



# The Marcos and Adina Katz YUTORAH IN PRINT

## Bereishit 5783

### The Impersonation of God

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm z"l (Originally delivered October 23, 1965)

Those who follow the scientific literature, and even the daily press, know that modern science is on the verge of a great breakthrough. Before long, we are told, we shall hear the news that mankind has achieved the synthesis — the artificial production of life, defined as a large molecule which can reproduce itself. So certain are scientists that this can be done, that only this past month the President of the American Chemical Society called upon the government to establish the “synthesis of life as a national goal.” The laboratory creation of life is imminent; it is only a matter of time.

There is no question that when this is accomplished it will have the most far-reaching consequences in every field of human endeavor, most of them as yet unforeseeable and unpredictable.

Already, in a number of journals here and there, the religious question is making itself felt. We must begin to anticipate these religious problems, specifically the question: will the synthesis of life constitute a challenge to the Jewish notion of God as Creator? If a living, self-replicating molecule is produced in the laboratory, will this act have profound religious repercussions upon us?

In order to answer this question intelligently and honestly, albeit briefly, let us refer to the basic teachings of Judaism as reflected in this morning's Sidra.

Next to the idea that God created the world, the most important concept in all of Genesis is that a part of that creation in some way resembles the Creator. This is the idea that man was created in the *צלם אלקים*, the image of God. In some ways, the Bible tells us, man is like God.

But this is more than a mere statement of fact. It is also a charge and a challenge: Man's function is to fulfill the image of God in which he was created. His purpose in life is to achieve, evermore, that resemblance to his Creator.

His mission, in other words, is to imitate God. That is what the Torah itself means when it commands us: *אחרי ה' אלקיכם תלכו*, “you shall go after the Lord your God.” This was formulated by our great philosophers as the commandment, *להתדמות לאלקים*, to be God-like, to imitate God. The result of the imitation of God is the whole of Jewish ethics. When we are told to be ethical, we are, in essence, told to act as God acts. Man must constantly say, *מה הוא חנון, אף אני חנון*, just as He is gracious, so must I be gracious; just as He is *רחום* -- compassionate and loving -- so must I be merciful. Just as He visits the sick and consoles the mourners, so must I do.

Such is the general idea of the imitation of God, what is generally known by the Latin term, *Imitatio Dei*. But let us be more specific. If we are told, at the very beginning of the Torah, so early in the history of the universe, that man was created in the Divine Image and that he therefore must resemble God, we must first know something about God in order to be able to imitate Him. But what do we know about Him at this point? From a study of the first chapter of Genesis, we know three things about God. First, we know that He is the Creator of all things: “In the beginning God created heaven and earth...” Second, we know that He created man as a natural being, but also endowed him with some special transcendent significance. On the one hand, man is a completely natural phenomenon: *עפר מן האדמה*, he is but “dust from the earth.” On the other hand, *ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים*, “and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” — man is a spiritual being as well. The third thing that we know about God is that He is the source of all morality. When we are told that God created the world and that at each stage he declared *כי טוב*, “that it is good,” that means that it is God who determines what is absolutely

good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong.

To be God-like, to imitate Him, means therefore that man the creature must emulate the Creator in the three ways we have mentioned. First, we must be creative; man must seek always to create and to enhance God's creation, to advance the welfare of God's world by employing the creative abilities which He implanted within us. It means that we must participate in — as the Rabbis put it — יִשׁוּבוּ שֶׁל עוֹלָם, the settlement and civilization of the world. The first way in which man imitates God is by acting creatively, by becoming a co-creator with God.

The second way of Imitatio Dei is to protect human life and to improve its quality. It means we must always consider life as precious, as sacred, and as inviolable.

Third, it requires of us to establish the good כִּי טוֹב -- the good as determined by God, in our lives, in our society, and our culture. We must take the absolute morality decreed by the Almighty and live it out to its fullest. How do we carry out what God declared is good and decent? — the answer is: the totality of our Torah and our tradition, the performance of our various mitzvot.

So, to imitate God, to fulfill the tzellelem, means exercising creativity; the enhancement of life; and moral conduct.

A reading of the first two portions of Genesis leads us to the understanding that man cannot escape being confronted by these three challenges. These three forms of the imitation of God are not simply three ways for saintly souls to achieve bliss. No man can escape them. We have one of two alternatives: either we fulfill the צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים, the image of God, or we destroy it; but we can never ignore it. A study of these chapters will reveal what a consideration of contemporary life will affirm: man's disaster, his bankruptcy, lies not in neglecting the image of God, but in distorting it; not in the disuse of the tzellelem, but its misuse and abuse. The early Biblical narrative, which we read today and shall continue next week, reveals three tragic errors where man failed to imitate God, and, instead, impersonated Him.

The first instance is the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They were commanded not to eat of the עֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע, the "tree of knowledge of good and evil." The serpent enticed them to transgress the Word of God telling them if they would eat of the forbidden fruit then וְהִייתֶם כְּאֱלֹהִים יוֹדְעֵי טוֹב וְרָע, you will be like God who knows good and evil. Maimonides, at the very beginning of his Guide, records a relevant question: did intelligence, the

ability to discern between good and evil, come to man after he sinned? Was it a reward for his crime? Did not man have intelligence before the act of evil? If he were not able to distinguish between right and wrong before, how could God have commanded him in the first place?

Permit me to suggest an answer. The word יָדַע usually means "to know." But at times it may also have a slightly different meaning: to make known, to inform, to determine, to establish. Thus, Maimonides himself says the following in his Guide, elsewhere, of the verse recording God's message to Abraham, through the angel, after the Akedah: כִּי עָתָה יִדְעָתִי כִּי יִרְאֵ אֱלֹהִים אֶתְּךָ. This does not mean, says Maimonides, "for now I know that you are a God-fearing man." God knew this all along! What it means is this: "now I have made known to all the world that Abraham fears God, and that this is how a God-fearing man is expected to act." Here too, therefore, יוֹדְעֵי טוֹב וְרָע means not that Adam and Eve will know good and evil, but that they will make known or determine by themselves what is right and what is wrong! The sin of the eating of the tree of knowledge, of good and evil, consists of man's desire to reject God's absolute laws of morality, and to substitute instead his own standards and guides. Adam wanted to impersonate God, instead of imitating Him. He thought: I will determine and make known what is good and what is wrong. I do not need God's absolute laws; I can make my own laws to satisfy me according to time and place. Early in history, therefore, man erred. Instead of accepting the כִּי טוֹב of God, he sought to devise his own patterns of behavior.

Today we still have not learned that lesson. There is an entire school of thinkers who seriously propose that there can be no "prescriptive ethics," that there are no absolute rules for right and wrong which we can prescribe in advance of any act. Instead, this school -- which goes by various names, such as "the new morality" or "situational ethics" -- believes that man can determine by himself how to act only at the moment that he is faced with the need for a decision. There can be no telling in advance what he must do or not do. He must determine it by himself. In other words, God and His morality are out, man and his fluctuating whimsicality is in. The same thing happens in Judaism, when Halakhah is rejected, when "standards" are offered in substitution for the divine laws, when every Jew is told that he can pick and choose amongst the various commandments of the Torah what he will. When this happens, we have ceased to imitate God. We have begun to

impersonate God, each of us acting as a little god by himself.

The second failure of man in the task of imitation of God occurred in the story of Cain and Abel. Man was told to imitate God the Creator of man and life, by improving life and enhancing mankind. But then man makes the mistake: he imagines himself to be the Master of life. And when man owns a possession, that implies as well his right to destroy it. Hence, Cain rises upon his brother Abel and kills him. This act of murder is not merely rebellion against God; Cain does not deny God, he plays God. He begins as an impostor and ends as a murderer.

The third instance is that of the tower of Babel. Like God, man should be creative. The tower of Babel is a symbol of man's technological creativity. There is nothing wrong with building and creating. As we have just said, it is an act of fulfillment of the *tzelleim*, the imitation of God. However, the purpose of this creativity was wrong. The builders of the tower said: *נעשה לנו שם*, "we shall make a name for ourselves." They wanted to advance the creation of the world, its upbuilding, not for the glory of God, but for their own prestige and ambition and power. Once their own selfish interests were substituted for the advancement of the divine purposes of God, they displaced God, they impersonated Him. Hence, again, man fails in his sublime mission.

