

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd the man called the name of his wife 'Chava,' for she was the mother of all life" (Beraishis 3:20). We are familiar with the story of Adam and Chava (Adam and Eve), the first humans who were imbued with a divine soul. G-d commands them not to eat from a certain tree in the Garden of Eden, and when they do anyway, they are punished. Although G-d gave the first man the name "Adam," the name of his wife was given to her by her husband. However, instead of being named immediately, the order of the verses indicate that she was not called "Chava" until after they ate from the "tree of knowledge." The obvious question is why Adam waited until after the sin before giving her a name.

Rashi tells us that Adam really did name her right away (before the sin), but the story was not told chronologically, in order to teach us something else. Why did the "snake" want Adam to sin? Because he wanted to marry Chava, and was trying to get her to give him the forbidden fruit so that he would be put to death. In order to teach us that, the snake's advice to Chava was put immediately after telling us that Adam and Chava were not wearing clothes, indicating that the snake seeing them trying to be fruitful and multiply led to his attempt to get him (or them) to sin (also see Rashi on 3:1). Once that story was complete, including the punishments for all parties involved, the Torah goes back to what had been interrupted, i.e. Adam giving Chava her name and G-d giving them clothes.

This opens up other issues, such as why Adam had to make fig-leaf coverings after he realized their bodies should be covered if G-d had already given them clothing. These issues are discussed by the commentators on Rashi and on the Midrash he is based on (Beraishis Rabbah 18:6). Suffice it to say that G-d had made them clothing to protect them from the weather conditions (thin clothing to protect their skin from the sun and animal-fur type clothing to protect them from the cold, see Rashi on 3:21), but they didn't need protection on warm days while under the shade of the trees in the garden, so had left their clothing at home. Upon realizing that they needed clothing for modesty reasons as well, they put on fig-leaf coverings until they got home and could put on their other clothing (see Nachalas Yaakov on 3:1). As far as why the

naming of Chava couldn't have been taught earlier and only the clothing described afterwards, interrupting after being told that man should "cleave to his wife and become one" with her and/or after telling us that they were unclothed would have left us without knowing what led to the snake's plan. The bottom line is that according to Rashi (and the first approach in the Midrash he is based on), Chava was given her name right away. Nevertheless, others maintain that the verses (either just the naming or both the naming and being given clothes) are taught in the correct chronological order, and numerous explanations are given as to why Adam waited until after the sin to give Chava her name.

The first issue to sort out is whether Chava was a name change or the first name she ever had. The Shaaray Aharon says that according to the kabbalists, her name had been "Chaya" but was changed to "Chava" after the sin. Others suggest that the name "Isha" (2:23) does not refer to all women, but was the first woman's personal name, until after the sin when Adam changed it to Chava. If there was a name change, by understanding how the new name reflects her post-sin status, we can understand why Adam hadn't given her the name until after the sin had occurred.

The Kli Yakar says that the reason Adam changed her name from "Chaya" to "Chava" was because the word "chivya" means snake in Aramaic. Adam therefore kept the basic meaning of her name to refer to her being the mother of all humans while hinting at the damage caused by her listening to the snake. Beraishis Rabbah (20:11) does not indicate that Adam changed her name, but does connect the name Chava with the Aramaic word chivya, referring to the snake that enticed her to sin. Others connect the name "Chava" with the Aramaic word for "telling over," either because her penchant for conversation got her into this mess in the first place when she spoke with the snake (Baal Haturim), or because of her ability to understand what the animals were saying - which she got from "seeing" the forbidden fruit (3:6) and her husband, who only ate from it, didn't have - led to her taking care of the entire animal kingdom and being the "mother of all living things" (Moshav Zekainim and R' Chaim Paltiel, see also Abarbanel).

The Vilna Gaon seems unsure whether or not "Isha" was her personal name, suggesting that her

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own name may not have been used until the narrative applied only to her, and not to all women (which may indicate that she was given the name "Chava" right away, while explaining why we weren't told what her name was until much later). If it was her first name, he suggests that it was changed to "Chava" to reflect what her primary role had become post-sin; she was now a mother/caregiver first, whereas she had shared Adam's primary mission of intellectual growth before they sinned (also see Sefornu and Malbim). The Radak says that since after the sin the desire for marital relations emerged, Adam now associated her more with her role as mother than he previously had.

