



Parshas Bereishis

פרשת בראשית

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The Mechanics of Life

Rabbi Aaron Feigenbaum ('97)

In honor of Shema Koleinu's 25th anniversary, we are proud to present articles throughout the year from past editors of the publication. This week's article comes from Rabbi Aaron Feigenbaum, who served as editor in the 1996-97 school year. Since graduating, Rabbi Feigenbaum has gone on to receive semichah and a Masters Degree from Yeshiva University. He currently serves as the rabbi of the Irving Place Minyan in Woodmere, NY.

We learn this week about the creation of the world - "*Bereishis bara Elokim es hashamayim v'es ha'aretz*".

People used to believe that the world was flat, until the early Greek philosopher Pythagoras (500 BCE) suggested, based on his study of the stars, that the world was round. Pythagoras' theory was accepted, and Plato (400 BCE) taught his students that the world was a round body in the center of the heavens. As a result of the belief that the world was the center of the universe, they also believed that the world was in a relative state of rest, that the world was static. Plato's student, Aristotle (300 BCE), thus believed that the natural state of objects in this world was rest. Aristotle thought that objects would only move so long as force was applied to them, and that when that force stopped, the motion would stop as well. Aristotelian physics was the accepted science for almost 1,800 years, until Nicolaus Copernicus in the 1500's suggested that the sun and not the earth was the center of the universe. By shifting the earth out of the center of the universe, Copernicus also put the world into orbit, meaning that the world is not static and at rest, but in constant motion. This began to change our understanding of the mechanics of motion as well.

Galileo Galilei, in the 1600's, continued Copernicus' attack on Aristotelian physics with his Law of Inertia. Galileo's Law of Inertia is: "A

body at rest remains at rest, and a body in motion continues to move at constant velocity along a straight line, unless acted upon by an external force.” Sir Isaac Newton incorporated this Law as his First Law of Motion: “Every body perseveres in its state of rest or of uniform motion in a right line, unless it is compelled to change that state by forces impressed upon it.” In simpler terms, the current science is that things that are at rest will remain at rest, and things that are in motion will stay in constant motion unless something else makes them move or stop moving. In our everyday lives, this is hard to observe, because there are constant forces of gravity, friction, and air resistance which cause objects in motion to slow and stop. While impossible to prove definitively, this is the accepted understanding of Motion.

Rav Chaim of Volozhin (1700's in what is today Belarus) discusses in his *Nefesh Hachayim* the difference between people and angels. Rav Chaim writes that angels are much holier beings than people. They have wings and they are spiritual and not physical beings. But, he continues, people have an advantage over the angels. This advantage is seen from the Book of Zechariah (3:7) “So says Hashem... I shall grant you walking amongst these standers.”

The angels are *omdim*, standers, while people are *mehalchim*, movers. Angels are static beings; they are objects at rest, and they remain at rest unless God puts them into motion. By contrast, people are objects in motion. God made us as *mehalchim*, as movers. When God first made Man, he charged him *l'ovdah ulishamrah* (*Bereishis* 2:15), to work the Garden and to guard it, to protect the world, and to perfect it. Man is created as an object in motion, with a mission and a job to do. But God also created a world which is designed to challenge us in accomplishing that mission.

If my application of physics to the human condition is correct, then as objects in motion, the natural state of Man should be constant motion, continuous accomplishment and achievement on a continuous arc upward towards Hashem. But maybe, much like the physical world, in which there is air pressure and gravity which challenge the natural motion of objects in motion, in our spiritual world, there are pressures which are constantly challenging and halting our motion and progress. We call that spiritual counterpressure the *Yetzer Hara*, and the challenge of life is to avoid the roadblocks and maintain our natural constant state of motion.

The *chagim* season which we just finished tends to give us a push forward, to put us back into motion if we might have slowed down over the past year. We have to take caution now that they have passed not to allow the *Yetzer Hara* to slow us down again. Like the objects of motion we were created to be, we have to stay in motion, making constant progress towards Hashem.

Hashem's Humility

Samuel Gorman (21)

Parshas Bereishis is a *parsha* that is truly packed, containing everything from the creation of the world to the events leading up to the flood. Among the many happenings of *Parshas Bereishis* is the creation of man.

This extremely important chapter is truly fascinating to study, as there are many interesting things to be learned from the text of the *pesukim* (*Bereishis* 1:26-27). One thing in particular that caught my attention as I was reading these *pesukim* was a certain statement that God said. “*Naaseh Adam... - Let us make*

A SHORT VORT

Akiva Kra (21)

ויאמר ה' אל-קין למה חרה לך ולמה נפלו פניך:”

“And Hashem said to Kayin, “Why are you distressed, and why is your facial expression fallen?”

This is a question that Hashem asks Kayin after his brother's offering was accepted and his wasn't. However, it seems strange that Hashem is asking this question. The answer is explicitly written in the two *pesukim* that precede this *posuk*: “Hashem paid heed to Hevel and his offering, but to Kayin and his offering He paid no heed”. It would appear that Kayin was clearly upset because his offering wasn't accepted!

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik explained that Hashem was asking Kayin if he was upset because his offering **wasn't** accepted, or if he was upset because his brother's offering **was** accepted. Throughout life, there can be times when those around us are successful in a field we wish to excel in as well. However, we shouldn't feel angry because they are successful. We have to remember that Hashem did this on purpose, and that while we might be sad, we have to pinpoint our emotions, and make sure we are not upset because our “brother” is doing well.

May we all be able to rejoice with those around us at their success, and always trust that whatever happens to us is for the best.

man..." (*Bereishis* 1: 26), *Hashem* says. Why does God say "let **us** make man," as opposed to "let **Me** make man?" To add to this question, the next *possuk* says "*Vayivra Elokim* - And God created" (*Bereishis* 1:27), indicating that God alone created man. So, once again, why does God say "let **us** make man?"