Let us, now, return to our original question: the religious implications of the ability of man nowadays to create life. Let it be said, clearly and unequivocally, that, considering all we have said, this deed will not in the least disturb our religious equanimity. Judaism has nothing whatever to fear from the creation of living matter by man. It will be, on the contrary, an exercise in the fulfillment of the divine image: just as God can create, so can man. And just as God can create life — so can His image, mankind, create life.

If man, who can now already replace human organs and speak of directing his own evolution through "genetic engineering," will actually create life in the laboratory and use that knowledge and ability to improve human life and help a suffering humanity; if he will come thereby to the worship of the Creator of all the universe; if he will, further, assist in establishing God's moral law in the world — then man's achievements will be a new and great milestone in human progress. Then this scientific breakthrough will be a historic act of the imitation of God and man's fulfillment of his Divine Image.

If man, however, will do here what he has already done

elsewhere with his creative genius — showing a spiritual schizophrenia, a rapid scientific advancement together with an accelerated moral deterioration, then he will be foolish and arrogant and dangerous.

The act will be foolish, because he will begin to imagine that because he has created life, therefore God did not do so originally. This will be no less foolish than the assertion that since I can make a chair, then that somehow proves that no one has ever made a chair before me. One can well imagine primitive man having just invented the shovel and dug his first hole, rising and uttering the silly boast that since I have dug a hole, it proves that God never created this earth filled with caverns and crevices and caves!

It will be arrogant, because it will lead merely mortal scientists to play God, and convince all of us to believe that we are petty deities. Heaven help us when scientists claim the benefit of clergy! It will be dangerous because it will lead us into devious moral paths, where men keep on making up their own rules as they go on. When we impersonate God (*והייתם כאלקים*), then we ourselves declare what is right and wrong (*יודעי טוב ורע*). No wonder that as a result of much of the expectation of the synthesis of life, we have already heard some scientists — notably the grandson of Charles Darwin — call for a program of eugenics, the selective destruction of those people whom we regard as unwanted and expendable, and breeding only those whom we consider valuable — the "we" probably meaning the scientists! Certainly we Jews, so long and so terribly considered an inferior race, and destroyed on an unprecedented scale, are aware of the dangers of playing fast and loose with human destiny and human life.

Man is the only creature that is a little more than an animal yet a little less than an angel. Whether we turn beastly or Godly depends only upon us: how we relate to the divine image within us, and whether we imitate or impersonate God. And not only mankind as a whole, but each of us individually, as individuals, are each day faced with momentous decisions as to the quality of our lives. At every step, at every decision we are called upon to make, we must know that behind it there lies a greater decision: shall we imitate God or impersonate Him; glorify God or play God?

May God grant us the wisdom and the sensitivity and the good sense to learn to express fully the image of God within us by emulating Him and not trying to become gods on our own. Only when all of us would have come

to acknowledge the אדון עולם אשר מלך בטרם כל יציר נברא, the Master of the world who reigned before any creation was brought into existence, will we be able to say with confidence and faith, בידו אפקיד רוחי, in His hand do we

commend our spirits, whether asleep or awake, and with our spirits our bodies as well; ה' לי לא אירא, the Lord is with us, we have no reason to be afraid.

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## A Garden of Possibility

*Dr. Erica Brown*

**T**he joy of starting the Torah cycle again is twinned with the sense of new interpretive possibilities that once again unfold. We may have read the first chapter of Genesis dozens, if not hundreds of times, but we bring a new self to it this week, a self that is a year older and made wiser through new experiences and insights.

We'll begin where our most foundational story began: in a garden. Why a garden? Everything about a garden thrums with new growth and possibility. Remember those little seeds in cups we planted as young schoolchildren? Remember the excitement of watching the first green sprout appear from the soil? In a garden, we cultivate that delight again and again.

Richard Powers in his Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Overstory*, writes, "This is not our world with trees in it. It's a world of trees, where humans have just arrived." The book of Genesis opens with the verdancy of a tree-filled world. We humans only arrive later. On the third day, God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it. And it was so." The text continues as speech brings forth action followed by evaluation: "The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that this was good" (Gen. 1:11-12). Seeds speak to the generational continuity of creation; every living thing in this special garden can replicate itself.

Humans, new scientific research tells us, are similar to the trees that preceded them in creation. Humans were not only in the Garden, we were of the Garden. Formed from the dust, our namesake - Adam - signifies the loamy earth - the adama - that produced us. In Genesis 2, the Garden is described as a bare landscape in desperate need of a human/Divine partnership: "when no shrub (si'akh) of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the soil" (Gen. 2:5). Later, in Deuteronomy 20:19, humans are compared to

trees; this prompted the midrashic comment: "This teaches that human life comes only from the tree" (Sifrei 203).

The Spanish medieval exegete Nahmanides observes that although vegetation was created in Genesis 1, its continued growth relies upon God's rain and the human gardener described in Genesis 2. God created a water supply and a person to tend and steward nature: "but a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of the earth. The Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:6-7). This image is both primal and poetic.

Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra, the twelfth century Spanish poet and commentator, defines the si'akh of Genesis 2:5 - typically translated as shrub - as a fruit-bearing tree. He then offers another definition for si'akh: conversation. This meaning is borne out by a quick study of the word's appearance throughout Tanakh. Si'akh can also mean to sing (Judges 5:10), to speak (Job 12:8), to pray (Ps. 55:17), to meditate (Ps. 77:6), to praise (I Chronicles 16:9), and to complain (Job 7:11).

Is it possible that a word for many types of trees also signifies the varieties of speech? Yes. Speech, Ibn Ezra conjectures, is the fruit of our mouths. The similarity between humans and trees is not only in form, he writes, but in what we produce. Trees produce fruit. We produce words. Ibn Ezra then offers us a panoply of tree images we use to describe humans: limbs, trunks, roots, fruit, branches. Powers in *The Overstory* makes the comparison genetic, "You and the tree in your backyard come from a common ancestor. A billion and a half years ago, the two of you parted ways. But even now, after an immense journey in separate directions, that tree and you still share a quarter of your genes..."

Ibn Ezra may have been on to something by alerting us to the linguistic "root" shared by trees and language. In 2015, Peter Wohlleben, a German forester who has devoted his life to the study of trees, published the

bestselling book, *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*. He challenges our common misconception of trees as loners that compete with other vegetation for water, sunlight, and nutrients. Mounting scientific evidence suggests that trees form alliances with other trees, even those not within the same species. They not only live cooperatively, they also communicate at the root level. Above ground, they use scent signals and pheromones to speak to each other. Through these complex, interconnected networks, trees send distress signals about drought, disease and insect attacks. Wohlleben calls it the “wood-wide web.”

Powers, through one of his characters, described this majestic undergrowth in this way: “A forest knows things... There are brains down there, ones our own brains aren’t shaped to see. Root plasticity, solving problems and making decisions. Fungal synapses. What else do you want to call it? Link enough trees together, and a forest grows aware.”

God’s decision to create humans in this Garden may have been a way to communicate to Adam and Eve that they entered an interconnected natural world that predated them and required their leadership and tender care to bloom. The Garden was their classroom where they were to learn from trees how to nurture an interdependent universe that communicated under and above ground. By creating through the process of separation, God was showing Adam and Eve that on a cosmic level we are all profoundly connected. Trees were the best living example of this for the new couple. In *Studies in Spirituality*, Rabbi Jonathan

## Dog Days

Rabbi Joshua (*The Hoffer*) Hoffman z”l

In our parsha we read of the heinous crime of Kayin, who murdered his brother Hevel. After God confronts him and asks where his brother is, kayin answers, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” God tells Him that he killed his brother, and will suffer punishment for this horrendous act. Hevel then says, ‘my sin is too great to bear.’ (Bereishit, 4:13). Rashi explains that, actually, this remark should be understood as a question, with Hevel asking God if his sin is really so terrible. In other words, Kayin denied culpability, not recognizing how terrible what he did really was. Ramban, on the other hand, says that the sentence should be understood in the declarative, as a confession by Hevel that he sinned, and that his sin was too great to

Sacks writes, “If I were asked how to find God, I would say: Learn to listen. Listen to the song of the universe in the call of the birds, the rustle of trees...”