The Or Hachaim, after telling us that the change in name from "Isha" to "Chava" indicated a lesser status, says that she was called "Chava" as opposed to "Chaya" because it included an allusion to the snake ("chivya"). Even though Adam was as much the father of all living things as she was the mother of all living things, she was given that name because after the curse she had to shoulder more of the burden, carrying the baby for nine months and then going through labor to deliver it. Another reason why she would be referred to as the mother of all living things as opposed to his being the father of all living things may be based on Rabbeinu Bachye's kabbalistic explanation of the "benay ha'elohim," sons of angels (6:2, see his commentary on 5:2), that Chava had children (i.e. Kayin) fathered by Satan, who was controlling the snake. After that incident, only she could be called the mother (or parent of any gender) of all humans.

The Rosh (Berachos 6:8), explaining the beracha of "Boray Nefashos," says that the expression "kol chai" refers to things that are not absolutely necessary, but are created to give us enjoyment. Based on this, the Netziv suggests that even though originally the first woman only ate and fed her husband foods that were absolutely necessary, starting with the forbidden fruit she also fed those under her care things that were enjoyable, even if not needed. Therefore, she was now considered the mother (read: innovator) of "kol chai," everything enjoyable, even if unnecessary.

Another possibility as to why Adam only gave her the name Chava after the sin may be based on the punishment mankind received for it; death. Had there

been no sin, Adam would have lived forever, and the first woman could never be considered the mother of all humans, as Adam was human and she was not his mother. However, since Adam knew that his death was now inevitable, he also knew that after he dies every human on the planet would be descended from her. And since, from that point on, she would truly be the mother of all living humans, he called her "Chava."

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RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Why is the mitzvah of building, decorating and living in the sukkah for seven days one of the most popular commandments in the entire Torah for observant Jews? Certainly the most obvious reason is the familial fun of building together a special house and actually living in it for seven days!

But I truly believe that the reason is much deeper; the sukkah touches upon the very existential nature of human existence - and teaches us at the same time a profound truth about the meaning of repentance.

If we think about it, the sukkah involves two extremes of human existence. On the one hand, we find ourselves inside a fragile hut built to last for seven days. Naturally, a structure with such a brief existence will be constructed from whatever material we have at hand: a few old doors, several pieces of odd-shaped plywood, or one of those prefab jobs that are available from sukkah manufacturers. But one thing for sure, in terms of the weather, there is not going to be much of a difference between the outside and the inside. When the wind blows, the sukkah will rock. And when it rains, look out for the chicken soup. The halakha insists that the sukkah's roof must be made of vegetation that grows on the ground like twigs, branches, bamboo poles or foliage, but too thick a roof covering is also problematic: our Sages would like the sky to be visible through the opening between the branches. Hence it is rather obvious that the sukkah is the prototype of impermanence. Yet why is it that when we find ourselves inside our fragile hut that an overwhelming sense of protection surrounds us, and we have the distinct feeling that the wind and rain and all the other vagaries of existence cannot seriously disturb us?

That we feel this way is not fortuitous, but may be traced to a Talmudic debate [B.T. Sukah 11b] between R. Eliezer and R. Akiva regarding the correct interpretation of the following verse: "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths [sukkot] when I brought them out of the Land of Egypt..." [Lev. 23:43]

R. Akiva holds that the sukot in question refer to physical, human-made booths, while R. Eliezer claims the verse speaks in supernatural terms: 'clouds

of glory' that descended from the Almighty to protect the Israelites in their desert wanderings.

On the surface, it's difficult to understand their argument; nobody would ever confuse a 'cloud of glory' for a physical booth in which you sit inside when the burning sun and the stinging wind become intolerable. How may we attempt to understand the implications of the difference of opinion between these two Sages?

Let us briefly study a number of laws in Maimonides' codification of his Laws of Repentance, and the link between repentance and the debate between R. Eliezer and R. Akiva is much clearer. It is important to remember that Jewish tradition maintains that the very last opportunity for complete repentance is on Hoshannah Rabbah, the last day of Sukkot.

The first kind of repentance that Maimonides addresses describes the penitent going through a humbling process: "The path of repentance is for the penitent to cry out constantly before G d with tears and beseeching. He gives charity according to his ability, distancing himself from what he did, and he changes his name as if to say that he is not the same person who committed these transgressions, transforming his deeds into righteous deeds. And he exiles himself from his place, because exile serves as forgiveness for sin in that it causes a person to be more subdued, humble and subservient." (Laws of Repentance, Ch. 2, Hal. 4)

Hence, by taking us away from our homes, by "exiling" us from accustomed comforts and security, the sukkah becomes the final step in Maimonides' vision of repentance. Once we enter the self-imposed exile of a battered hut, once we realize in all humility that we deserve no better habitation, we shall have accomplished the necessary penance to make us worthy of Divine forgiveness!