Rashi (*Bereishis* 1:26, *d"h naaseh adam*) says that the goal of this episode is to teach us a lesson in humility, while also making it perfectly clear that God alone created man. In *possuk* 26, God's statement, which is directed towards the angels, is designed to teach humility. Just as God consulted with the angels before creating man, so too man should always be aware and considerate of his inferiors. And then, lest anyone claim that the angels were, in fact, partners in the creation of man, *possuk* 27 states "*Vayivra Elokim* - and God created," to dispel any doubts that God alone created humanity.

There are other understandings of what is meant by these *pesukim*. *Ramban* (*Bereishis* 1:26, *d"h Vayomer Elokim naaseh adam*), for example, writes that God here is commanding matter to form man, as God only created something from nothing (*ex nihilo*) on the first day of creation.

While all of the different understandings are fascinating, I would like to focus on *Rashi's*. Humility, the *middah* that *Rashi* suggests is being taught in these *pesukim*, is a trait that reappears among many of the great people in our Jewish history. Avraham refers to himself as "*afar v'eifer* - dust and dirt" (*Bereishis* 18:27), thus displaying his humility, and Moshe is described as an "*anav meod* - extremely humble man" (*Bamidbar* 12:3), just to mention a few examples. And now, in addition to learning humility from the likes of Avraham and Moshe, we see God teaching humility as He creates humanity, perhaps indicating that it is an important trait for man to possess. If it is not too bold, I would like to suggest that we should all heed God's lesson, and try to work on *anivus* (humility) this week as we read *Parshas Bereishis*.

Backbreaking Labor For Eating A Fruit?

Elisha Price (22)

One of the first stories in human history is a recording of man's first sin. Adam was instructed not to eat the fruit of the *Eitz Hada'as*, the Tree Of Knowledge, but after his wife, Chavah, was tricked into violating this rule by the snake, he allowed himself to be convinced to partake of the fruit as well. The *Torah* (*Bereishis* 3:17) describes his punishment as the following:

5 Minute Lomdus

Shimi Kaufman (21)

וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צְבָאָם: וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ. אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר-בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת:

"And the heaven and earth were finished, and all their contents. And Elokim finished, on the seventh day, His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from His work that He had done. And Elokim blessed the seventh day and set it aside, since on that day, He rested from all the work of creation which he had done" (*Bereishis* 2:1-3)

Q. These *pesukim* are recited as a part of *kiddush hayom* on *Shabbos* night, as there is a *mitzvah* to sanctify the day verbally over a cup of wine. Thus, the structure of the *kiddush* is these *pesukim*, followed by a *berachah* of *borei pri hagafen*, and then a *berachah* on the *mitzvah* of *kiddush*. The *Har Tzvi* (*Orach Chayim* 156) asks if the *berachah* of *borei pri hagafen* is considered to be a part of the *kiddush* itself, or if it is considered to be a separate *berachah*. A *nafka minah* (practical difference) in this question would emerge if someone wanted to fulfil their obligation of *kiddush* by hearing someone else recite it, through the principle of *shomeah ki'oneh* (that one who hears something is as if he said it himself). If one heard the rest of *kiddush*, but missed the *berachah* of *borei pri hagafen*, would he be considered to have fulfilled his obligation. Most *poskim* are of the opinion that *borei pri hagafen* is not a part of *kiddush*, but there are some who hold that it is. According to the latter opinion, it would be logical that everyone who heard *kiddush* would need to have a bit of wine, since there would essentially be a *chiyuv* for everyone to make a *borei pri hagafen*, and it would not make sense to have a *birchas hanehenin* (*berachah* for pleasure) with no *hana'ah* involved. However, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chayim* 271:14) rules that it is only an added stringency to have everyone drink from the wine, and not a requirement. According to the opinion that *borei pri hagafen* is a part of *kiddush*, how would we explain this *halachah*?

A. According to the opinion that *borei pri hagafen* is a part of the actual *kiddush*, the *berachah* would essentially have two functions: one, as a part of the *kiddush*, and two, as a *berachah* on the wine. Since the listener only intends to fulfil their obligation of *kiddush*, they only intend to be *yotzai* with that aspect of the *berachah*, but not the aspect of the *birchas hanehenin* on the wine. As such, according to all opinions, the listener is not required to drink from the *kiddush* wine.

וְלֹאֲדָם אָמַר כִּי־שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתְּךָ וְתֹאכַל מִן־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לֵאמֹר לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ אֲרוּרָה הָאֲדָמָה בְּעִבּוּרְךָ בְּעֶצְבוֹן תֹּאכְלֶנָּה לֵל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

Since you listened to the voice of your wife and you ate from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from, the ground will be cursed for you, and with effort (lit. sadness) you will eat all your life.

As a result of his actions, Adam was cursed with having to work the soil of the ground to get his food. Why was Adam punished in such a harsh way, especially considering that Chavah gave Adam the fruit without telling him where it was from? How does this severe punishment fit the crime, which seems to have been accidental?

The *Chizkuni* (*d"h ki shamata*) says that Adam actually **knew** about the incident with Chavah and the snake. He writes that Adam was even told by Chava that this fruit was forbidden before she gave it to him to eat! Therefore, says the *Chizkuni*, his sin was intentional, and his willfulness deserved such a strong reaction.

However, other *meforshim* have different explanations for why Adam was penalized so heavily.

The *Ohr Hachayim* (*d"h uli'adam amar*) offers a very different approach. He says that it is incongruous to think that Adam sinned on purpose, based on the fact that God only blames Adam for listening to Chavah in the *possuk*. This implies that he didn't know he was sinning. If so, then what is Adam being punished for? The *Ohr Hachayim* explains that Adam's sin was in not checking with Chavah if the fruit he was eating was from the *Eitz Hada'as*. For this carelessness, he was punished.

