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Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

What is the most distinctive feature of the human being which sets him/her apart from the animal world and places humanity in a sui generis, unique position in this very complex universe in which we live? The philosopher Descartes taught, "Cogit, ergo sum," "I think, therefore I am," suggesting that it is the gift of intelligence which is humanity's most vital possession; my revered teacher Rav J.B. Soloveitchik once maintained that it is the human ability - and necessity - to take responsibility for his/her own life as well as for the lives around him/her which is the most important aspect of the human personality. But it is Aristotle's definition which I believe is closest to the Biblical outlook when he describes the human being as a social animal, or an animal which has the ability to communicate with others.

I would like to begin my analysis of this most significant aspect of the human character with a fascinating commentary of R. Isaac Abrabanel (15th Century Spain). This week's portion of Bereishit, the renewal of our yearly cycle of Biblical readings, tells the story of the Creation of Adam, the first human being, and from Adam's very essential self, Eve. "And the Lord G-d caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and he slept; and He took one of his sides and closed up the flesh beneath it," thereby fashioning the first woman (Genesis 2:21). What follows this account (in Chapter 3 of Genesis) is the fall of man and woman with their sin of eating the fruit of the tree of Knowledge of good and evil - without any record of conversation between them either before or after they succumb to temptation. Indeed, Adam only voices recriminations against the "woman whom you gave to me, she gave from the tree and I ate" (Genesis 3:12). And at this point we are told of the punishment meted out by G-d to the first man and woman, and then to the serpent.

Adam then continues his task of naming the various creatures in the world: "And Adam called the name of his wife Havah, because she is the mother of all human beings." Now the Hebew hay means life, but havah may well be from a similar but nevertheless somewhat different root word; the Abrabanel suggests that hvh means a communicator, a woman of words, as we find in Psalm 19:3 ("Night unto night communicates-yehaveh - knowledge); in Job (36:2) and even in our modern usage of the Hebrew mahvah as a verbal gesture of good-will. And clearly hay (life) and havah (communication) are inter-related linguistically and ideationally if indeed the essence of human life is the ability to communicate.

The inter-relationship between these two ideas is likewise to be found in an earlier verse in our Torah portion: "And the Lord G-d formed the human being (Adam) dust from the earth, and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;' the human being then became a nefesh hayah, or a living soul " (Gen 2:7. The image depicted in the Bible is very different from that of Michelangelo's portrait of the creation of man in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, where he painted the hand of G-d (as it were) touching the hand of the first human being, finger to finger. Apparently Michelangelo, a genius sculptor and painter, felt his creativity in his fingers and transfixed that power-in-the-hand to the Divine as well.

But such is not the Biblical image, which is far more profound. In the words of the Sacred Zohar, cited in the first chapter of the Tanya of Rav Shneur Zalman of Liady, founder of Habad (Lubavitch) Hassidism, "Anyone who exhales, exhales from the essence of his innermost being." Hence, G-d's breathing into dust of the earth in his Creation of the human being is tantamount to saying that there resides in the deepest recesses of every human being a portion of the Divine from on high, a spark of G-d Himself. This is the eternal aspect of the human being which can never be subject to death or destruction; this is the part of the human personality which enables him/her to create, to love, to transcend him/herself. Targum Onkelos, the early and accepted Aramaic translation - interpretation of the Bible written by a righteous proselyte who was a leading disciple of Rabbi Akiba, translates the concluding two words of the verse, nefesh haya , as ruah memalela, a speaking or communicating spirit. Apparently Targum understood the internal connection between human life (hayah) and human speech (havah), two very closely allied verb and noun forms.

No wonder then that the part of the human organism which allows for speech, the larynx, is anatomically connected to the part of the human organism which enables us to breathe, the trachea. Human speech and communication is a direct out-growth of the breath of the Divine, which informs every human being, which enables him/her to live (the breath

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of life), and which defines him/her as a shadow or image of G-d (tselem E-lohim). And it is precisely because each and everyone of us has within him/her self a spark of the Divine that each and everyone of us is related to each other in an inextricable bond of unity; the part of G-d within us all truly makes us all part of the One and part of each other.