Yet interestingly enough, several chapters ahead Maimonides codifies a different kind of repentance altogether: "Great is repentance because it brings a person close to the Divine Presence. Yesterday he was hated by G d, disgusting, alienated and abominable. But today he is beloved, delightful, close, a confidante ... one who cleaves to the Divine Presence (as a bride to her bride-groom) ... and on and whom the Divine Presence desires and yearns for." (Laws of Repentance Chapters 6 & 7)

Hence the sukkah has a magnificent double symbolism. Initially, as the individual begins to realize his imperfections, his frailty and his fragility, the sukkah serves as a hut-in-exile, a metaphor for the humble (and sometimes absurd) mortality of a flesh-and-blood transient visitor in an often alien and forbidding planet.

But once the human being returns to his Divine Source in repentance - and feels the warm rays of Divine forgiveness and unconditional love - he/she realizes that he/she is not merely a child of mortals but is actually a child of G-d, nay, a bride of G-d!

"One thing do I desire of the Lord, only that do I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple." He will protect me in his sukkah, on every evil day; He will shelter me in the shelter of His tent, in His rock will He exalt me... (Psalms 27).

And so, in repentance and closeness to G-d, the hut of exile has become the nuptial home of Israel and the Divine, the seven days of Sukkot, the seven days of celebrating a marriage, welcoming the seven holy guests (ushpizin) the "new faces" for each of the seven feasts of the first marital week. The sukkah need not be rooted in physical security; it is transcendent and eternal, the House of G-d, the clouds of Divine glory.

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RABBI LABEL LAM

Dvar Torah

The opening words of the Torah are too often misread, "In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth." That statement would imply that the Torah is communicating cosmology, as a science text book, and is interested in satisfying our curiosity about the order of creation. The Torah, Rashi relates, is rather a teaching book with a more important set of lessons to be learned in the first verse.

The first letter "Beis" taken as a prefix, meaning "for" or "for the sake of" when attached to the word "Reishis" means that the world was created for the sake of something called, "Reishis". Using the rest of Torah as a self-referential dictionary of sorts, Rashi qualifies and crowns two items with the title, "Reishis"-Primary. It is for their sake all is created. We are being told not "how" but rather "why" the world was created.

I have in mind a certain huge factory that I used to gaze at frequently when barreling down some New Jersey highway. The building was humungous. The Parking lot was jammed. The smoke stacks billowed constant smoke. I never figured out what it produced. I'm sure every car that pulls up in the morning represents another subset of activity at the plant. There's the accounting department, food service, janitorial crew etc.

There must be some prime product that justifies all the rest. It might be a slim vile of perfume or a variety of buttons but something of value must be exiting the assembly line that makes the entire complex worth its while.

Similarly, if I were to attempt to solicit from you a large donation to build a school building, you would be justified in asking a few questions. "Why do we need this school?" I'll answer, "We have a wonderfully unique curriculum." Then you might follow up and ask, "Who would attend this school? From where do you get your faculty?" Good questions!

Imagine the whole world is this school. Why is it here? What is it in this life that justifies the existence

of all the world's parking lots? It may seem arrogant or ethnocentric to say so, but the Torah is saying it, right in the beginning, and not me. Why and to whom should we apologize? The curriculum is the Torah. The students and the faculty are Israel.

Together they produce something so valuable that the Talmud tells us that whole world was created for "this" alone. What is this "this"? Something else is also called "Reishis"- Primary. "The primary wisdom is fear of HASHEM!" This profound educational process is meant to inspire in its students a sense of awe and ecstasy in relationship to The Creator.

And so over the course of centuries and millennium millions of worthy students have graduated from here and many with high honors too. It is for their great sake and for our blessed benefit as well that there has been made to exist this generously endowed and sophisticated school that offers such a superior primary education. © 2003 Rabbi L. Lam & Project Genesis, Inc.

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The solemnity and awe of the Yomin Noraim gives way to the relaxation and enjoyment of the beautiful holiday of Succot. Succot is the holiday with many symbolic rituals and mitzvot attached to it. It revels in its beauty, in the four species and in the succah itself with its decorations and greenery.

Family gatherings and chol hamoed outings contribute to the festivities of the holiday and to the sense of satisfaction and accomplishment that we feel after Yom Kippur. It is no wonder therefore that the rabbis assigned to Succot the title of "the time of our happiness and rejoicing."

Even though the weather may not cooperate fully and the comforts of our home and dining room are not usually found in the succah, Jews have a great sense of enjoyment in sitting in the succah. Joy and satisfaction are not always connected to physical comfort or luxuries.