The *Bechor Shor* (*d"h uli'adam amar*) brings down yet another approach, vastly different from the other two. In his view, Adam's sin really was not so terrible, and did not really deserve such a strict judgement. If so, then what was the punishment for? God realized that mankind is not capable of fearing sin inherently, and that some external deterrent was necessary. *Hashem* had to punish Adam severely, so that there would be fear in Adam's heart, and he would not sin again. In essence, *Hashem* made a lesson out of Adam.

Even if we understand why Adam was punished, we still are left baffled by the punishment. The snake and Chavah were both punished directly; the snake was cursed with the loss of its legs, and Chavah was cursed with the pain of childbirth. Adam's punishment however, did not affect him directly, but was a curse on the earth. Why is the punishment directed at the ground and not him?

The *Da'as Zekeinim* connects the specific punishment to Adam's distinct crime. Adam's *aveirah* was rooted in his inability to control his desire for food. As a result, *Hashem* made it that the ground, Adam's source of food, would no longer yield the produce he relied on it for. In other words, regardless of whether Adam's sin was intentional or accidental, his punishment was linked to him taking for granted something which seemed to be a 'given'. The sin of Adam was that he acted cavalier about God's presents, the food which grew on its own and the special garden in which he lived. So, God took these gifts away, to make Adam appreciate what he was given.

This is a theme which is prevalent on the holiday of *Sukkos*, which we just concluded. On *Sukkos*, we celebrate how *Hashem* sheltered us in the *midbar*, providing us with food, water and protection from the outside world. Adam's *aveirah*, according to the *Da'as Zekeinim*, was in taking for granted the gifts which *Hashem* gave him. Adam came to the conclusion that food is just food, and that he did not need to pay heed to the one who gave the food to him. This was why he was not careful to avoid the forbidden food. Let us all absorb the message of *Sukkos*, and remember to never take what *Hashem* gives us for granted, by listening to that which we are not allowed to do.

What Is Truly Good?

Benny Cohen (23)

This week's *parsha* contains several famous episodes: the seven days of creation, the Garden of Eden, the story of the *Eitz Hada'as*, Kayin and Abel, and a bunch of seemingly random genealogies all the way down to Noach. But why are these stories all here? Is this just a "day in the life" of Adam and Chavah? Storytime in Eden? How do these stories fit together, and why are they the stories that the author, God, chooses to tell? *Parshas Bereishis* and *Parshas Noach* cover almost 2000 years, and these are the only stories that God chooses to tell us from that time period. It seems that these stories are more essential to the overall storyline of the *Torah*, not just important historical events.

So, is the *Torah* a history book or a story book? Let's look at the end of the Kayin and Hevel story for some clues. Kayin has just murdered his brother, Hevel, and God confronts him. He asks a pretty straightforward question: "*ei Hevel achicha*" - where is your brother, Hevel? Kayin responds with an answer that would resonate for millennia: "*hashomer achi anochi*" - am I my brother's keeper? And God, who is now furious with Kayin's glib answer, doles out punishments in response: "*v'atah arur atah min ha'adamah*" - now, you are going to be cursed from the land; "*ki ta'avod es ha'adamah lo tosef tet*

kochah loch” – when you work the ground, it won't yield its strength to you; “*nah vinad thiyeh ba'aretz*” – you're going to be a wanderer, a nomad, exiled from your home. And finally, Kayin cries out in anguish at this final punishment: “*ein geirashta osi hayom mei'al pnei ha'adamah u'mipanecha esaser*” – you have driven me away from the face of the earth today, and now I will be hidden from Your face. At the end of everything, it seems like Kayin and God's relationship is pretty much over.

Now, the story of Kayin and Hevel may seem like an isolated event in our *parsha*, but the aftermath of this murder is reminiscent of another instance in this *parsha* where a human sins and God punishes them in the form of curses. After Adam and Chavah eat from the *Eitz Ha'daas*, the *possuk* tells us “*vayischabeh ha'Adam v'ishto mipnei Hashem Elokim*” – and the man and his wife hid from the face of *Hashem Elokim*. We just saw hiding in Kayin's story – Kayin declared that he is now hidden from God's face. And then, when God asks Adam “*ayekah*” – where are you? How did you get to this point? Adam hides from his responsibility and points fingers - It was Chavah's fault! Chavah does the same thing - it was the snake's fault! But we saw that word with Kayin as well, when *Hashem* asked “*ei Hevel achichah*” - where is Hevel your brother? Kayin's response of shrugging off responsibility was also the same as his parents trying to shift the blame. God then curses the ground, using those same words He later used with Cain; *arurah ha'adamah ba'avurecha* – the ground is cursed because of you, in sadness you will eat of it all the days of your life. And finally, Adam and Chavah were exiled from *Gan Eden*, their home, just as Kayin was forced to wander. It's pretty clear that there is a strong connection between these stories. So what are the connections telling us? Is it just that God is not very creative when it comes to His arsenal of punishments? Or, is there some deep way that these stories are connected?

If the aftermath of these sins is similar, it would stand to reason that the thing that provokes them is similar too. Kayin's sin must be connected to the sin of the *Eitz Hada'as*. So, let's look at why Adam and Chavah sinned. But first, let's look at why God created the world - what is the meaning of life? God doesn't come right out and tell us, but it does seem that God's creation of the world is a great act of kindness, that He wants to have a relationship with mankind. The first two *perakim* of the *Torah* are all about what God gives to man. *Hashem* allows man to take part in the entire creation, save for one restriction, the Tree Of Knowledge. It sounds like such a strange command. Why create a tree that we're not supposed to eat from? And what's even stranger, is that it seems like a pretty easy commandment not to mess up! Adam and Chavah have unlimited access

to **everything** except this one tree, and they still violated *Hashem's* commandment! So what's going on here? Why create the off-limits tree in the first place, and how did Adam and Eve so egregiously fail?