It’s not hard to understand the implications of the tree/human comparison for leadership. “Root cause analysis” in leadership is the study of all that is unspoken underground that may shed light on organizational problems, prompting us to search for creative and lasting solutions. Examining underlying, causal issues can prevent problems from reemerging. More than that, taking the tree metaphor seriously in leadership implies alerting others to our inherent connectedness, especially when it is not obvious, especially in times of divisiveness. We lead when we select our words with intention and use them to create new possibilities. As the saying goes, what we pay attention to grows.

We are born “to work and to watch” this remarkable garden. The blessing of the very first psalm is also the blessing of what a great leader can do to protect and inspire us, “...like a tree planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, whose foliage never fades, and whatever it produces thrives” (Ps. 1:3). Leaders help others flourish. John Gardner, in his book *On Leadership*, compares mentors to farmers. Every word we utter can be a seed to help someone else thrive. As we begin the Torah anew, we are challenged to think of how to tend to the world around us and within us.

So, as we begin this sacred Torah cycle anew, who and what will you be growing this year?

bear. Hevel then went on to say, explains the Ramban, that God, in his mercy, did not punish him with death, as he deserved, and he therefore asked that he not end up dying through the consequences of his punishment, which required him to wander from place to place, and left him open to be killed by wild animals who may find him. If this happened, said kayin, his punishment would exceed what God had decreed. God then told Kayin that whoever killed him would receive a severe punishment, and we are then told that God placed a sign on Kayin. What was this sign, and how do both Rashi and Ramban understand it, each according to his respective opinion as to whether kayin confessed to his crime, as the Ramban says, or did not

confess, as Rashi says? The Ramban mentions a midrash Rabbah, which says that God gave a dog to Kayin. He says that the simple meaning of the midrash is that a dog is a lowly kind of animal, and the rabbis felt that Kayin was a disgraced person because of his deed, and deserved having a dog as his constant companion. The Ramban himself, however, following his opinion that Hevel did actually acknowledge his sin, says that the dog was to serve as a guide for Kayin, so that he would not venture into dangerous areas where he may be killed. The famed Rav Shimon Sofer, son of the Kesav Sofer, and grandson of the Chasam Sofer, writes, in his *Shir Maon*, that, actually, the trait that ultimately led to Kayin's killing of Hevel was that of ingratitude. The midrash says that Hevel at first overcame Kayin and was on top of him, ready to kill him. Kayin pleaded for his life, and Hevel released him. Instead of being grateful for this act, Kayin then went and killed Hevel. The sign of the dog, says Rav Shimon Sofer, was meant to teach Kayin the trait of gratitude, which dogs, always loyal to their master, are known for. This explanation would seem to comply with the opinion of the Ramban, who says that Kayin confessed, and was thus on the road to teshuvah. The sign of the dog was meant to help him along this road. For Rashi, however, who says that Kayin did not confess his sin, the explanation of Rav Sofer would not seem to hold true, because Kayin was not trying in any way to atone for what he did or improve himself in any way.

Rashi explains, based on a midrash, that the sign given

Kayin was a letter of God's name that was engraved upon his forehead. The Netziv explains that anyone who kills a human being, even inadvertently, loses his 'tzelem Elokim,' the image of God that he had from birth. Because of that, Kayin was exposed to attack by animals, and, so, God engraved a letter of His name on Kayin's forehead, because animals can perceive hidden things and messages that human beings cannot. There is another opinion in the Midrash Rabbah, cited by Rav Sofer, although not by either Rashi or the Ramban, which says that symptoms of tzara'as appeared on Kayin's forehead. This midrash would seem to be in accord with Rashi's stance that Kayin did not acknowledge his sin. The lack of humanity involved in refusing to acknowledge the horrific act of taking another human being's life indicated that there was not any semblance of humanity left in the killer, so that he was, in fact, he is dead inside. This is exactly what the rabbis meant when they said that a *metzora*, a person afflicted with *tzara'as*, is considered as being dead. We know that the main sin for which *tzara'as* comes is that of *leshon hora*, or speaking evil, and the Talmud says that speaking *leshon hora* involves the killing of three people, the one who speaks it, the one who hears it, and the one of whom it is said, so that a person who speaks *leshon hora* is likened to a killer. This sign, then, was not meant to protect Kayin from attack by animals, but was, rather, a divine message to him, in response to the callousness that he displayed in his response to God's admonition for killing his brother.

## Sirgul Hasefer

*Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh (Transcribed and adapted by a talmid from the YUTorah shiur presented at Gruss Kollel in Yerushalayim on Oct 15, 2020)*

An intriguing Midrash Bereishis Raba in this week's Parsha quotes a pasuk at the beginning of the fifth perek: *Zeh Sefer Toldos Adam*. And the Midrash comments: "*Zeh sefer*" teaches us something that has to do with halachos of writing a sefer. Specifically, Hashem taught Adam *ha-Rishon*, even the *Sirgul ha-Sefer*—what we call "*sirtut*." He taught Adam *ha-Rishon* how to score the lines before writing the Sefer Torah, the Mezuzah, etc. So it's a very strange Midrash. Why is it so important that Adam *ha-Rishon*—the beginning of humanity, the beginning of history—do the *sirtut* on the Sefer Torah?

So you could, at least theoretically, say that Hashem taught Adam *ha-Rishon* everything about the Torah—

down to the last minor detail. But it still seems strange. What's *sirtut ha-Sefer* all about? You have a Sefer Torah. We understand what writing a Sefer Torah means. Whether you are writing a Sefer Torah, Megillah, or Mezuzah, etc., you are basically taking the holiest substance in the world—the words of Torah—and you write them down. You are basically creating a guidebook and concretizing the most important content that a human being can read. So what is *sirtut*? It is the making, in advance, of the nice lines. Therefore, when you start to write, you will not go off the page; your script will not curve up or down, out of line—your writing will not be messy. There is a tremendous difference between when you planned-out everything in

advance and when you didn't. If you did not prepare in advance, you might have the most sublime prophecy that anyone could possibly record, but it will not come out right because you did not prepare in advance. *Zeh Sefer Toldos Adam* is the role of humankind—what we are supposed to do in history. What did Hashem teach Adam ha-Rishon? He said: Adam ha-Rishon, don't worry. There is going to be a Matan Torah. There will be multiple important events in history, and you must bring the world to its redemption by using the holiness I am giving you. But first, let me teach you the first lesson of history. Before you do all these things, you should be sure to plan and prepare everything in advance to make sure you will do them right. If you wait until the last second and do what comes to you in the moment, you will not get it right. Think out your plan for life beforehand. If you say: Oh, I will just do all the right things, I will grow, I will do everything — then it's not going to work out. But if you sit beforehand and decide, how am I going to it? When am I going to do it? What will I do first, and what will I do second? If you plan in advance, you will get history to where it needs to be.

Fascinatingly, this Midrash appears in several places—in the Sifra and Yerushalmi Nedarim. Rabbi Akiva says: *ve'ahavta le-re'echa ka-mocha, zeh klal gadol ba-Torah*. Ben Azai says, *Zeh Sefer Toldos Adam, klal gadol mi-menu*. How is Sefer Toldos Adam a greater klal than *ve'ahavta le-re'echa ka-mocha*? Many meforshim suggest that Ben Azai was referring to the end of that pasuk, not its beginning. But if you take the beginning of this pasuk, maybe what Ben

Azai is saying to us is: Rabbi Akiva, of course, you are right! *Ve'ahavta le-re'echa ka-mocha, zeh klal gadol ba-Torah*. If you love your neighbor like yourself, everything will go right, etc. But you know what? What if you are in a particular situation and you don't feel the love there? What if you end up messing up? What if, in the end, your neighbor does something that annoys you; something that he has been doing (and annoying you in the process) for the last ten years—and you end up hating him? *Zeh Sefer Toldos Adam* teaches us to prepare our sefer in advance. Sit there and plan out how you will love your neighbor like yourself. What am I going to do to work on my midos? What will I do when I get into that situation so that I will react in the right way? What do I have to build in myself and plan out how to structure my life to ensure that I will live up to these wonderful ideas of Rabbi Akiva? That's what it means *zeh klal gadol mi-menu*. And I think that that's the klal. You know that we are all not yet at a point where we are changing the course of Human History, but we all have our own Toldos Adam. So maybe the greatest klal in our lives is *Sirgul ha-Sefer*. Before we go out and do, take some time to sit and make *cheshbon ha-nefesh*. What do we want to accomplish in our lives? How do we want to grow? What do we want to fix? And how we will do that, step by step, in an orderly and logical fashion, we will be able to accomplish what Hashem has placed us in this world for and bring the world to its ultimate realization in the final Geula. Shabbat Shalom.

