

מתוקים מדבש



Dei'ah, Binah and Haskel on the weekly parashah

RABBI MICHA BERGER

Bemachashavah Techilah

The language that the Torah uses to retell the story of the Tree of Knowledge is unique in a number of ways. The doubling of the name “*Hashem Elokim*,” used to address the A-lmighty, is used here repeatedly and once when Moshe addresses Paroh, but in no other place in the Torah. What is the significance of using both names, consistently using seemingly superfluous words, when one alone would be sufficient?

The verse says, “The woman [Chavah] said ‘the snake *hisi’ani*, made me err, and I ate it.’” “*Hisi’ani*”, is *hifil* (causative conjugation) of *nasa*, to carry. This is the only context in the Torah in which we find this word used in a non-physical sense (although it is found in the latter Nevi'im and in Tehillim). Why isn't a more straightforward expression used?

What was the nature of man before eating from the Tree of Knowledge? We know that Adam subsequently changed, for the verse says “The eyes of the two of them [Adam and Chavah] were opened, and they knew they were naked.”¹ Rashi² comments that the “opening of the eyes” should be taken to mean that they suddenly realized something new. The Or HaChaim³ explains that it is not that they had

not previously known that they were naked, but rather, they had seen nothing wrong about it.

On the other hand, the concept of choice between right and wrong seems to be fundamental to man's role in serving his Creator. The

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Rambam⁴ writes that man has free will only so that there is value to a good deed. Hashem only values our service because it comes from us, and not from the force of some law of nature. The ability to choose is fundamental to our purpose. But without knowledge of good or evil, how could Adam make a choice?

In Moreh Nevuchim, the Rambam writes that man always had free will; this is the meaning of being created “in the image of G-d”. However, before eating the fruit, the challenge in Adam's existence was to choose between truth and falsehood. The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil reduced him to working within the paradigm of good vs. evil.

⁴ Hilchos Teshuvah 5:1-4

R. Eliyahu Dessler writes⁵ that the difference between before and after man's sin was the internalization of the Evil Inclination. Before eating from the tree, Chavah had to be convinced by a snake to disobey G-d, and Adam in turn had to be convinced by Chava; neither would have sinned on their own. The snake, identified with the Satan, was instead of their evil inclination.

These two ideas merge quite beautifully.⁶ Before eating the fruit, man had no Evil Inclination. He had no motivation to sin. It was only the intervention of an outside force that lead him to sin. It was, therefore, the task of this outsider to convince man that what is in reality evil, is good. Then, man's job would be to ascertain the truth. Before the Fall, he only had a desire to do good, but that does not mean he always knew what good was. This is the Rambam's model of truth vs. falsehood.

The snake did not simply mislead Chavah the same way one who causes the masses today would. Today the misleader has help, everyone has some internal inclination to do what is wrong. At that time, Chavah did not yet have one.

For this reason, the Torah did not just use the word “*hitah*” - “made me err”, or “*hechta*” - “made

¹ Bereishis 3:7

² Ad loc.

³ Ad loc.

⁵ Michtav MeiEliyahu vol. 1, pg. 113 i.e. Kunterus HaBechirah sec. I, ch. 2

⁶ Ibid vol. pp. 139-140

me sin". The word used is "hisi'ani", "he made me get carried." Just as the object getting carried is moving through the volition of the carrier, here too, the jump from good to evil was that of the snake. The language is unique because the case was unique.

This idea of the difference between pre-sin and post-sin Adam might also explain why we find Hashem referred to as Hashem-Elokim.

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch relates the word "shem," name, with the word "sham," there, since both have the same spelling, *shin mem*. Both are used to reference to an object. Thus, he translates "shem" as not only name, but also perception. When we talk about the "Name of G-d", we mean our perceptions of Him.

Since it is impossible for man to comprehend G-dliness, when we talk about G-d's attributes we can only talk about our perception of them⁷. When we talk about His Mercy, Wrath, and Justice, we really mean the Hashem's behavior looks similar to what we would do

⁷ Moreh Nevuchim 1:58, Kuzari 2:2 onward

when we fell mercy, anger, just, etc...⁸ In reality all of G-d's actions are a product of His goodness.⁹

The name "Hashem" is used in the Thirteen Divine Attributes.¹⁰ It is used to refer to the Almighty when He is showing Divine Mercy. The name "E-lokim" is an expression of Divine Justice.¹¹

In reality, though, G-d does not change moods or attitudes. He is timeless, and therefore cannot be subject to change. He is also above such human frailties as emotions. This is because, as Rav Hirsch and the Rambam suggest, these names describe how we perceive Hashem, not His unknowable reality.