God wants to have a relationship with us. He created the garden as a place where man could live together with Him as a sort of paradise, a gift for humanity. But, God wants us to understand that it comes from Him. When a parent gives their child a gift, they want their child to enjoy it, but in the context of their relationship. And if the child acts like they deserve the gift, when they forget the parent who gave it, it damages the relationship between parent and child. So, God says, “eat from all these trees, enjoy My garden, but I want you to know that it comes from Me, because I want to have a relationship with you.” And how are we going to show that we understand that and that we want to be in that relationship? By honoring the prohibition not to eat from God's one tree. That's how we convey our understanding that we're guests in the garden. We don't make the rules – God does. But when Adam and Eve broke God's rule and ate from the tree, they took good and evil into their own hands. The text says “*vateireh ha'isha ki tov ha'etz lima'acha*” – Chavah saw that the tree was **good** to eat from. This is the first time a human declares that something is good. But, that was Chavah's perspective on good and evil, not God's. Chavah meant that the fruit was good as in tasty, for her immediate pleasure, not good as in morally good. When Adam sins, God responds by cursing the ground that He had formed for man. It is almost as if God is saying “I gave you the world to enjoy and to produce for you! But if you can't realize that it's from Me, if you want to pretend that you're the owner, then let's see what you make of it on your own.” And the culmination of this punishment is that they are kicked out of *Gan Eden*; they can still live in *Hashem's* world, but the special closeness with Him is gone.

And now, we return to the story of Kayin and Hevel, where instead of things getting better, they get worse. When Kayin saw that Hevel's offering was accepted and his own wasn't, he got really, really angry. But God lovingly reached out to Kayin, telling him to instead strive to improve himself - “*halo im teitiv se'eit*” – if you do what's good, you'll be uplifted. Once again, we see the word good, here meaning what was right and morally proper in God's eyes. But Kayin had another idea. Kayin took God's advice – sort of. He did what was good – but good according to his own rules, according to his own desires, just like Adam and Chavah did. He ignored God, took matters into his own hands, and ended up killing his brother. Kayin continues to fall further than his parents did, outright denying any involvement in his sin. As a result, his punishment is that much more harsh, and what started out as Adam hiding from God turns

into God hiding from Kayin.

This is the link that ties our *parsha* together. Our *parsha* begins with a loving God, shaping a Universe of Good for mankind, but it ends with the broken relationships of humanity, who are moving further and further away. The final chapters of our *parsha* list the genealogies from Adam to Noach, fastforwarding over a thousand years of human history, as they continue a downward spiral where things get even worse. The *parsha* began with seven “*tov’s*” – seven mentions of good, but it ends, depressingly, with the first time that God declares that something as *ra’ah*, evil. “*Vayar Hashem ki rabah ra’as ha’adam ba’aretz vikol yeitzer machshevos libo rak ra’ah kol hayom*” – God saw that the evil of man was great in the land, and that all of his thoughts were only evil. This causes God to *kaviyachol* become sad and regret having created man. In the span of just one *parsha*, we are presented with the creation of an ideal world and its rapid decline into self-destruction, due to people choosing their own will over God’s. This sets the stage for the rest of the *Torah*, where we are asked to subjugate our own desires to those of *Hashem*. The *Torah* begins with a cautionary tale, warning us of the depravity which man can fall into if he trusts his own moral compass rather than obeying the will of *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*.

Signs In The Sky

Pinchas Cohen (24)

In this week’s *parsha*, *Bereishis*, *Hashem* says “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day and night; they shall serve as signs and for set times, for days and for years” (*Bereishis* 1:14).

When do the sun and moon serve as signs? And for what purpose?

Rashi explains that when an eclipse occurs, it serves as an ominous sign for the world. The *Gemara*

(*Sukkah* 29a) describes this in more detail: lunar eclipses are bad for the Jewish people, since their calendar depends on the moon, and solar eclipses are bad for the non-Jews, since their calendar depends on the sun. The *Gemara* also states that the place where the eclipse occurs is where the misfortune will happen.

We know that lunar eclipses appear about 150 times more often than solar eclipses in any given location. This leads us to question why *Hashem*, who loves us so much, would bring upon us more punishment than the rest of the population.

We can answer this based on the following story which the *Gemara* (*Avodah Zarah* 4a) tells of the sage Rav Safra. Rabbi Avahu told the heretics in the government that Rav Safra was a great scholar, and so they exempted him from taxes for the duration of a year. One day, they approached him with a puzzling *possuk* (*Amos* 3:2): “Only you I have known from all the families of the Earth, therefore I will punish you for all your sins.” Since Rav Safra was unprepared to answer heretics, he was unable to satisfy them, and they began to mock him. Rabbi Avahu happened upon the scene, and they demanded, “Did you not tell us Rav Safra was a great scholar?” “Of course he is!” Rabbi Avahu retorted. “He specializes in the words of the early sages; I on the other hand specialize in responding to heretics.” He proceeded to answer their question with a parable: A man lent money to a friend and an enemy. For the friend, he set up a payment plan, so that he would be able to repay his loan gradually, whereas for the enemy he waited and collected the debt all at once.

With this in mind, we can return to our question. Indeed, we are punished more often than the rest of the world, but our punishments are like installments of a loan that allow us to continue forever. On the other hand, with the non-Jewish nations, *Hashem* waits to punish them until their sins accumulate, and that is why throughout history we have seen nations rise, fall and then disappear.

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THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM: ANIMALS IN THE PARSHA

Yisroel David Rosenberg (23)

Now on the Menu

"וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע זָרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת כָּל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ פְרִי עֵץ זָרַע זָרַע לָכֶם
וְהָיָה לְאֹכְלָהּ" (בראשית א:כט)

"And Hashem said: behold, I have given to you every growing plant on the face of the earth, and every tree that has fruit, it grows for you to eat"

Hashem says that plants are to be food for Adam *Harishon*. After the *mabul*, Noach was given permission to eat animals. Rashi on *Parshas Noach* (9:3) explains from the *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* that indeed, Adam could eat only plants, while Noach and his descendants were allowed to eat meat as well.

The Ramban takes the approach that the reason why Noach was permitted to eat animals after the *mabul* was because he was the one who saved them all from the flood, by bringing them aboard the *teivah*. The survival of the animals, their very existence after the flood, is purely due to Noach. Therefore, Noach was permitted to eat animals.