## The Creation of Shabbat

Rabbi Yosef Goldin

**W**e are all familiar with the basic narrative at the beginning of Parshat Bereishit- G-d created the world in six days, and on the seventh day He stopped creating, and rested. However, upon further inspection of the Torah text itself, things aren't as clear as they seem.

At the conclusion of the six days of creation, the Torah introduces the seventh day of Shabbat (2:2): "And G-d finished doing His work on the seventh day, and He rested on the seventh day from all the work that He did". Meforshim note an apparent contradiction in this passuk. Initially, the Torah says that G-d finished His work on the seventh day, implying that He did create on part of the

seventh day. Yet the second half of the passuk says that He rested on the seventh day- which implies that He didn't create at all on the seventh day? Did Hashem create on the seventh day or not?

The Midrash Bereishit Rabbah raises this question- and answers that Hashem did create one thing on Shabbat- He "created rest". After six days of creation, the one thing missing from the world was the concept of rest, and that was what G-d created on Shabbat.

The Midrash's answer seems difficult to understand. What exactly does it mean to convey when it suggests that G-d "created rest"? Rest isn't something that can be created; it is simply the lack of activity. How could God

“create rest”?

I once heard a beautiful answer to this question from Rabbi David Fohrman. Rabbi Fohrman noted that when someone is involved in the process of creation- for example, an artist creating a new painting or a musician writing a new piece of music- the most difficult stage is finishing. There is always more that can be done, additional finishing touches that can be added. That moment of finality- when the artist takes a step back and decides that he has finished- is most elusive. Yet, at the same time, ironically, that instant is the most creative moment in the process- because the painting now exists on its own and has been “created”. Until that moment, it was a project, or a draft, a canvas with colors- from that moment on, it is a painting, a new creation.

This, suggests Rabbi Fohrman, is what the Midrash means when it says that Hashem “created rest” on Shabbat. For six days, G-d created the world, in all its wondrous glory and with all its myriad of details. But throughout those six days, as G-d continued to create and add to the world, the world was still simply “G-d’s canvas”, as it were- a project in progress. Once Shabbat came and G-d consciously ceased to create- that act of resting was actually the most creative moment in the process of creation, as it now enabled the world to exist on its own, as a finished entity. This was G-d’s act of creation on Shabbat.

Rav Fohrman noted that this profound concept applies in many other areas of life, as well- including the world of parenting. Of course, our most creative act as parents is our involvement in the creation and birth of the child. From that moment on, however, we continue to play a major

role in shaping and raising that child. Throughout the childhood years, we are involved in all aspects of the child’s life- as we strive to mold and fashion the child according to the values and ideals that are important to us.

At some point, however, the child grows older and begins to assert his independence. Our natural instinct as parents is to push back against this- we aren’t quite yet ready to give the child the independence he naturally craves. We feel that there is still more that we can give to the child, ways in which we can continue to influence and shape the person he is becoming. In a way, we are like the artist who isn’t quite yet ready to be finished with his newest project, as there is always more to add or improve.

And yet- like the artist, one of the most creative acts we can perform as parents is to step back and give that child some space and autonomy. In doing so, we allow the child to exist “on his own” and empower him to grow as an autonomous and independent adult. At that point, we have truly “created” our child in an incredibly profound way.

Of course, this is not an “all or nothing” proposition, particularly in the realm of parenting. Throughout our children’s lives, it may be appropriate to give them- or even encourage- autonomy in certain areas of their lives, while maintaining our influence in other areas. The formula involved in this process will also vary from child to child, and situation to situation.

It is critical, however, that we recognize the importance of letting go and giving our children independence at the right time. While it may feel like we are “losing” our kids or abdicating our parental role - empowering them in this way is one of important things we can do as parents.

## Bereishit, Darwin and Jewish Values

*Rabbi Moshe Taragin*

**S**cientific revolutions often lead to cultural upheaval. Our current information revolution has altered almost every aspect of human experience, and it will take decades to fully assess its long-term impacts.

The two most transformative scientific revolutions of the past one thousand years occurred in the 16th and 19th century respectively. In 1543, Copernicus proved that a stationary star was fixed at the center of our galaxy. We call that yellowish ball, the sun, and planet Earth, orbit this fiery star. The Copernican revolution radically altered our perception of the prominence of human beings

within the larger universe. If planet Earth no longer stood at the midpoint of the universe, perhaps human beings weren’t as central to creation as had been previously assumed. Humans were now reduced to a speck of cosmic dust occupying a minute orb, lost in an endless cosmos, containing billions of galaxies. What would become of Man and his lofty station as divine masterpiece? Everything changed.

In many ways, Darwin’s discoveries in the 19th century were even more world-shattering. In 1859, Charles Darwin published his “Origin of Species” proving that diversity



in Nature is driven by an evolutionary process known as natural selection. Genetic mutation creates both different species as well as variations within each specie. The stronger creatures are advantaged by a process known as survival of the fittest: only the fittest creatures survive and reproduce, while weaker forms of life are filtered out of the natural ecosystem.

Darwin's theories radically impacted human thought and severely challenged religious dogma. Here are five enduring Darwinian challenges to our Jewish value system.

### **Is Science the Enemy of Religion?**

Darwin's theories directly challenged our belief that God created the world, or the doctrine of creationism. Some of Darwin's discoveries are more easily reconciled with religious tenets, while others appear to be more difficult to resolve. The concept of evolution per se, doesn't directly clash with creationism. Perhaps God created an intelligent system with inherent creative capabilities. Perhaps evolutionary change, driven by an invisible hand, is part of God's intelligent design. Other Darwinian claims more directly clash with religious belief, such as his assertion that Man descends from primates, or the overall implication that the world is older than the Biblical timeline.

Despite the apparent conflict, most if not all of Darwin's actual discoveries can be squared with the Torah's description of creation. It is not necessarily his actual claims which counter religion, but, rather, the growing rift between science and religion which emerged in the aftermath of his discoveries. Unfortunately, many religious people harbor a perennial but false suspicion of science as the enemy of religion. Science empowers us to better understand the mechanics of God's world and should enhance our appreciation of God's handiwork. Of course, science and ration are only equipped to describe the "how" but never the "why". Science can reveal the process, but can never provide meaning. Sometimes scientific conclusions challenge religious dogma and force us to develop more profound understandings of our religious belief. Defaming the entire field science as anti-religious, is theologically fraudulent, and cripples human progress, which itself is part of the divine will. Darwin's discoveries added to the false illusion of science as the enemy of religion.

### **Social Darwinism**

Darwin's ideas also caused a century of bloodshed. Social Darwinism extended Darwin's theories about Nature to the field of sociology: just as the selection of the strong

from the weak is vital to natural evolution, it is similarly necessary for the sustainability of society. Society must be filtered of its impurities, else it will wilt. These poisonous ideas led to various programs aimed at cleansing society of undesirable elements, and, ultimately, to the Nazi program of genocide against non-Aryans. Hitler was deeply influenced by social Darwinism and quotes these theories in his book *Mein Kampf*.

### **A humane society or a jungle?**

Even when it doesn't express itself in murder, social Darwinism is socially toxic. Nature may be driven by the harsh realities of competition, but society of Man should be more humane and compassionate. Judaism envisions a society of ethics and social welfare, in which the weakest members aren't exterminated, but provided for. In the wake of Darwin, society has become less caring and more violent and is slowly resembling Darwin's jungle. Just because nature is morally indifferent does not mean that humans should follow suit.

### **Human will or genetic fate**

Darwin's doctrine of evolution also constrained human freedom. Man is the only creature gifted with consciousness, creativity, and freedom of choice. Our freedom empowers us to make moral and religious decisions, but it also demands we take responsibility for our failures. Darwin's system implied a more deterministic view of Man who is nothing more than a 'gene capable of creating a gene'. We are just one small spoke of a larger evolutionary wheel, being spun by forces beyond our individual control.