And if we are related to each other, we must relate (communicate) to each other as loving relatives, as part of one greater organism of G-d and humanity united. This is the deepest meaning of the verse, "you must love your neighbor like yourself, I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19). Since G-d is part of each of us, we are all part of each other, and must therefore communicate with each other in love. Unless we learn and practice this, there is no future for humanity.

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The Torah covers quite a bit of ground in a very short period of writing in this week's first parsha of the Torah. The ten generations from Adam to Noach are dispatched of without too much detail or description. The Torah in its entire narrative does not spend effort to inform us of the particularities of the lives of many of the people that it mentions. The Torah instead concentrates on detailing the lives of the people whose lasting moral impression on humankind was so great that they live on throughout the generations.

The Torah in fact comes to teach us the great lesson of opportunities granted and either frittered away or positively exploited. The Torah obliquely mentions our father Avraham already at the beginning of its narrative even though he will not appear in real life for another twenty generations. The Torah thereby points out to us the truism that our rabbis in Avot stated, that Avraham exploited his opportunity for spiritual greatness and received the reward of all of the preceding generations while those people preceding him did not, either out of passivity or willfulness.

The lesson here is obvious. In every generation, each and every person, has an opportunity to enhance spirituality and morality in the world. It is those that exploit this opportunity that the Torah details and expands upon. They are the true builders of civilization and goodness in G-d's world. The Torah slows down, so to speak, to enable us to analyze their lives and deeds and to draw conclusions from this to apply to our own lives.

The length of life of the people that the Torah mentions in this week's parsha is also astounding. Centuries on end did they live and yet apparently they had very little accomplishment to show for all of those years. Though length of life is certainly an important factor in one's own life, apparently it is not the most important factor.

There are those who accomplish much in a relatively short time and those who leave little inspiration behind them after living many decades. King Solomon in Kohelet makes note that even if a person lived a thousand years that would not be a guarantee that a productive and meaningful life took place.

We are bidden by Moshe in his famous psalm to "count our days in order to bring forth a wise heart." The phrase can certainly be understood to mean that one should attempt to make one's days count as well. Our father Avraham is described as having come to his old age with his days in his hand. Time is a precious commodity and squandering it is one of our foolish and self-defeating habits.

Adam is criticized by the Midrash not only for his original sin and expulsion from the Garden of Eden but for withdrawing morosely from life for so many long decades thereafter. Avraham is complimented for being active and vital even till his last days on earth. The attitude of Judaism towards life is to make it meaningful and elevating, productive and noble. It is for this purpose that we were in fact created.

Please accept my best wishes for a happy and healthy winter (in the northern hemisphere) season.

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

While some maintain that the human being is only physical form, the Torah, in one of its most important sentences, insists that every person is also created in the image of G-d-tzelem Elokim (Genesis 1:26,27). On the surface we see each others' outward appearance, but if we look deeply, we ought be able to perceive a little bit of G-d in our fellow human being. In fact, it is the tzelem Elokim which makes the human being unique. In the words of Pirke Avot, "beloved is the human being who is created in the image of G-d." (Avot 3:18) Several fundamental ideas emerge from the tzelem Elokim principle. Bearing in mind that each and every human being is created with tzelem Elokim, it follows that all people-regardless of

race, religion, nationality, age, mental faculties, handicap, etc.-are of equal value.

Human beings can relate to G-d "vertically" and "horizontally." In the sense that we have the capacity to reach upwards to the all powerful G-d through prayer and ritual, we relate vertically. Additionally, when we relate to our fellow person, we connect to that part of G-d in them. If one hurts another human being, G-d is hurt. Similarly, if one brings joy to another, G-d is more joyous. Hence, a horizontal relationship exists as well.

No matter how far one strays, one has the potential to return to the inner G-dliness we all possess-which is, of course, good.

Even if a person holds him/herself in low esteem, he/she ought have self confidence. After all, G-d is in each of us. G-d, as the ultimate creator has given us the capacity to be endlessly creative - adding an important ingredient to our self-esteem.

As G-d is omnipresent, so too do people created in the image of G-d have the inner desire to reach beyond themselves. We accomplish this by developing lasting relationships with another. In that sense, one's presence is expanded. Similarly, as G-d is eternal, we, created in the image of G-d have the instinctual need to transcend ourselves. This need is met by raising children. Unlike animals, human beings are uniquely aware of historic continuity.