A contemporary approach to this question of what changed from Adam *Harishon* to Noach to allow the consumption of animals is that of Rabbi Dr. Yonatan Grossman. Rabbi Grossman proposes that when Adam was created, he was given intelligence and dominion over animals to serve as a king over animals. A ruler is not, however, meant to eat his subjects. The change occurs with the corruption of man. Hashem found it necessary to bring the *mabul* to begin again after man failed as a ruler of animals. Now animals would simply fear man's intelligence, because man was no longer restrained by the matter of being their ruler, and could hunt and eat them.

CHUMASH B'YUN Moral Claims and Their Divine Refutation

Rabbi Mayer Schiller

"In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth" (Bereishis 1:1)

Rashi comments: "R. Yitzchak said: [God] could have begun the *Torah* from "This month shall be for you..." (*Shemos* 12:2), because it is the first commandment with which *Yisroel* was commanded. What is the reason that He began with the Book of *Bereishis*? Because of the verse, "The power of His acts He told to his people, in order to give them the estate of the nations" (*Tehillim* 111:6). If the nations of the world will say to *Yisroel*, 'You are bandits, for you conquered the lands of the Seven Nations', *Yisroel* will say to them, 'The whole earth belongs to the Holy One, Blessed is He. He created it and He gave it to the one found proper in His eyes. By His wish He gave it to them, and by His wish He took it from them and gave it to us.'

This very first Rashi on *Chumash* presents us with a host of difficulties. First, it seems to be a composite of two Chazals, which Rashi weaves together as if they were one. Second, there is the challenging philosophical premise of Rashi that the *Torah* is simply a compendium of laws, leaving all other information in it as ostensibly superfluous. Third, the Ramban accentuates Rashi's claim by noting that non - *halachah* matters are esoteric and of no relevance to the masses of Jewry. Then, he offers his own explanation of the relevancy of certain events in *Bereishis*, but he seemingly leaves open, as does Rashi himself, the question of the relevance and proper placement for the entirety of the *Torah* from *Bereishis* until *Parshas Bo*. Of intri-

guing interest is Rashi's use of R. Yitzchak's name, which is a departure from Rashi's usual approach of citing Chazal anonymously. Finally we have the moral and social question which the non-Jew's pose of our right to the land of *Eretz Yisroel*, and Creation's role in our response.

In order to flesh out Rashi's assertion that the *Torah* should have begun with laws, there are three basic understandings in the primary commentaries on this text. The Mizrahi (1455-1525) asserts that although all stories and details (even lists of names, which he uses as an example) of the *Torah* serve a religious purpose, that purpose should be secondary to laws. Thus, the narratives should follow the laws in the actual text. This is explained in greater specificity in the *Nachlas Yaakov* (1760-1832), who avers that this means that the *Torah* should first have listed the laws, and afterwards spelled out the narratives. The *Devek Tov* (R. Simon Aschenburg, d. 1598) offers a slightly different premise, that the narratives of the *Torah* should have been in their own *sefer*, not part of the primary *Chumash*.

Further insight may be gleaned by those commentaries on Rashi who turn to the compelling question of the existence *mitzvos* in *Bereishis*, such as the seven commandments of Noach, and the *mitzvos* of having children, performing a *bris milah* and the prohibition of the *gid hanasheh* (the thigh sinew). R. Yitzchak's question would seem to ignore the existence of these *mitzvos* within *Sefer Bereishis*. The fairly uniform answer is that Rashi references the first *mitzvah* given to the entirety of the Jewish people. The previously noted commandments were given to either individuals or to all of humanity. So, to re-frame Rashi's assertion, the *Torah* should have begun or been devoted solely to laws given to all of Jewry, and only to *Klal Yisroel*. This then characterizes Rashi's assumption of what *Torah* is.

Yet, the point of Rashi is that the *Torah* needed to violate this rule in order to answer moral qualms put forth by Gentiles. This is surely intriguing. In fact, the *Gur Aryeh* (Rabbi Yehudah Loew, 1512-1609) pushes the importance of responding to Gentile moral questions a bit further. He asks that in *Bereishis* (7:1) we find that Canaan conquered the land from Shem, to whom Noach gave it. Thus, he says, our claims to the land are entirely valid, and require no further explanation - the land was stolen from our ancestor, Shem, before we took it back from the Canaanites. To this, the *Gur Aryeh* answers that Shem had four sons besides Arpachshad, the ancestor of Avraham. Thus, the Gentile's claim is a morally correct one, that other descendants of Shem had a legitimate claim to the land. Thus, we see that according to the *Gur Aryeh*, the Gentile argument is, on its face, morally very sound.

Turning to the Ramban for a moment, he feels that there is no need in general for the *Torah* to discuss the details of creation, the story of *Gan Eden*, the flood, or the generation of *haflagah* (dispersion). All that is needed for the "people of the *Torah*" is the knowledge that God created everything and rested on the seventh day, for which reason we have a *mitzvah* to keep *Shabbos*. All the rest is a "deep mystery" which cannot be understood without a tradition, which "those who know are duty bound to conceal."

The Ramban then offers a detailed explanation of why we have the narratives of *Bereishis*. His basic point is that *Eretz Yisroel* is "the choicest of places created in this world", and for those who sin, it is "unbefitting that they should inherit such a place." This is why, in the end, the land was given to *Klal Yisroel*, because "He drove out those who rebelled against Him and placed those who serve Him to dwell there instead." We are told this in order "that they should know that it is through the service of God that they inherited it, and if they would sin to Him, the land would disgorge them as it disgorged the nations that were before them."