Darwin was not alone in deflating human freedom. Marx asserted that human history was driven by class warfare over the distribution of wealth. Freud suggested that we are driven by dark psychological forces beyond our control, namely our hatred of our father and our desire for our mother. Taken together, Darwin, Marx and Freud relandscaped a world of free choice into an ironclad deterministic world where humans cannot determine their fate or their decisions.

Ironically, we have achieved unprecedented political and economic freedom, but we feel more trapped and less empowered. In a world of determinism, we are less likely to take responsibility for our failures, and more likely to blame others for our struggles. Judaism is predicated an unconditional belief in unlimited human freedom, and once that belief is toppled the entire system collapses.

### A divine masterpiece or a cosmic hiccup?

Finally, Darwin's theories of evolution blurred the distinctiveness of Man. By claiming that all living humans belong to a unitary species with a single origin, Darwin asserted equality between Man and the rest of the natural kingdom. If, as Darwin claimed, all species descend from a common evolutionary source, Man possess no lofty or distinctive status. Homo Sapiens are just a small part of a large evolutionary tree, and we don't even occupy our own branch, as we share ours with primates. Darwin reduced man from a Divine masterpiece into an amalgam of genes, positioned randomly on an evolutionary timeline of billions of years, commencing well before we arrived on this planet. In place of a Divine grand mission, we are locked into an evolutionary survival of the fittest alongside the animals of the jungle. Formulating this implied Darwinian view of humanity, Stephen Hawking referred to the human race as "just a chemical-scum on a moderately sized planet, orbiting round a very average star in the outer suburb of one among a billion galaxies." God compares us to stars, but to Hawking we are just scum.

Bereishit celebrates the dignity of Man by recording that God fashioned Man in His own divine Image and vested

## Three Lessons From The Beginning

Mrs. Michal Horowitz

**P**arshas Bereishis: Creation, Adam and Isha, the first sin, the first murder, exile, the generations from Adam to Noach, the corruption of man upon the earth. In a parsha more esoteric than revealed, in narratives beyond our comprehension, and in lessons about the foundations of our world as we know it - and before it was as we know it - we begin our journey and cycle through Torah once again. The Torah opens with: בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ - *In the beginning, Elokim created the heavens and the earth* (Bereishis 1:1). There are worlds (pun intended) to learn, say, darshan and write about this pasuk, but as we are mortals and time is more limited than we would like, I will share three insights with you.

(I) Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Bregman, in Short and Sweet on the Parsha (Feldheim), teaches in the name of Midrash HaNe'elam that the letters of the word בְּרֵאשִׁית can be rearranged to spell the words שִׁיר תֵּאבֵד, which means 'desires song.' This hints to the idea that everything that Hashem created in the entire creation desires to sing praise

him with unlimited potential. Man was created noble and pure, and to underscore this primal virtue, his creation on the sixth day is marked by effusive divine praise: "God beheld all His creation, and it was surpassingly good". Darwin and his comrades devalue human dignity, but Judaism heralds it.

Without respect for the dignity of the human condition we are more likely to dehumanize or objectify other humans. Without belief in our own inner nobility, we suffer lack of self-esteem and lose of belief in ourselves and in our potential. Without viewing ourselves as God's masterpiece we forget that God chose us, spoke with us at Sinai, and handed us a historical mission. We are different and not just because we are better adapted at surviving Nature's contest for survival.

It is not Darwin's doctrine of evolution per se which is dangerous to Jewish belief and values. Instead, it is a range of implications about science, society, free will and human dignity. Every revolution creates cultural and religious upheaval. While we accept scientific findings, we cannot accept implied messages which erode basic religious values. Science should provide data, not values. It should provide information but not belief.

to HKB" H by announcing the existence of the Creator and fulfilling His will (Short and Sweet on the Parsha, p.4).

From here we learn that an integral part of our existence as ovdei Hashem, as created beings, is the avodah of singing shira to Hashem. As King David instructs us, עֲבֹדוּ וְרַנְּנוּ אֶת-ה' - בְּשִׂמְחָה בָּאוּ לְפָנָיו, בְּרִנְנָה (gladness and joy), come before Him with song (Tehillim 100:2). It is not sufficient to serve Hashem by carrying out the mitzvos by rote, but rather, we must be moved to the depths of our soul from the joy of Torah and mitzvos, and sing (proverbially and, at times, literally) to the Creator for the zechus of being His nation.

In regard to the power of song in avodas Hashem, when Moshe entreated Hashem to be granted entry into Eretz Yisrael, Moshe said about his prayers: וְרַנְּנוּ אֶת-ה' וְרַנְּנוּ אֶת-ה' - בְּעֵת הַהוּא לֵאמֹר (Devarim 3:23). The Ba'al Ha'Turim teaches: וְאֵתחֵן - בְּגִימַטְרִי שִׁירָה שֶׁאֵמַר לְפָנָיו שִׁירָה כְּדִי שִׁשְׁמַע תְּפַלְתּוֹ in numeric value equals שִׁירָה, song, to teach you that

Moshe sang before Hashem, so that He would heard his prayers (ibid).

Not only does the power of shira stir our soul, but it elevates our prayers to higher heights, so that the RS"O may hear - and accept - our prayers.

(II) Rabbi Bregman further writes a tremendous insight of the Vilna Gaon (Short and Sweet on the Parsha, p.4). The word בְּרֵאשִׁית is the roshei teivos (an acronym) for the most important values in the life of a Jew:

בראשית = בטחון, רצון, אהבה, שתיקה, יראה, תורה

How does the entire Torah begin? By alluding to the most fundamental concepts and foundations upon which a Jew must build his life?

Bitachon - trust; ratzon - desire to serve Hashem; ahava - love of G-d; sh'tikah - silence and knowing when to hold our tongue; yirah - reverence of G-d; and finally, Torah - the all-encompassing beacon of light that guides us through this world of darkness.

When we live according to each of these ideals, and remember that the acronym of בְּרֵאשִׁית is the beginning and foundation of the entire creation, we will live lives striving to always reach higher heights in our avodas Hashem.

Which brings us to our third insight: (III) Rabbi Bregman quotes a medrash that contrasts the way a human being builds and the way HKB"H, I'havdil, builds. Chazal teach that when a person builds, he works from bottom up. When Hashem builds, He begins from the Shomayim and works down, as the verse says: בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ - In the beginning, Elokim created the heavens (first) and the earth (second). What is the medrash coming to teach us? What lesson does Hashem want us to learn into how we should conduct our lives?

“R' Shmuel Alter (d.1969, authored Likkutei Bosor Likkutei [20 volumes]) explains: Hashem wants that as we build our lives, the shomayim-type stuff should be the

focus of our lives. This means making torah and mitzvos our main goal. In terms of the rest of what life has to offer, all the stuff of olam ha'zeh can come afterwards. This is what the medrash means by saying that when Hashem builds, He goes from Heaven to earth, working downwards. Unfortunately,” Rabbi Bregman concludes, “many people in life have it backwards and make the finite, temporal, material world the goal of their strivings” (Short and Sweet on the Parsha, p.4).

Asaf Lieberman, an Israeli broadcaster, wrote after Rav Chaim's petirah, zt'v'k'l, “I am a chiloni (secular Jew). The word kadoash does not speak to me. And yet, many matters become clear when one enters his (R' Chaim's) house on Rashbam Street in Bnei Brak ... Rabbi Kanievsky's home is mesmerizing. There is nothing in it. Meaning, there is nothing in it from a materialist perspective. In the small bedroom there are two old beds and a cupboard. In the central room, a table and books. There is also a tiny kitchen. And that's it. The rabbi's entire life can be summed up as sleeping, learning Torah and nutrition.

“In all my visits there, as a skeptical journalist, I looked for the catch. Where are the rabbi and the members of his household hiding the lavishness? But the thing is, there is no lavishness ... As I mentioned, I am a chiloni who does not connect with discussions of holiness ... (But) Think about it: Who is the person for whom you would wait hours for a few minutes with? For which person whom you never met would you abandon everything so as to participate in his funeral?” (Jewish Action, Fall 5783, p.26).

בראשית - בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ - (I) we must strive to always sing in our avodas Hashem; (II) we must remember the acronym of Bereishis and the six foundations upon which a Jew builds his life; and (III) we must strive to build lives focusing on the ikar (primary - Shomayim) and not the tafel (secondary - aretz).