The image of G-d points to life after death. As G-d lives forever, so too does the part of G-d in us, our soul, live beyond our physical years. Of course, it must be remembered that tzelem Elokim does not mean that every human being is automatically good. Image of G-d is potential. If properly nurtured, it takes us to sublime heights. If abused, it can sink us to the lowest depths. Hence the words ki tov, found after every stage of creation, are not recorded after the human being is formed. Whether we are tov depends on the way we live our lives; it is not endowed at birth.

And, the mystics add, that when we live our lives properly, the image of G-d in each of us merges with the omnipresent G-d to become One-Ehad. The tzelem Elokim is an eternal spark. Whether it is lit is up to us. *Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

This Shabbos is a very special Shabbos, for it commemorates G-d's creating the world in six days and "resting" on the seventh. Okay, okay *every* Shabbos is special for that very reason, as we testify that G-d created the world when we refrain from work every seventh day. But this week we read (and learn) Parashas Beraishis, focusing our thoughts even more on "ma'aseh beraishis," the creation story.

Towards the end of the Parasha the generations from Adam till Noach are listed, providing us part of the information needed to calculate that this is the 5767th year since Adam was created. And, being that he was created on the sixth day, it would follow that this is also the 5767th year since creation. Yet, science has several means of measuring the age of the universe, putting the date of creation billions of years ago rather than thousands. This topic has generated much discussion in recent years, with numerous approaches given to deal with this discrepancy.

There are those who just ignore the issue by dismissing science as a moving target, not to be trusted, and therefore presenting no challenge to our tradition. While there may have been things that "scientists" once believed that have since been "disproved," it is difficult for many to dismiss today's more advanced scientific techniques, especially since the commentators have traditionally tried to explain how the Torah is consistent with the philosophy and/or science of their times. After all, if the goal of science is to discover the truth, and religion is the manifestation of the truth, they should (eventually) meet.

Others avoid the issue by differentiating between how old things appear to be and how old they actually are. For example, their answer to the famous question "which came first, the chicken or the egg" would be the chicken. This is supported by a statement by Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi in the Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 11a) that everything was created in their full height (etc.), i.e. complete. So when G-d created the chicken, it was an adult chicken (not an egg or even a chick). If you could somehow take this just-created chicken to a scientist, he or she would examine it and confidently proclaim that this chicken is a few years old. And, by all objective measurements, it would be, except that G-d created it to appear that way even though it is really only a few hours old. The same applies to the rest of creation as well. If a newly created tree would be cut down, numerous rings would be found in its trunk. The rings serve no purpose except for the tree being created as if it were years old, and a years-old tree has rings. Had this tree actually grown from a seed into a sapling and then into a tree, it would have had these rings, so it was given them when it was created as a full-grown tree.

Taking this a step further, the earth was also created as an "adult" earth, as if it had been formed naturally, including rocks that, when tested, test as millions of years old, and containing the remains of species that would have existed and become extinct. Not just in the animal kingdom (such as dinosaurs), but for mankind as well. If an "adult" earth would have had humanoid civilizations before the conditions were ideal for the first "real" man-the first humanoid with a divine soul-i.e. Adam, then the created earth will contain evidence of them as if they had actually existed. In

short, there would be absolutely no difference between a world that evolved into what it is now and one that was created as if it had, expect for how long it took, in real time, to get to this point-six days or billions of years. Evidence of a world billions of years old is therefore not a contradiction to saying that that it is really only thousands of years old.

These approaches both understand each day of creation to be standard 24-hour days. This would seem to be consistent with the Radak, who says (Beraishis 1:3) that for the first twelve hours of the first day the lower part of the world (the sky and earth) was dark, then G-d said "let there be light," causing the light to have an effect (below) for 12 hours, constituting "one complete day of 24 hours."

Another approach was put forth by Professor Nathan Aviezer ("In the Beginning: Biblical Creation and Science"), who suggests that the word "day" does not literally mean a 24-hour time period, but a stage in the process of creation. There were 6 "stages" of creation, rather than 6 days of creation; Professor Aviezer details how each stage described in the Torah precisely matches the way scientists understand the formation of the universe. If the six days of creation are not limited to actual days, most of our issue is resolved, as creation *ended* 5767 years ago, but could have begun billions of years before that.