In fact, the Ramban offers a slightly different version of the *Midrash* cited by Rashi, and it is possible that this omission by Rashi and inclusion by the Ramban is of much significance. But first, let us pry apart the two texts used by Rashi. (Incidentally, two of the three earliest known manuscripts of Rashi, those of Regio de Calabria and Chagara (Alkabetz), both have essentially the same amalgamation of *Midrashim* that we do, with a few many differences. Unfortunately, the Roma edition of Rashi, the oldest still existent, only begins in the third *perek* of *Bereishis*.)

Rashi, until the quote from *Tehillim*, is almost verbatim as we have today in the *Tanchuma Hayashan* (also known as the Buber *Tanchuma*). The question of the Gentiles and all that follows does not appear there. The latter material (although without the name of its author, R. Yehoshua of Sakhnin in the name of R. Levi) appears in *Bereishis Rabbah*, in a longer version than that which Rashi quotes. However, the essential

elements of Gentiles asking and the response being based on *Hashem* giving and taking the land as He wishes are there.

Missing from Rashi but present in both the *Midrash* we now have, as well as in the text cited by the Ramban, is that the *Midrash* begins its statement of the Jewish response by quoting from *Devarim* (2:23) where the *possuk* says that the “Kaphtorim who went out of Kaphtor conquered and dwelt in their place” (that is, in place of the people who lived in the land earlier.)

Conceivably, following the Ramban's general sense that acquisition and forfeit of the land is based upon the virtue of its inhabitants – recall that the verification of this metaphysical reality is why we are told all the narratives of *Bereishis* in his understanding – the reality of earlier peoples similarly gaining and losing the land is part of the proof. Eventually, this is what *Hashem* is answering the Gentiles. It is not simply a Divine fiat that gives us the land, but our own spiritual virtue.

However, Rashi leaves out the *pesukim* from *Devarim* (although they exist in our current *Midrashim*), perhaps due to what is, according to him, the decision of God's inscrutable Will not link virtue to the Land's holiness.

In any event, according to both Rashi and the Ramban, the Gentile claims are worthy of an answer. Ramban sees it as part of morally coherent history, whereas for Rashi it is *Hashem's* decision which trumps morality as we humans perceive it. Both worthy lessons, worthy enough to begin the *Torah* with them.

A lingering problem following Rashi is why we need the rest of *Bereishis* until *Bo*. According to the Ramban, everything in the *Torah* which is not an explicit commandment is a statement of the moral and metaphysical justification of *Klal Yisroel's* eventual conquest. According to both, though, alleviating this moral qualm is more important than beginning the *Torah* with laws, even though laws are its true purpose. The moral problems must be dealt with at the outset.

In fact, the Artscroll Commentary on *Tehillim* quotes in the context of 111:6 that Reb Eliyahu Meir Bloch of Telz said that this argument of God creating the world was not meant for Gentiles, but to “reinforce the resolve and faith of the Jews themselves.” It is us that need to realize, before the laws of the *Torah* even begin, that we need to and do stand on the moral high ground.

Lastly, and on a lighter note, the *Divrei Dovid* (R. Dovid Segal, 1586-1667) brings a tradition that the exceptional mention of R. Yitzchak by Rashi is due to the fact that it is not a *tanna* being cited. Rather, R. Yitzchak was Rashi's father, who was not a learned man, and his son wanted to begin his commentary with some *Torah* of his father. He asked him to ask something, and that is the question with which Rashi begins. The *Divrei Dovid* refutes this claim with several sources that indicate Rashi's father was a learned man. Plus, I would add that all the *Midrashim* which we have also quote R. Yitzchak, implying the source of this question is in fact tannaitic.

The *Bnei Yissaschar* (R. Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, 1783 - 1841) is quoted with a slight nuance on this matter. He explains that the *Midrash* does in fact cite R. Yitzchak, but why did Rashi go out of his way to quote a *tanna*, which he almost never does? He answers that Rashi wanted to use the name in order to give his father a mention at the beginning of his *peirush*, thus rendering a subtle hint of respect by quoting a name only here.

FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

Of the various episodes contained within *Parshas Bereishis*, possibly the most significant is the account of mankind's creation. The *Torah* describes how man and woman were formed, and the details of the inception and subsequent failures of these first humans are essential to understanding our place in the world. Interestingly, the *pesukim* appear to contain two conflicting accounts of Adam's creation, one which is found in the middle of the entire account of creation, and one which is placed afterwards. Many commentators are at pains to explain why both passages are necessary.

The Rav, Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik, famously expounded on this contradiction in his groundbreaking essay "The Lonely Man Of Faith". He explains that the two reports of Adam's conception refer to two different aspects of man, that of "Adam The First" (Adam I), and "Adam The Second" (Adam II). Adam I, he writes, is characterized by the command "*peru urevu, umilu es ha'aretz vikivshuah, uridu ... bikol chayah haromeses al ha'aretz*" - be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and conquer it, and rule over every living thing on the earth (*Bereishis* 1:28). Adam I is creative, majestic, driven by a desire to act "in God's image". His drive is to innovate, to expand, and to attain control over his environment. In contrast, Adam II's role is far more submissive; he is created "from the dust" and is charged "*li'ovdah ulishamrah*" - to work and guard the earth, rather than to conquer it. Adam II represents spiritual man, who inherently views himself as incomplete, and longs for a relationship with God to overcome this sense of inadequacy.

(It should be noted that this is a criminally simplistic summary of the Rav's thesis. There are many more nuances to the essay, including the role of community for both Adam I and Adam II. Anyone who has not read the Rav's complete essay must find time to do so; it is possibly the most essential work of Jewish philosophy in the modern era.)

The Rav's description of the two Adams would appear to cast Adam I as more physically oriented, and Adam II as far more spiritually inclined. In this light, it is strange that in the second report of Adam's creation, the *pesukim* seem to state that the reason for Man's creation was entirely physical. The *possuk* (*Bereishis* 2:5) states that the plants which *Hashem* created had not yet sprouted, as He had not yet sent rain, and there was no man to work the soil. This would not appear to fit with the Rav's approach to Adam II's purpose in the world, which is to forge a spiritual connection to *Hashem*! In addition to this, the *possuk* itself is puzzling for two reasons. First, plants can grow without the involvement of man, as they often do in the wild. Second, we know that Adam's role as a farmer was a curse which came about due to his later sin of eating from the *Eitz Hada'as*! How could Adam's role have been based on a punishment he would not receive until later?