## The Book of Humankind

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

More than 2000 years ago, the rabbis of the Babylonian Jewish community divided the Torah into 54 portions and began the practice of reading the entire five books of the Torah on an annual cycle, rather than the previously practiced triennial cycle. And so, for the last two thousand years, as soon as the reading of the book of Deuteronomy is completed on the

festival of Simchat Torah, the annual Torah reading cycle immediately starts again with the book of Genesis.\*

In this week's parasha, parashat Bereshith, we find the quite well-known, yet enigmatic, verse: (Genesis 5:1) וְזֶה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדֹת אָדָם, בְּיוֹם בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם, בְּדִמְיוֹת אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֹתוֹ, *This is the book of the history of humankind.* On the day on which G-d created the human being, He formed him in the

likeness of G-d.

To place this verse into context, the Torah has just concluded the tragic narrative of Cain and Abel and recorded the descendants of Cain. The end of Genesis 4 records the birth of a third son to Adam and Eve, whose name is Seth. Genesis 5 tells of the descendants of Seth, and concludes with the birth of Noah. The words: **זֶה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדוֹת אָדָם**—this is the book of history of humankind, underscores that despite the vast differences between human beings, like Cain and Abel, we are all descended from the same source, and reflect the endowments of G-d, in whose image all humankind was created.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch notes that the word **סֵפֶר** (book) comes from the Hebrew word **לִסְפֹּר**—to count. This implies that although numerous items may be found and counted, all of G-d's creations eventually come together and are systemically connected to one other. Says Rabbi Hirsch, this verse teaches that “The whole history of humankind with its lowest depths and its loftiest heights which shows human beings in the most varied happenings, forms one whole...” and that due to our Divine endowment of freedom of will, a human being can “be higher than an angel... or [worse] than the devil.”

Interestingly, there is a major debate over this verse in the Jerusalem Talmud, tractate Nedarim, chapter 9. Rabbi Akiva is quoted as saying: **וְזֶה כְּלָל גְּדוֹל בְּתוֹרָה**, **וְזֶה כְּלָל לְרַעַף כְּמוֹךְ**, **וְזֶה כְּלָל גְּדוֹל מְזֵה**, Love thy neighbor as thyself (Leviticus 19:18)—this is a fundamental statement of the Torah. A lesser-known sage, by the name of Ben Azai, citing Genesis 5:1, declares, **זֶה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדוֹת אָדָם**, **זֶה כְּלָל גְּדוֹל מְזֵה**—This is the book of the history of humankind—is an even greater fundamental principle than loving your neighbor as yourself.

Were it not for this debate, the verse “Zeh sefer toldot adam,” would probably be rather obscure as verses go. After all, virtually the entire world knows the verse “Love thy neighbor as thyself,” which has become a fundamental principle of humankind. What then does the verse “Zeh sefer toldot adam,”—this book is the history of humankind, contribute to our understanding?

Some commentators suggest that this verse underscores that all of humankind comes from one set of parents, and that this family relationship is far more important than loving thy neighbor as thyself. After all, loving thy neighbor underscores the importance of emotional relationships such as neighborliness or friendship, whereas, “Zeh sefer toldot adam,” underscores the fact that we are all connected by blood,

and that we are all one family—literally brothers and sisters.

Expanding on his previous comments, Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch argues that Ben Azai's statement is far greater than R' Akiva's and far more comprehensive, because it underscores a much more significant and higher union of all humankind. Says Rabbi Hirsch, “This verse looks on the greatest criminal, the greatest degeneration, the greatest bestiality, all as **תּוֹלְדוֹת אָדָם**—all as developing out of one human being, the one creation in the likeness of G-d, all entered together in G-d's great book of the world in which He enters humankind.”

But perhaps, also, the verse “Zeh sefer toldot adam,” is a more significant verse because it is open to more far-reaching implications than “Loving thy neighbor as thyself.” The “book” that is referred to as “the history of humankind,” is the book that every person writes during his/her own lifetime. At the end of a person's days, that book is carefully reviewed. It is, after all, that book that determines the value of a person's life. It is not merely a single instance of loving a neighbor as oneself, or showing kindness to particular friends. It is an “accounting” that each person must give at the end of his/her days.

At the very end of a person's life, what does that person have to show? Only the good deeds, the meritorious acts, and the charitable gestures performed during one's lifetime. And even more significant than that, a person must show the **תּוֹלְדוֹת**—the disciples, the descendants the progenies that were produced. Are there “offspring” that have been nurtured to maintain the ethics and morals that the deceased had practiced? Has he/she left behind disciples and children who will follow in his/her footsteps?

In light of this, the comment of the philosopher Eliezer Berkovits, with respect to the controversy of “Who is a Jew?” becomes much more telling. “A Jew is not merely one who has a Jewish mother, or a Jewish father,” said Professor Berkovits. “A Jew is one who has Jewish grandchildren!” In effect, Berkovits declares that a Jew is one who has been able to transmit his/her Jewish values to succeeding generations.

Once again, we see how a seemingly minor, almost insignificant, verse takes on a world of meaning, enlightening us with revolutionary ideas about the value of human life.

As we, once again, start the annual cycle of the Torah reading, this verse serves as an early road mark indicating how much there will be to learn from the study of this sacred text.

# Am Yisrael's Right to the Land of Israel

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

Rashi's opening comments to the Torah likely comprise the most famous passage in his Torah commentary. He raises the question of why the Torah, which is our "constitution," our instruction manual for how to live our lives in accordance with Hashem's will, does not begin with the first mitzva given to Am Yisrael, the mitzva of kiddush ha'chodesh (לכם החודש הזה – Shemos 12:2). Why does the Torah begin with Sefer Bereishis, which tells the story of the world's creation, and of the lives of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov?

Rashi answers by citing the pasuk in Tehillim (111:6), כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו, לתת להם נחלת גוים – "He [God] told His nation about the power of His actions, in order to give them the share of other peoples." He explains that if the other nations challenge our right to Eretz Yisrael, and accuse us of stealing the land, we can point to the Torah, which makes it clear that Hashem created the entire world, and chose to give the special land of Eretz Yisrael to the Jewish People.

Throughout history – and certainly in our time – our nation's rights to Eretz Yisrael have been called into question. At the very beginning of Chumash, Rashi calls upon us to reaffirm our conviction that this land has been given to us. In fact, an entire sefer was written just for this purpose – so we can feel assured that we are entitled to Eretz Yisrael.

However, already the Ramban noted that Rashi's comments do not seem to explain the need for all the stories of the avos and imahos that are found in Sefer Bereishis. We understand the importance of telling us

about creation, but why was it necessary to tell us about the lives of our patriarchs and matriarchs?

The Slonimer Rebbe, in Nesivos Shalom, explains that we are given this information so we can learn about the kind of lives we are to live in Eretz Yisrael. The Land of Israel is inherently sacred, and can be inhabited only by people who conduct themselves in a manner that is harmonious with the values represented by the land. Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Toras Yisrael all go hand-in-hand. And so Sefer Bereishis tells us about the saintly conduct of our righteous forebears, which sets for us the example we need to follow of *derech eretz*, of living in a way that brings glory to Hashem. The Gemara (Avoda Zara 25a) refers to Sefer Bereishis as ספר הישר ("the Book of the Upright"), and the Netziv, in his introduction to Sefer Bereishis, explains that the lives of the avos and imahos as told in Sefer Bereishis provide us with a model of *yashrus*, of ethics and morality. They dispensed *chesed* even to those whose conduct they found objectionable. They lived among pagans, morally bankrupt people, but they nevertheless treated them kindly and compassionately. Sefer Bereishis thus reaffirms for us not only our rights to Eretz Yisrael, but the purpose for which we are given those rights – to build a just, moral, ethical society that creates a *kiddush Hashem*. If our patriarchs and matriarchs were kind and compassionate to the immoral people of their time, then certainly we, who live in a generally moral and civilized society, must conduct ourselves with integrity, dignity and generosity, and treat all people with kindness, thereby bringing glory to Hashem.

## Adom HaRishon and His Contemporaries – Soulless Humanoids

Dr. Harvey Babich

On a Friday morning, in the very late summer, 5782 years ago, HaShem, using the generative nature of soil, formed the first human being, Adom HaRishon (Sanhedrin 38b). As with all animals, Adom HaRishon was provided with a life-giving force, or *nefesh*. However, Adom HaRishon was unique among the animal kingdom, as he was given an additional spirit, a soul (*neshama*). "And HaShem God formed the man from dust of the ground, and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life

and man became a living being" (Bereishis 2:7).