Included in this approach is the notion that evolution occurred during these stages of creation. This should not be considered contradicting the notion of creation, as evolution is only the means through which G-d created and formed the world. As a matter of fact, the Midrash (Beraishis Rabbah 3:7) may even be alluding to evolution when it tells us that G-d "created worlds and destroyed them, until He created ours." As the Maharzo explains it, "this wasn't [G-d] changing His mind (originally wanting one type of world then deciding He didn't so created another type), but a means of refinement until the world came out the way it is now so that it can last."

It should also be pointed out that this approach does not contradict the Talmud's saying that everything was created complete (rather than evolving), as the Talmud's proof-text that everything was complete is 2:1, i.e. by the time creation as a whole was complete (and the seventh day started) everything that was created was full and complete. In other words, there was no further evolution necessary after the first six days, not that everything was fully complete from its very first moment of existence.

As an aside, I have heard it suggested that the "taninim hagedolim," the giant reptiles created on the 5th day (1:21) refers to the dinosaurs. It may seem awkward for the Torah to mention a species that became extinct before man came on the scene, unless the Levyasan, which is what Chazal (Bava Basra 74b) tell us is meant, was part of the species.

As far as the appearance of human civilizations thousands of years prior to the traditional date given for Adam, Professor Aviezer ("Fossils and Faith," pg. 49) suggests that the creation of man described in Beraishis 1 refers to Modern Man, and specifically the Agricultural (or Neolithic) Revolution that occurred 10,000 years ago, while Adam's creation in Beraishis 2 refers to the individual, upon whom our counting of years is based. I'm not sure how this answers the question, unless he is suggesting that there were advanced humanoids that were still part of the evolutionary process and therefore considered "man" from a creation standpoint but not from a "first real man with a divine soul" perspective. The notion that there could be humanoids that were not descendants of Adam should not be completely foreign (see Rabbeinu Bachye on 5:2), and it is theoretically possible that, after the "form" of man had evolved to the ideal state, G-d then "breathed a divine soul" into the appropriately evolved one (see Sefornu on 1:26 and 2:7).

The main thrust of Professor Aviezer's thesis, however, is that the six "days" of creation were not really 24-hour days, but six stages of creation. This would seem to be consistent with the Radak, who says (1:5) that "the Torah used the expression 'and it was evening and it was morning' on each of the six days of creation because each of these days had a unique aspect [of creation]." He doesn't say that each is referred to as its own day because they each were a 24-hour period, but because each was its own stage of creation.

But wait a minute! Didn't the Radak say earlier that each day *was* 24 hours? If each day was a standard 24-hour period, why does he need to explain why each was referred to as a "day?" It was *called* a day because it *was* a day! Before attempting to answer this apparent contradiction in the Radak, let's examine one more approach to resolving the discrepancy in the amounts of years since creation.

In "Genesis and the Big Bang" (pgs. 27-54), Dr. Gerald L. Schroeder shows how time is not constant, but (based on Einstein's theory of relativity) is flexible depending on differences in gravitational pull. In short, if two time pieces (that kept completely accurate time) were brought to two different places in the universe, kept there for a period of time, and then compared, they wouldn't necessarily show the same time, as time may have moved faster in one place and slower in the other. He says (pg 47) that this has even been proven on commercial airline flights. (Dr. Schroeder presents a further discussion of this theory in "The Science of G-d," pgs. 41-71.)

Since time does not move at the same pace everywhere, Dr. Schroeder suggests that the six days of creation did last six literal days at one spot in the universe (or from a universal, or G-d's, perspective) while taking 15 billion years at another (i.e. our solar

system). This is backed up by a kabbalistic source that implies that time as we know it didn't start until the transition was made from the sixth day to the seventh (1:31 and 2:1, where the first letters of the words "yom hashishi vayachulu hashamayim" spell out G-d's name). Before then, the "clock" was based elsewhere, where six days had passed, even though billions of years had passed locally.