We teach our children that Hashem is in heaven, and at the same time that He is everywhere. That He is remote and unreachable, and also that He is always nearby, available when we need Him. Imminent and yet Transcendent. If either sentence would be presented to most of us separately, we would agree to either. This dichotomy is

⁸ Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 1:11

⁹ Emunos VeDei'os ch. 3

¹⁰ Shemos 34:6

¹¹ Rashi, Bereishis 1:1

not G-d's but man's. He is near us, for we have a spark of the divine. Yet He is also remote, for we have an inclination to serve our baser selves.

At a time when man has no internalized evil, he can understand the unity of Hashem's actions. When Adam and Chavah ate the fruit, they diminished in their perception of G-d. Once they had a conflict of desires, the idea of a Being who was totally one of purpose was forever closed to them.

The name of G-d understandable by pre-sin Adam was Hashem-Elokim, a unified view. Adam and Chavah could understand to a greater extent than we can that the apparent contradictions: justice vs. mercy, imminence vs. transcendence, are just that, apparent.

When the day comes that the world will once again be unified to one purpose, "and all the children of the flesh will call in your name" as we say in Aleinu, we are promised a restoration of this closer relationship with Hashem. "And Hashem will be accepted as King over all the earth; on that day Hashem will be One, and His Name will be one."

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Bakeish Shalom

Numerous purposes are given in the Torah for the creation of the sun, moon and stars (Bereishis 1:14-15 and 1:17-18). One of them, "to differentiate between the light and the darkness" (verse 18), is very puzzling. After all, the sun and stars (and by extension, the moon) are the sources of the light, so how can they be described as the vehicles through which we determine what is "light" and what is "dark?"

Although another purpose given is "to differentiate between the day

and the night" (verse 14), and they determine which is "day" and which is "night" (see Rashi's explanation for the word "and for days" in the same verse), the Rashbam explains that we know when each day starts and ends from sunrise and sunset (and when the stars come out). Therefore, they do, in effect, help us differentiate between "day" and "night." And while the Rashbam explains the other verse the same way, why would the Torah need to tell us this twice, and why would it

change from "day" and "night" to "light" and "dark?"

Also deserving a closer look are the terms "heaven" and "earth" used in the first verse. If G-d created "heaven" and "earth" on the first day, how are we told that the sky ("rakiya") was called "heaven," when it was created on the second day! And the dry land that appeared on the third day is called "earth," even though we were told about how "empty" and "void" the "earth" was on the first day. Were "heaven"

and “earth” created on the first day, or the second and third days?

There are two parts of creation, the physical and the spiritual. Everything that G-d created can be put in one of these categories, with the exception of humans. Each person has both a physical body and a spiritual soul. The world was created to give man the opportunity to use the physical, tangible aspects of creation to raise his (or her) spirituality; to develop and nourish the soul. It follows, therefore, that this would be alluded to in the very first verses of the Torah.

“Heaven,” in the first verse, can be said to refer to all things spiritual, while “earth” refers to everything that is physical. “In the beginning, G-d created everything that is spiritual and everything that is physical.” But they were two separate entities, and because the “earth” was devoid of any spirituality, it was covered in “darkness.” Even though G-d’s “spirit” was hovering right over the “earth,” there was no means for the physical part of creation to connect to the spiritual part. G-d therefore said, “let there be light,” i.e. a way to allow the physical to reach the spiritual.¹

¹ See Megillah 16a, where the verse “For the Jews there was light” (Esther 8:16) is explained as their having “Torah,” and Mish-

This theme continues on the second day, as spirituality is given the ability to “spread” (the literal definition of “*rakiya*”) to the physical creation. Just as man has the ability to choose between developing his spirituality or focusing on his physical, animal-like body, the “*rakiya*” separated between the “waters above it” (i.e. those that use material

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things for spiritual purposes) and those “below it.” By instilling spirituality into something physical, we allow it to also be called “spiritual” (“heaven”). It is up to each individual to choose the spiritual over the physical, to make use of the physical for spiritual purposes.

However, it is not always easy to differentiate between what is good and what is not. Not everything appears as “black and white;” often times there are “gray” areas. But if you put gray under a microscope, you can see how it is made up of a lot of little black and white

lei 6:23, “for a candle is [representative of] a mitzvah, and Torah is light.”

dots. From afar it looks gray, but in reality it too is just a finer form of black and white. The trick is to get close enough, or obtain enough magnification, to be able to differentiate the “black” from the “white” inherent in every “gray” area.