At this point, it is customary to mention that the Torah may be understood on several levels (i.e., the 70 facets to the Torah (Bamidbar Rabba 12:15-16)) and, thus, the approach herein is acceptable, albeit, it may not be palatable, to all readers. This article presents a little discussed thought, that Adom HaRishon entered the world to find a preexisting society of primitive man, probably Cro-Magnon man. An important caveat is that primitive

man is described as a creature that is human-like in appearance, with intelligence, but lacking a neshama. This idea of soulless humanoids is found in Ramban (Guide for the Perplexed, chapter 1, part 7) and Teferes Yisrael (Rav Israel Lipschitz, see Drush Or HaHayyim), as well, as noted by Rav Shimson Schwab [1-3], Rabbi Ari Kahn [4], Rabbi Steven Pruzansky [5], and Dr. Gerald Schroeder [6, 7].

Ramban, as well as S'forno, noted the possibility of soulless humanoids. According to these sages, Adom HaRishon was developed in three stages, created initially as an entity formed from soil, with a force that produced growth "like that of a plant." Next, man was made animate, able to move.

Ramban continued that this primitive form of man had both the physical structure and the power of perception of a human. Lastly, this primitive man acquired a neshama, now achieving the status of a human being (Bereishis 1:26; 2:7). Apparently, according to Ramban and S'forno, it was possible to have a creature who appeared human, but who was not human, because of the lack of a neshama [see 6-8].

Adom HaRishon entered the world to find an abundance of life forms, both invisible to the naked eye (e.g., bacteria and protozoa) and visible to the unaided eye (e.g., multicellular plants and animals). At the apex of the animals were creatures, biologically classified as *Homo sapiens*, but different from Adom HaRishon (also biologically classified as *Homo sapiens*), as these pre-Adomites (i.e., prehistoric man) lacked a neshama. A cytological analysis of primitive pre-Adomites and Adam HaRishon would show that the somatic (body) cells of both contained 46 chromosomes and the gametes (egg and sperm) of both contained 23 chromosomes. Physically, there was no biological difference between the two, and interbreeding between Adom and Chavah and pre-Adomites was possible and produced fertile progeny. The difference between the two was spiritual - the pre-Adom HaRishon humanoids were "soulless" and, as such, are considered to be "animals," whereas Adom HaRishon and his descendants have a soul and are human beings.

It is important to note that, although these pre-Adomites, spiritually are "animals," there is a sufficient distinction between soulless humanoids and other traditional animals. Traditional animals lack a Yetzer Hara (an evil inclination) and their behavior is instinctual. Rav Samson Rapheal Hirsch (Bereishis 3:1), wrote that

"animals are endowed with instinct, which is the voice of God, the Will of God as it applies to them." Thus, a lion would not be punished for killing another animal nor for cohabitating with any female lion, even its daughter. Although the soulless pre-Adomites are viewed as "animals," they are at a higher intellectual level than what we traditionally refer to as an animal. Prehistoric man had a more complex brain, was able to discern right-from-wrong, had free will (as opposed to instinctual behavior), and functioned with reason and thought. Prehistoric man had sufficient intelligence [1-3] to follow basic principles of humanity (e.g., possibly, the Seven Universal Commandments, later to be known as the Seven Noahide Commandments). Their lack of adherence to the basic principles of humanity will eventually be the driving force for their destruction in the Flood.

Who were these soulless humanoids and when did they come upon the scene? According to one kabbalistic thought (as put forth by Teferes Yisrael) based on the Talmud Chagiga (13b, 14a), HaShem destroys (i.e., transforms) worlds and replaces them with more improved, more advanced worlds. Apparently HaShem orchestrates natural cataclysmic events – such as volcanic eruptions, movements of the tectonic plates, meteorites crashing into the planet – that destroy the world along with a large percentage of its inhabitants, both plants and animals [9]. Such a destructive event accounted for the sudden disappearance of dinosaurs from this planet, A giant asteroid crashed into this planet, launching more than 12,000 cubic meters of debris and material into the atmosphere, which blocked sunlight from reaching the planet, caused a winter that lasted for decades, and acidified the oceans. When the air cleared, three quarters of all species on Earth, including the dinosaurs, were dead [10]. The discovery of fossils of dinosaurs excited the Teferes Yisrael, as these artifacts confirmed the kabbalistic idea of an everchanging planet. The extinction of dinosaurs paved the way for mammals, including prehistoric man, to develop and to repopulate the transformed planet.

Teferes Yisrael suggested that the reason the Torah started with the Hebrew letter "bais," or the number two, was to hint that this present version of planet Earth is the second time in which *Homo sapiens* were at the apex of the animal kingdom. In the immediate prior version of planet Earth, the apex of humanity was represented by Cro-magnon man, the pre- Adomite soulless humanoids,

who replaced Neanderthal man (not classified as *Homo sapiens*). The Cro-magnon civilization was significant and extended from France to Ukraine and across northern Canada [6, 7]. Subsequently, the crown of humanity was replaced by Adom and Chavah, and their descendants became the dominant form of *Homo sapiens*.

Perhaps, the presence on the planet of prehistoric man was advantageous to Adom HaRishon and his descendants, as the world that Adom HaRishon entered had existing sociological and technological accomplishments that laid the groundwork for humanity to rapidly progress and advance. Rav Schwab [1-3] considered prehistoric man to be highly intelligent. Archaeological data note that prehistoric man practiced agricultural farming, animal husbandry, metal working, construction of complex shelters, and invented boats, weaponry, harpoons, bone needles, and tools. Other accomplishments included construction of personal adornments such as strings of beads, statuettes of bone and stone, cave art, and clothing, as well as a social system that included care for the infirm [11].

Modern day man, beginning with Adam and Chavah, and pre-historic man biologically are classified as *Homo sapiens*, thus, interbreeding between these two subspecies was possible, producing hybrid progeny. Eventually, different strata of people existed: (a) progeny resulting from intrabreeding between prehistoric man; (b) progeny tracing a direct lineage to Sheis (Seth, in English), the third son of Adam and Chavah, and (c) as will be discussed, hybrid progeny, resulting from interbreeding between human beings and prehistoric man. When the Flood came, most of humanity, i.e., human beings, prehistoric man, and hybrids, was wiped out.

The concept of soulless humanoids (prehistoric man), coexisting with human beings, may clarify several midrashim and touch upon one halacha (Kilayim 8:5). Below are some examples.

(1) Towards the end of the parshas Bereishis, the Torah enumerated the human lineage from Adom until Noach, and noted their life spans. Regarding Adom it stated: “When Adom had lived one hundred and thirty years, he begot in his likeness and his image, and he named him Sheis” (Bereishis 5:3). After expulsion from the Garden in Eden, Adom and Chavah physically separated from each other for 130 years and did not have intimate relations. When the estranged couple reunited, Sheis was born - in

the likeness and image of Adom. Why was it necessary to add that Sheis was in the “likeness” and “image” of Adom. Apparently, during their 130 years of separation, Adom and Chavah bore offspring who were not in their likeness – i.e., not human beings. There are many versions of the following midrash (Bereishis Rabba 20:11; also Eruvim 18b) -- during these 130 years of separation, Adom mated with female “demons” and produced hybrid offspring and Chavah mated with male “demons” and produced hybrid offspring. Rambam, a rationalist who did not believe in demons, explained this midrash as follows: Adom and Chavah mated with soulless humanoids, to produce hybrid progeny that lacked the image of God (The Guide for the Perplexed, 1:7) [7, 12].

(2) “And the man said, “This at last is the bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This shall be called ‘woman’ for from man was she taken” (Bereishis 2:23). Rashi, citing the Talmud Yevamos (63a), noted that from here we learn that Adom HaRishon, in search of the appropriate mate, was intimate with domesticated and wild animals, but was not fulfilled until matched with Chavah. Many commentaries rejected that this occurred. The Alshikh (Toras Moshe 2:19-20) suggested that Adom HaRishon merely entertained these possibilities in his mind and did not put them into action. The Maharal (Be’er HaGolah, fifth be’er) also put forth a nonliteral approach to this teaching [1]. Yet, Rashi clearly did state Adom HaRishon, in search for a mate, was intimate with animals. Rav Shimon Schwab [3] offered the more palatable suggestion that the “animals” with which Adom HaRishon mated were female Cro-Magnon soulless humanoids. Adom HaRishon found no psychological satisfaction with these relationships as these pre-historic females lacked a neshama.