Perhaps this would explain how both of the Radak's statements are true. The Torah called each day a "day" because each was a unique stage in creation. However, the Torah would not use the term "day" to describe each stage unless it was literally a day as well. Therefore, the Radak tells us that each stage did take 24 hours, at least from G-d's perspective.

The bottom line, however, is that it is irrelevant whether G-d created the world as an adult world (mimicking what evolution would have done had He created the world that way) or actually used evolution as a tool in creation. The result is exactly the same, and by the time Adam enters the scene all is prepared and ready for him. Does it really matter if it took six days or 15 billion years? G-d is outside the boundaries and constraints of time, so they're both the same to him, and Adam wasn't around yet! This much is clear from the story of creation: G-d created the world for man to fulfill his specific mission. It is up to us to make the most of the time and resources G-d has provided us to accomplish it.

RABBI LEVI COOPER

For Pity's Sake

The Rabbi of Pezinok, nowadays in Slovakia, once guided a prospective convert through the process of becoming a Jew, in contravention of local laws that forbade conversion without governmental license (retold in Hemed Shlomo). The prospective convert completed the process, leaving only his circumcision to finalize his new status.

Alas, following the circumcision the flow of blood could not be stemmed and the unfortunate convert found himself in tremendous pain. Because the conversion was illegal a qualified doctor could not be called lest the authorities hear of the crime. A great fear settled on the Jewish community and no one knew what to do.

The rabbi decided that he and the convert would quickly travel to the great Hatam Sofer (1762-1839) and seek the scholar's counsel. Upon arrival in Pressburg, the Hatam Sofer heard their tale and sadly told them, "I have no advice for you. The only course is for the two of you to travel to the Duna River and drown yourselves for the sake of G-d's name."

The poor convert and rabbi heard the suggestion of the Hatam Sofer and decided that they had no choice. On the way to their death, after they had covered a considerable portion of the distance, they met an elderly man who warned them, "Where are you going? It is dangerous here! The river is wild and may sweep you to your death!" After repeated inquiries, the duo eventually told the elderly man why they had come to the area.

"You need not take that recommendation, for I am an expert circumciser and I have a powder that when thrown at the wound slows the blood and prevents the pain." Immediately the old man took the powder and the convert's throbbing subsided.

Naturally the rabbi and the convert wanted to thank their kind helper and offer to take him to his destination. Yet, when they turned, they realized that he had disappeared. Their conclusion was obvious - it must have been Elijah the prophet who attends every circumcision!

They hurried back to the Hatam Sofer's house to tell of their miraculous salvation. They reported the entire episode and then the Rabbi asked: "Why did you need to command us to go and throw ourselves in the river, couldn't you have sent Elijah straight to our town?"

The Hatam Sofer jumped up, "Do you think that without self-sacrifice Elijah would appear to you?! Only once you demonstrated your willingness to go beyond your human limits to sanctify the name of G-d, can you hope for a miraculous appearance by Elijah."

The Hatam Sofer's admonition is the thrust of a talmudic exchange (B. Berachot 20a). Rav Pappa asked Abaye, "Why do we not merit miracles as did earlier generations?"

Abaye responded, "Earlier generations sacrificed themselves to sanctify G-d's name. Having gone beyond what was required of them, they could ask the Almighty to transcend the boundaries of nature and perform miracles for them."

The idea that we need to show a willingness to transcend our own boundaries before we can expect Divine assistance is a theme that runs through much of our literature.

The Mishna details ten wonders that occurred in the Temple (M. Avot 5:5). In this list we find that during the thrice yearly pilgrimage to Jerusalem, when the Temple courtyard would be packed, people stood tightly pressed together. Yet when they bowed down, miraculously they prostrated themselves with ease.

We can ask: Why not miraculously let them stand with ease as well? Once the throngs of people were willing to stretch their own comfort boundaries for the opportunity of standing in the courtyard of the Temple, the borders of that physical space expanded to grant them more room.

In a similar vein we find the recently freed Jewish People standing at the edge of the Reed Sea with the Egyptian soldiers charging behind them, crying out to G-d for assistance in this dire predicament. The

Almighty responds to Moses' entreaties, "Why are you crying out to me. Speak to the Children of Israel and they should travel!" The raging sea, however, doesn't split until Nahshon courageously enters the waters and are about to engulf him (Exodus 14:15; B. Sota 37a). Again we see that for Divine assistance we need to take that first extraordinary step.