Apparently bothered by these questions, Rashi clarifies that the necessity of man was not in relation to the ground, but in relation to the rain. Of course, the rain could have caused the plants to grow on its own, but without man, there would be nobody to appreciate the rain and pray for it. This explanation would appear to resolve our questions; man's role in the process was not intended to be physical, but rather, a spiritual boost to the environment. *Hashem* could have sent rain without Adam, but its purpose would not have been complete without someone to appreciate and request it.

However, this explanation begs the question - why was rain chosen as the primary motivator for Adam's creation? While rain is certainly important, there are many other things a person could pray for, and many other ways to grow close to *Hashem*. What about rain made it the fundamental thing which Adam was needed to *daven* for?

The *Gemara* in *Ta'anis* (4a) discusses how certain natural phenomena, such as dew and wind, are constant and unyielding, while rain is something which is specifically based on our merits. Earlier, the *Gemara* equates rain with livelihood, and states that it is one of three things which *Hashem* never gives to a messenger to control. Rain represents mankind's inherent dependence on *Hashem* for survival. No matter what we do, no matter how hard we work, if the rain ceased to fall, we would not be able to survive. One rainfall is also insufficient; a consistent flow of rain is needed to produce a healthy crop.

We can now explain why rain was an essential factor for Adam's place in the world. As much as Adam I tries to conquer and control his environment, he is ultimately subject to the whims of *Hashem*. And yet, he does not recognize this, continuing to work under the belief that he is helping himself. This is a recipe for disaster. *Hashem* could not begin to send rain if man would not appreciate it. And so, *Hashem* created Adam under the premise that the rain would fall based on his merits. The consistent need for rainfall ensured that Adam II would never forget that it is *Hashem* who provides *parnossah*, not his own effort. This was the perfect condition under which to create Adam II, the counterbalance to Adam I's domineering nature. We should merit to recognize *Hashem's* hand in all aspects of our life, and to remember to keep our spiritual growth at the forefront of our minds.

Wishing everyone an amazing *Shabbos*,
- Shimi Kaufman

HALACHA HASHAVUAH

Josef Weiner (23)

Standing for Keriyas Hatorah

With the reading of *Parshas Bereishis*, another cycle of *Kriyas HaTorah* begins, and as such, it is an appropriate time to discuss the topic of standing during *leining*. First, standing during *Kriyas HaTorah* is not a requirement, according to the *Mechaber* (*Shulchan Aruch* 146:4). The Rema adds that it was the practice of the Maharam MeRottenburg to stand, but even according to him, it is just a good practice to stand, and by no means an obligation (*Bach Orach Chayim* 141). The reason behind this custom of standing is that we are supposed to see ourselves as if we are at *Har Sinai*: just like at *Har Sinai*, *Bnei Yisroel* stood, so too, we should stand for *leining* (*Mishnah Berurah* 146:19). Based on *kabbalah*, it is actually better not to stand for *Kriyas HaTorah*, and this was the practice of the *Arizal* (*Kaf Hachayim Orach Chayim* 146:22). One must stand for the *oleh's* recitation on *Barchu*, as it is a *daver shebikedushah* (M.B. 146:18). However, between *aliyos*, everyone agrees that one may sit (M.B. 146:20).

One need not stand during the *Haftorah* (*Shevet Halevi* Vol. 10:26). Some people have the practice to read the *Haftorah* of the "*Ma'aseh Merkavah*" (describing the workings of the Heavenly Spheres) quietly as the *maftir* reads it aloud, and those people should stand out of respect (M.B. 494:4).

The question of standing for *Kriyas HaTorah* may also be subject to what the congregation as a whole practices. The *Kaf Hachayim* says in the name of the *Kol Eliyahu* that one should not stand in a place where everyone is sitting (*Orach Chayim* 146:22). However, the *Imrei Binah* (13:4) and *Pesach Hadevir* (146:3) say that one may stand even where nobody else is doing so, and he does not have to be concerned with appearing haughty.

CHASIDUS ON THE PARSHA

Peshurin Sorscher (21)

The first Rashi on *Chumash*, at the beginning of this week's *parsha*, famously asks why the *Torah* begins with the creation of the world, when it could have started with the first *mitzvah*, that of *Kiddush Hachodesh* (sanctification of the new month) in *Parshas Bo*? After all, if the point of the *Torah* is to tell us the *mitzvos*, would it not have been logical to begin with the very first *mitzvah*. Rashi quotes Rabbi Yitzchok, who says that we need the story of creation in order to have a response to the nations of the world. If they claim that we stole *Eretz Yisroel* from them, we can respond that *Hashem* created the world, and he can choose who it belongs to. Thus, when the Jews conquered the land from the Seven Nations, they were not stealing, as the land was given to them by its true owner, *Hashem*.

The *sefer Nesivos Shalom*, written by Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky (1911-2000), the late *Slonimer Rebbe*, points out that the answer given by Rabbi Yitzchok only explains why we need the story of the creation of the world, detailed in *Parshas Bereishis*. But, why was it necessary to speak about everything which happened after creation? Why do we need to know about Noach, Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov, and the descent to Mitzrayim? If the goal is to establish *Hashem's* right to give land to whomever he pleases, then tell the story of *Bereishis*, and then skip directly to the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hachodesh*!

The Rebbe explains based on the principle that the *Torah* can only be given to someone who has proper *middos*. At the same time, nowhere within the *mitzvos* of the *Torah* is there any guidance as to what these *midos* are and how to achieve them. Since we know that for a Jew, the *Torah* is the guide for all of life's demands, it would not be a complete *Torah* if we had to look somewhere else to know how to live our life. But if the *middos* are not to be found in the *Torah*, how are we supposed to know how to develop these necessary character traits? Our guide to life would be missing something fundamental, namely a guide to how to develop ourselves and grow!