(3) HaShem placed Adom HaRishon in the Garden in Eden, which housed the Tree of Knowledge, and commanded him not to eat from that tree, for on the day you eat from it, you will surely die (Bereishis 2:16, 17). Subsequently, Chavah is formed and later is seduced by a creature, the so-called “snake,” to eat a fruit from Tree of Knowledge (Bereishis: chapter 3). Why was the “snake” concerned that Chavah eat from the Tree of Knowledge? The “snake” had spied upon Adom and Chavah in a moment of intimacy and lusted for Chavah (Rashi, Bereishis 3:1). If the “snake” lusted for Chavah, why did it encourage her to eat from the Tree and die? The snake assumed that Chavah would serve her husband

first, as wives normally do (Gur Aryeh; Sifsei Chachamim) (Bereishis 3:6). With Adom dead, Chavah would be his to marry (Gur Aryeh). However, Chavah ate the fruit, and afterwards gave some to Adom and he ate from it (Bereishis 3:6). If Chavah was aware that consumption of the forbidden fruit carried the death sentence, why did she offer it to Adom? Rashi provided the rationale for Chavah's action, stating that she gave Adom the fruit so that if she alone died and he survived, he would then remarry. Rabbi Pruzansky [5] asked, "Marry, who?" there were no other human beings? He answered, Chavah was concerned that Adom would remarry a prehistoric Cro-magnon female.

(4) The identity of the seducer as a "snake" is problematic. This creature is described as a biped, walking upright (Rashi, Bereshis 3:14), with arms, communicating with speech and reasoning, and lusting after a human being. Snakes lack appendages, they slither and do not walk, they lack a larynx and cannot talk, and mate by instinct, not by lust. It is important to remember that the punishment was that this creature was transformed into a snake, not that it initially was a snake (Bereishis 3:14). Rav Schwab (2014) and Rabbi Kahn [1] suggested that this "snake" was a prehistoric Cro-magnon male, humanlike in appearance, capable of speech and reasoning, highly intelligent, and with a sexual desire directed for Chavah. This specific creature was the most intelligent of all the pre-Adomites (Sanhedrin 59b). In the Torah, this specific creature was described as, "Now the snake was cunning beyond any beast of the field that HaShem God had made" (Bereishis, 3:1); this specific prehistoric man was destined to be the king of the soulless humanoids, probably explaining its access into the Garden in Eden. There is a discussion (Sanhedrin 59b) of the intended purpose of the "snake." Apparently, that "snake" (i.e., that prehistoric Cro-magnon man) was intended to be the personal servant of Adom and Chavah, to be used to perform tasks beyond the capacity of other animals. If Adom and Chavah had not sinned, each Jew was to be given "two snakes" – to perform tasks too difficult for human beings, such as journeying to the frozen North or the scorched South to gather precious gems. In addition, these servants would handle agricultural issues involving soil (Maharsha, cited in the Artscroll edition of Sanhedrin 59b). This gemora is more understandable when viewed according to the Rav Schwab (2014) and Rabbi Kahn (2011) – that the above noted "snakes" were references to pre-historic man, who existed

in the time of Adom and Chavah.

(5) Upon killing Hevel, Kayin was punished to "become a vagrant and a wanderer on earth" (Bereishis 4:12). Worried about survival as a wanderer, Kayin complained to God, "I must become a vagrant and wanderer on earth, whoever meets me will kill me" (Bereishis 4:14). As a protective measure, HaShem "placed a mark on Kayin's forehead so that whoever encountered him would not kill him" (Bereishis 4:15). Of whom was Kayin afraid? Rashi suggested that Kayin was worried about attack from wild beasts. Most probably, wild animals would not discern a facial mark on Kayin's forehead as a warning sign from God. Maybe, that is why another opinion is that Kayin was given a ferocious dog to ward off attack from wild beasts. Upon leaving God's presence, Kayin "settled in the land of wandering ('nod'), east of Eden" (Bereishis 4:16). Rashi noted that the phrase, "the land of Nod," referred to anywhere Kayin would go, the earth would tremble beneath him and the people would say, "Keep away from him! He is the one who killed his brother!" (Bereishis 4:16), What people? At this point the only people were Adom, Chavah, their daughters, and Kayin and his wife. A possibility is that Rashi was referring to the soulless primitive humanoids.

(6) Kayin, cursed to wander, built a city, and named it after his son, Enoch (Bereshis 4:17). Did Kayin's small family need a city? A town? A village? A small cottage would have been sufficient. An obvious question is for whom was this city -- for his wife and one son? It is logical to assume that this city was constructed to be co-populated with prehistoric man. When the Flood came in the time of Noach, most of the descendants of Adom and Chavah and of the soulless humanoids were destroyed (Bereishis 22:22). The exceptions were Noach, his wife Naamah, and their three sons and three daughters-in law. Rabbi Kahn [1] made the interesting observation, that Noach was a direct descendent of Sheis (i.e., a human being; created in the image of God) whereas Naamah was a descendant of Kayin (i.e., a hybrid). Apparently, as we all are descendants of Noach and Naamah, all human beings of today are an admixture of humanoid and human DNA. As support for this theory, it is important to note that human chromosomal DNA of today has regions that match to DNA extracted from fossil bones of Neanderthal man. Specifically, the centromere of human chromosome #2 has sequences of nitrogenous bases that match with



Neanderthal man [13], a very early form of primitive man who emerged prior to, and mated with, Cro-magnon man.

In addition to the Noach family, seven pairs of kosher animals and a male and female of each non-kosher animal species entered the ark. These animals were spared to repopulate the world (Bereishis 7:14-16). As the soulless humanoids are defined as “animals,” a noncorrupted pair of Cro-magnon humanoids would be accepted into the ark to survive and subsequently to repopulate their species. This would explain how these creatures resurfaced in a Mishnah in Kilayim (8:5). The Mishnah in Kilayim discussed, if a person is under the same roof as a dead adnei ha-sadeh, does this corpse transmit tumah to the human. The question revolved around the halachic status of the corpse of an adnei hasadeh - was it a human corpse or was it a corpse of an animal? The Artscroll edition of Mishnah Kilayim provided a host of suggestions for the identity of the adnei hasadeh, including: a ferocious animal attached by an umbilical cord to the ground, a chimpanzee, an orangutan, a feral human, and a mountain man. Dr. Schroeder [7] and Rav Schwab [3] proposed that the adnei hasadeh was a prehistoric soulless humanoid, whose ancestors coexisted with Adom HaRishon. Dr. Schroeder [7] noted, “Recall that upon death, the neshama leaves the body. With the neshama now gone, there is no way of distinguishing a human corpse from the corpse of one of these beasts.” Rav Schwab suggested that the adnei hasadeh is the avnei hasadeh mentioned in sefer Iyov (5:23). In Iyov, Rashi described the avnei hasadeh as a humanoid lacking a neshama.

Rav Schwab [1-3] proposed that these prehistoric, primitive soulless humanoids are still alive - today. “It is very possible that some of them might even be alive today as uncivilized tribes in the jungles of the Amazon, or other remote areas of the world. These man-like creatures - who do not seem to be able to learn enough to advance out of the Stone Age - may not be descendants of Adom HaRishon; rather, they may be highly developed animals who can be as dangerous as wild beasts” [3].

In the Epilogue to his book, Genesis and the Big Bang, Dr. Schroeder [6] made some poignant remarks to the Orthodox Jewish reader. “For the Bible scholar, it is not an easy task to accept as reality that for the past 100,000 years there existed animals such as hominids and that the skeletons of these ancient animals are near replicas of those of modern man. But the fossil evidence is abundant and

irrefutable. It is folly, no it is counterproductive, to close one’s eyes to this fact.” He continued, “The existence of pre-Adam animals with shapes and intellect similar to humans was discussed 1,000 years by biblical sages, just as it has been discussed during the past 100 years by archeologists. The data are not a threat to either side.”

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