A final tale (Kohelet Rabba 1:1): Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa saw his fellow townspeople taking various offerings to Jerusalem, "Everyone is taking offerings up to Jerusalem, but I take nothing?"

With this in mind he went to the empty lands outside the city and found a rock. He chipped it, chiseled it and polished it, and proclaimed: "Behold I take upon myself to take it up to Jerusalem!"

Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa then sought to hire workers to transport the stone and five men chanced to come his way. The workers agreed to lug the boulder for a significant charge. The sage, however, did not have such a sum on him and the workers moved on.

Hiding their identity, five angels appeared and made a similar offer Though they did not demand immediate payment they had an added stipulation, "On condition that you bear some of the weight." To be sure, the angels could have conveyed the stone without assistance. Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa accepted the offer, placing his hand beneath rock.

When they reached Jerusalem, Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa looked for the workers to pay their wages but they were no where to be found. His repeated inquiries led the sages to the conclusion that angels had carried his stone.

We often wish for supernatural intervention, magical salvation that defies the course of nature, yet a question we may pose to ourselves is: Are we willing to go beyond our own limits, to act in ways that defy how we define ourselves, transcending the contours of our self-image for the sake of the One from who we are requesting assistance? People who are unwilling to depart from their preconceived boundaries cannot expect G-d to stray from the natural boundaries of this physical world.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

When the Almighty put the man that he had created into the Garden of Eden, He gave him only one prohibition, together with the punishment: "Do not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, for on the day that you eat from it you will die" [Bereishit 2:17]. And Chavah repeated this warning to the serpent. "And from the fruit of the tree in the garden G-d said, do not to eat it or touch it, lest you die" [3:3]. The only one who voiced doubts about the punishment was the serpent, "You shall not die" [3:4]. As we all know, Adam violated the prohibition and ate from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. However, surprisingly, he was not punished by death but rather by being banished from the Garden and by the need for hard labor in order to obtain his food. Why was man in fact not punished by death? Was the serpent right?

Many answers have been given to this question (three of them by the Ramban). One of the answers is that mankind was indeed punished by death for the sin of eating from the tree, as G-d said to Adam: "You shall eat bread with the sweat of your brow, until you return to the earth, since you were taken from there. For you are dust, and you shall return to dust." [3:19]. However, it is not at all clear from this verse that if Adam had not sinned he would never have returned to dust, since the emphasis in the verse is on the fact that hard labor will be needed in order to eat bread during his life. In addition, further on G-d expresses a fear "lest he stretch out his hand and take from the Tree of Life, eat, and then live forever" [3:22]. This certainly implies that eating from the Tree of Life is the only way to achieve eternal life. If there was no death for man before the sin in the Garden of Eden, why was a Tree of Life necessary at all?

Thus, it seems that man's punishment was limited, even though according to the strict law he should have been put to death. Why was the punishment made more lenient? Evidently a substantial change took place between the time of the warning and that of the sin. When G-d warned Adam that if he ate from the Tree of Knowledge he would die, he was still alone in the world, without any partner or any other elements that might have caused him to fail. Only after the command was given did the Almighty create the "animals of the field" [2:19] and then, finally, a woman, who in fact became "his opposite" [2:20]. But this act of creation also created the serpent, who was more cunning than "all the animals of the field" [3:1]. It also created the woman, who has the power to influence a man. This means that Adam was right when he said, "the woman that you placed with me gave me from the tree, and I ate" [3:12], and that Chava was also justified in placing some of the blame on the serpent.

Indeed, the first figure that G-d turned to punish was the serpent, the creature that symbolizes evil in the world, and his curse was the worst of them all. Then, G-d turned to the woman, who was influenced by the serpent but afterwards also incited Adam to sin. Only in the end did G-d turn to Adam, taking into account what he had claimed: "Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate from the Tree..." [3:17]. Thus, once the serpent had been created it could no longer be

ignored, and the original punishment of death was replaced by a lighter punishment.