The Rebbe answers that this is exactly why we need the rest of *Sefer Bereishis*. We need to know how our forefathers lived, to learn proper *middos* from them. When we see how Avraham Avinu lived a life of *chessed* and trust in *Hashem*, we can learn from and emulate his actions. Thus, *Sefer Bereishis* serves a dual purpose: on the one hand, it shows us that *Hashem* created the world and has the right to give land to whomever he chooses, and on other hand, by studying how our righteous ancestors lived, we can learn how to live our own lives, drawing inspirations from their success and failures.

The message for us is clear. As the next few months fly by, we must take extra care to look at stories in the *Torah* and see what lessons we can apply to our daily lives. On a closing note, the Rav writes that often, the *Torah* will devote only one or two *pesukim* to some of the most complex issues in *Shas*. And yet, when it comes to the stories of the *Avos*, the *Torah* spends entire paragraphs going into detail about their actions. It is clear that there is much to be learned from the stories of *Sefer Bereishis*. May we all merit to internalize these lessons for the upcoming year and beyond!

GEDOLIM GLIMPSE: RAV OVADIA YOSEF

Emanuel Tzrailov (22)



Rav Ovadia Yosef was born in Baghdad on the third of *Tishrei*, in the year 5681/1920. When he was four years old, his family moved to the Bucharian quarter of Jerusalem. Even in his youth, Rav Ovadia was in love with learning; during recess time, when the other kids went out to play, he would always stay inside with his *seforim*. He was known for his ability to zone out everything else while he was learning, as if he was literally out of this world. In his early teens, there was once an incident where Rav Ovadia climbed up a ladder to read a certain *sefer*, and was so incredibly focused that when he closed the *sefer*, he forgot he was on the ladder and fell, breaking his legs. Rav Ovadia attended *Yeshivat Porat Yosef*, where he learned under *chachamim* such as Rav Ephraim Hakohen and Rav Ezra Attiya. It was here where he developed into a full fledged *talmid chacham*, and where his love for *Torah* grew.

After he got married, it was difficult to make a living in Israel, so he moved to Cairo to accept the position of *rosh yeshiva* of *Yeshivat Ahava V'ahvah* (he was already a *rosh yeshiva* at the age of 27). In his years in Cairo, he also served on the *beis din*, and helped the Jewish community there in answering many halachic questions. In 1952, he moved back to Israel, and in 1953, he established *Yeshivat Ohr Hatorah*. Finally back in the Holy Land, Rav Ovadia was appointed to the rabbinical High Court in 1965, and served on the court with Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and Rav Betzalel Zolty. In 1968, Rav Ovadia was appointed Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, and in 1973, he was elected to be Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel. Some of his halachic works were *Hazon Ovadia*, *Yabia Omer*, and *Yechaveh Da'at*. It is not widely known but Rav Ovadia has actually visited Yeshiva University on 4 separate occasions and had a close relationship with Rav Soloveitchik. Rav Ovadia Yosef was known to be one of the *poskei hador*, and was renowned for his incredible *Torah* knowledge. He passed away in 2013/5774 on the 3rd of *Cheshvan*, and had almost 1,000,000 people attend his burial.

Story:

When Rav Ovadia was giving out permission for *agunos* (a woman whose husband is missing) to get remarried, there was one news reporter who wanted to “expose” Rav Ovadia. She asked many *agunos* who got halachic permission from Rav Ovadia what their story was, and used details of their stories to get herself a certificate from Rav Ovadia stating that she herself could remarry. Excited, she called the news network, and was informed that her husband, who worked at the same news network, had just passed away in a car accident. We can see from this story how Rav Ovadia did everything *leshem shamayim*, and how *Hashem* helped him to not be tricked into ruling falsely.

(Sources: Maran: The Life And Scholarship Of Hacham Ovadia Yosef by Yehuda Azoulay.
Master of the Torah- The Life of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef)

PARSHA PUZZLERS

Submit your answers to shemakoleinu@yuhsb.org along with your name and cell phone number to be entered into a raffle at the end of the *sefer*! 1 answer = 1 entry!

(Hint: Use the commentaries in the Mekraos Gedolos Chumashim, along with the Toldos Aharon on the side to find relevant Gemaras and Midrashim)

1. The word “*bara*”, meaning “create”, is used regarding four things in this week’s *parsha*. What are these four items? Why is the word used by these specifically?
2. On which days were the following items created: angels, the *levyasan*, Bilaam’s donkey, rest, and *gehenom*?
3. What kind of fruit grew from the *Eitz Hada’as*? Give four opinions.

Parsha Summary

The *parsha* begins by detailing the seven days of creation, and what was created on each day. For six days, *Hashem* created different aspects of the world, and on the seventh day, he rested, thereby establishing the seventh day as a day of rest for the rest of time. The *Torah* then tells more details about man's creation, which occurred on the sixth day. The first man, Adam, was created out of dust, and his wife, Chavah, was formed from one of his ribs, after he saw that every animal had a mate except for him. Adam and Chavah lived in a paradise called *Gan Eden*, where they were allowed to partake in any of the plants, save for the *Eitz Hada'as*, the Tree Of Knowledge. However, the snake tricked Chavah into eating from the tree, and she in turn gave fruit to Adam. This caused the two of them to gain a *yetzer hara*, as they had not understood the concepts of good and evil before. Thus, they were expelled from *Gan Eden*, with Adam cursed to work the ground for food, and *Chavah* cursed with the pain of childbirth. The snake was punished for its deceit by losing its legs, which it had before it's sin. Years later, Adam and Chavah had two children, Kayin and Hevel. Kayin, jealous that Hevel's offering to *Hashem* was accepted in place of his own, killed his brother, causing *Hashem* to punish him by condemning him to be a nomad. The *parsha* concludes with a genealogy from Adam to the protagonist of next week's *parsha*, Noach.

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