Additionally, it is rather easy to see “light” during the day, to find ways to grow spiritually in a spiritual environment. We also need to be able to find the “nuggets” of “light” when it is dark, to find the spiritual potential in each and every situation. These ideas can be learned from the “heavenly lights,” as the dark night sky contains stars that can be as bright as our sun. It may seem

dark at first, but if you look long enough, and carefully enough, you can differentiate the light from, and see the light contained within, the darkness. This might be what the Torah is teaching, by telling us-- after mentioning the stars (and not just after describing the sun and moon)-- that they can help us differentiate between “light” and “dark.”

As we begin reading (and learning) the Torah again, let us take the opportunity to gain from the lessons contained within it, and continue our spiritual journey through the physical world.

RABBI MICHA BERGER

Sefasai Tiftach

The first verse of *Shema* is often described as a doxology, a summary of our faith.

“Hear Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One.” When asked to explain the concept, it is natural to gloss over the first two words, seeing the call for Yisrael to listen as merely an introductory clause.

The community is an essential part of *tefillah*. Nearly all of our *tefillos* are phrased in the plural. (According to the Vilna Gaon, all *tefillos* are in the plural. Prayers written in the singular are not *tefillos* but rather *techinos*, a different kind of prayer.)

The Arizal requires that one must precede *tefillos* with an accep-

tance of the obligation to love one’s neighbor as oneself. Many *siddurim* include a formal declaration to this effect, either before “*Modeh Ani*” or “*Baruch SheAmar*”. The Arizal even writes that without this acceptance, one’s *tefillos* are powerless. He finds a hint to this in Joseph’s brothers’ words, “*Mah betza* – What is the purpose if we kill our

brother?”¹ “Betza” can be taken to be an acronym of “*boker, tza-harayim, erev* – morning, noon, evening,” a reference to the three *tefillas* of the day. In which case, their words reads, “What are our thrice daily *tefillas* if we are capable of killing our brother?”²

This is most evident in the notion of praying with a *minyan*. According to Rav Chaim Brisker, there are two distinct functions to the concept of a *minyan*: every individual’s *Shemoneh Esrei* gains the attribute of being a *tefillah betzibur*, praying within a community, and the Chazan’s repetition is a *tefillas hatzibur*, the prayer of the community as a corporate entity.³

Similarly, Mo’adim UZemanim⁴ identifies three categories of prayer. The lowest is *tefillas yachid*, the individual’s prayer. Beyond that is *tefillah betzibur* and highest, *tefillas ha-tzibur*. In the *Beis HaMikdash* the kohen, as an agent of the nation, brought one *korban tamid*, one of the “continual offerings” brought twice daily, for the entire nation.

¹ Bereishis 37:26

² Pardes Yosef

³ Repeatedly cited by R’ J.B. Soloveitch. See, for example, R’ Herschel Schachter, *Nefesh HaRav* pg. 123

⁴ Yom Tov ch. 31

The *korban tamid* parallels the *tefillas hatzibur*. This is why the blessing of the *kohanim*, taken from the service in the *Beis HaMikdash*, is inserted into the *chazan*’s repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei*, but not in the silent recitation.

The first two words, “Shema Yisrael,” are not simply an introduction; they are an essential part of the declaration of faith. To be an adherent of Judaism is to call out Shema, to realize that belief in G-d cannot remain a private and personal endeavor.

Saying *Shema* is called “*keri’as Shema*”. *Shema* is not merely said, it is a calling to others. We can phrase this ideal in terms as parallels to these three categories of prayer. The unity and uniqueness of G-d is not merely something one must do for oneself, or even for oneself as part of the Jewish People. Rather, it’s the mission of the Jewish people as a whole.

At the *Pesach sider*, the evil son asks, “What is this service work for you?” The Haggadah notes that he phrases it “for you”, and not “for us”, commenting, “Since he excluded himself from the community, he denied an article of faith.” Our

roles within the greater whole are part of the doxology.

We learn the laws of conversion from Rus’s example. She accepts the *mitzvos* when she tells Naomi, “Your nation is my nation, and your G-d is my G-d.”⁵ Becoming a Jew is not becoming a solitary believer of G-d or even solely becoming a member of a community of believers. Rather, it’s recognition of one’s role as part of the community.

In *Shema* we declare the unity of the perceptions of G-d as Hashem and as E-lokim. As we noted above⁶ this unified perception slipped away when Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge. As individuals, our ability to truly embrace the unity and uniqueness of Hashem E-lokeinu is limited. The ideal can only be implemented and made manifest by the Jewish People as a whole.

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⁵ Rus 1:16

⁶ BeMachshavah Techilah, this issue

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