DR. NOSSON CHAYIM LEFF

Sfas Emes

Let us begin from the beginning, the first ma'amar of the Sfas Emes on Parshas Bereishis. The Sfas Emes starts by quoting Rashi's comment on the posuk (Bereishis, 2,2) "Vayechal Elokim... " Says Rashi: "Ma haya ha'olam chaseir? Menucha! Bah Shabbos, bah menucha. Kalsa nenigmera melacha." That is: "What was missing from the Cosmos that HaShem had created? Repose. When Shabbos came, repose came as well. Creation was now complete."

Continues the Sfas Emes: HaShem created the world in order to let His goodness flow out to this world, the world of teva (nature). Further, this is why the word in Hebrew for the world is "olam" (hidden). Because HaShem's Presence is hidden in this world. This perspective-that HaShem is really there, but His Presence is hidden-is a recurring theme in the Sfas Emes. In support of this key insight, the Sfas Emes cites his illustrious grandfather, the Chiddushei HaRim.

Note what is occurring in this piece: The Sfas Emes makes a statement- that HaShem created the world specifically in order to suffuse it with goodness. That is standard and accepted Torah hashkofo (doctrine). But this precept stands in glaring contrast with the world as we see it -- - full of misery and suffering. Many authorities ignore this blatant contradiction between received doctrine and perceived reality. By contrast, the Sfas Emes draws our attention immediately to this tension, confronts it head-on, and incorporates it as an integral part of the story. That is, we are enjoined to glorify HaShem specifically andespecially in this state of His being hidden. In fact, this is one of the things that the Torah intends by saying: "HaShem saw all that He had made ("KOL asher assa"), and, behold, it was very good!"

In the same vein, the Sfas Emes cites a posuk (Mishlei, 16, 4) "KOL pa'al HaShem lema'aneyhu." (That is: "All of creation glorifies HaShem.") For, although individual features of the world oppose kedusha (sanctity), the generality (the "KLAL") of creation joins together to glorify HaShem. As we ourselves know and proclaim: "HAKOL bara lichvodo"!

The Sfas Emes continues: This is why without Shabbos, the world lacked menucha. For Shabbos brings together ("KOLel") and unites all the days of the week. By so doing, Shabbos elevates all Creation to a higher level of spirituality, all united by one theme: to become an instrument (a KELI) for serving HaShem's will.

The Sfas Emes has told us that on Shabbos, all Creation surges forward to come closer to HaShem. This movement toward HaShem occurs not only in intellectual terms. Shabbos also comes-and brings with it-a powerful emotional charge. Thus, the word "vayechulu"-a word that we say in Kiddush-implies a yearning to come closer to HaShem. So, too, the posuk in Tehilim (84,3): "... Kal'sa nafshi..." ("My soul yearns to come closer... to HaShem").

Finally, the Sfas Emes tells us how a person can attain the goal of this yearning. How? By hisbatlus-subordinating our will to the will of HaShem, something that is feasible only because each of us is connected with HaShem. This hisbatlus is what Chazal meant when they said that when Shabbos comes, menucha comes into our lives. This is what Rashi had in mind, concludes the Sfas Emes, when he declared that with Shabbos: "KALsa venigmera hamelacha". (That is: Creation was now complete). For this dedication and selflessness to HaShem is the purpose of Creation.

The Sfas Emes is not light reading. It will become more clear when you read it again.

Note two take-home lessons:

1. "Menucha" does not mean sleeping the Shabbos away.

2. When we say-in Kiddush-the word "vayechulu" our minds, too, can be sparked to the picture of all Creation yearning to come closer to HaShem, coming together to become an instrument of His will.The picture of all nature joining together to glorifying HaShem may appear too "mystical" for some people. But we find similar images in mainstream Yiddishkeit-e.g., in passages of Tehilim which are incorporated in Kabalas Shabbos (the Friday night prayer service).

RABBI BARUCH LEFF

Kol Yaakov

Have you ever tried to get lots of things done at night? Did you ever assume that you can get just as much done at night as you could during the day only to discover yourself dozing off at your desk at 11pm?

Sure, we do accomplish many things at night but somehow, for most people, it is never equal to what we can accomplish during the day. Even when we nap during the afternoon in order to stay up later at night, nights do not seem to be as productive as days. Why is this a fact of human experience?

The answer lies in this week's parsha, Genesis, and in the way G-d made the world. "G-d called the light, 'Day', and to the darkness, He called, 'Night'."(Genesis 1:5). What does this verse mean? What is the additional insight? Is it not obvious that day is day and night is night? Are we simply being told what the first words in G-d's dictionary were? We don't find the Torah telling us all the words that G-d defined in His dictionary. And besides, what purpose would there be to tell us dictionary word meanings in the Torah? Human experience with speech and language would suffice for us to know day is when we have light and

night is when it is dark. There must be a deeper realm of explanation here.

When G-d calls something a name, He is giving it a role and a reality of existence. Once that role is defined, there cannot be another purpose for that object. If we humans attempt to change the G-d given role of an object, we will not meet much success. It would be like trying to change the gas pedal of a car into the brakes. The objects and creations of the world were given set tasks and positions by G-d that cannot be redesigned.

If G-d called light, 'Day', light's function is as Day. This means that no matter how hard man may try, no matter how advanced electricity becomes, day is day. Night can never be day. The purpose of the daylight hours is for life's accomplishments.

Likewise, when G-d calls darkness, 'Night', night is etched as the time for rest. Accomplishments at night can never equal that which you can accomplish by day. G-d programmed the world this way. This is how G-d defined the world, both pre and post Thomas Edison.

The Ramchal, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, in a Kabbalistic vein, suggests similar thoughts in his magnum opus of Jewish philosophy, "The Way of G-d" (pg. 290):

"G-d ordained that the night should be a time when the forces of evil have the ability to move about freely in the world. This is why the intention of night was that people should stay home, sleeping and resting until morning. When the morning comes, authority is taken away from these evil forces and people can once again go about their occupations until nightfall."

Have you ever had such a terrible day that you felt like there was nothing to look forward to in your life? Yet, somehow when you woke up the next morning, things seemed different. What made your negative and dejected feelings change?

This is the purpose of our nights. We need to have breaks from day to new day because sometimes we are so emotionally pained that it is too difficult to bear. Sunset and darkness help bring an end to the negative life experience, allowing us to go on. The new morning's sunrise brings with it an ability to start new and fresh. Yesterday's disappointments do not seem as horrible and the hope for the future is as bright as the sunny day around us.

This is the meaning of the verse in Psalms (30:6), "In the evening one lies down weeping, but in the morning-joy!"

Day is designed for growth and accomplishment. Night is dedicated for rest and relaxation in order prepare for the next day of growth and goal attainment, enabling us to begin again with a brand new start to life.

The functions of Day and Night cannot be changed. No matter how far technological inventions and improvements may go to light up our nights like our days, the workDay, and not the workNight, will always be the reality in our world.

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

In the beginning, starts the Torah in Bereishit, G-d created the heaven, earth, and everything in between, all by Himself. Then, when it came time to create man, G-d asked his council about it, as it says "Let US make man in our image, after our likeness" (1:26). Just as we see a problem with the idea of G-d needing to confer, Moshe noticed the same problem as he was dictating the Torah from Hashem. The Midrash goes on to explain that G-d insisted on the text, accentuating the importance of conferring with others regarding all major aspects of life (as Jews, a spouse and a personal Rabbi is especially emphasized), and that those who wish to misunderstand the sentence will do so. Rav Wasserman raises a good question, though: Although the lesson is a good one, is it really worth the risk? Doesn't the potential for negative (people thinking there are multiple G-ds) outweigh the potential for positive?

He answers that there really isn't any potential for negative, after all! Generations after generations of children and adults have learned this verse and have understood it correctly. The only ones that will err are the ones that WANT to. Should we be deprived of an important lesson on account of those who WANT to find a fault? In a way, we just learned TWO lessons out of one. Not only is it important to listen to the advice of our peers, but it's equally important to separate ourselves from the advice of those that aren't our peers. Listening to others is the hardest thing to do, especially when you know you should, or when you know they're right. It's our own ego that rejects it, yet we're the ones that would gain from it. We should take the advice of the Parsha, and rather then just agreeing with its insight, actively start seeking and listening to others' worthy advice!

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