Succot aims to make us feel happy on the inside, to be satisfied with our lot and to have trust and faith in the coming good year and its blessings. Great people sat in their succot even in very cold weather even though the halacha prescribed that one who suffers discomfort in sitting in the succah because of weather conditions need not do so.

They said that when sitting in the succah they experienced no discomfort at all, so great was their satisfaction at being able to fulfill the commandment of being in the succah on Succot. Weather may affect our moods. It does not however deaden our souls or prevent one from being inwardly satisfied and joyful.

When I was a child in my parents' home in Chicago we lived in an apartment building where there was absolutely no possibility of erecting a succah within

its precincts. I trudged with my father to the large succah that the yeshiva had built in our neighborhood.

I missed having my mother at the table and the food was always cold by the time we arrived at the succah. I always wondered then why my father was nevertheless so serene and happy sitting in that large yeshiva succah surrounded by strangers and eating cold food.

I made a child's commitment to myself that when I grew up I would have my own succah. A few years after my marriage I was able to purchase a home with a back yard where I happily began to build a succah. My Jewish neighbor promptly reported me to the building department of the city of Chicago for building a structure without a building permit.

Next day I went to the building department and obtained such a permit which I prominently displayed. My neighbor shouted at me that "all of this nonsense is a nuisance to him." I coolly invited him to come over and share a meal with us in the succah. He sputtered and left and never spoke to me again.

That incident only fortified my resolve that come what may I would always attempt to have my own succah on Succot. The Lord has heard my request and I have had my own succah to enjoy and revel in for over fifty years consecutively. May it so continue in the future as well.

Succot concludes with the especially joyous day of Simchat Torah. Perhaps no other day of the year characterizes the relationship of the Jewish people to its Torah as does the day of Simchat Torah. Young and old, scholar and novice, the strictly observant and those who are less so are nevertheless united on this one day of rejoicing in the uniqueness of Israel that the Torah has created.

The day confirms the opinion of Rabeinu Saadyah Gaon (ninth century Babylonia) that our nation is a united people only by virtue of our Torah. The virtue of Torah is that it gives our life a focus and a moral compass. It promises a future and immortality itself.

It binds together disparate ethnic groups and bridges time and generations. No wonder Jews rejoice with it and are raised to a level of inner joy that requires no outside stimulus.

Simchat Torah is not only the culmination of the holiday of Succot, it is the final summation of the months of Elul and Tishrei that preceded it. It is the counterpoint to our days of solemnity and gives clear meaning and purpose to our times of joy. How fortunate are we to have such a treasure that is accessible to all and eternal in its meaning and message. May the joy of the holiday accompany us throughout this new year.

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RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Spreading the Fate

What began as a good-will gesture turned terribly sour. Worse, it spurred the first murder in history. It could have been avoided if only...

The Torah tells us of Cain's innovation. He had all the fruit of the world before him and decided to offer his thanks to the Creator, albeit from his cheapest produce -- flax. Cain's brother Hevel (Abel) imitated his brother, by offering a sacrifice, too, but he did it in much grander form. He offered the finest, fattest of his herd. Hevel's offer was accepted and Cain's was not. And Cain was reasonably upset.

Hashem appears to Cain and asks him, "Why is your face downtrodden and why are you upset?" Hashem then explains that the choice of good and bad is up to every individual, and that person can make good for himself or find himself on the threshold of sin. Simple as all that. (Genesis 4:6-7)

Many commentaries are bothered by what seems to be another in a litany of questions that G-d knows the answers to. Obviously, Cain was upset for the apparent rejection of his offering. Why does Hashem seem to rub it in?

The story is told of a construction worker who opened his lunch pail, unwrapped his sandwich and made a sour face. "Peanut Butter!" he would mutter, "I hate peanut butter!" This went on for about two weeks: every day he would take out his sandwich and with the same intensity mutter under his breath. "I hate peanut butter sandwiches!"

Finally, one of his co-workers got sick and tired of his constant complaining. "Listen here," said the man. "If you hate peanut butter that much why don't you just tell your wife not to make you any more peanut butter sandwiches? It's as simple as that."

The hapless worker sighed. "It's not that simple. You see, my wife does not pack the sandwiches for me. I make them myself."

When Hashem asks Cain, "why are you dejected?" it is not a question directed only at Cain. Hashem knew what caused the dejection. He was not waiting to hear a review of the events that transpired. Instead Hashem was asking a question for the ages. He asked a question to all of us who experience the ramifications of our own moral misdoing. Hashem asked a haunting question to all whose own hands bring about their own misfortunes.

Then they mutter and mope as if the world has caused their misfortunes. "Why are you upset, towards whom are you upset?" asks G-d. "Is it not the case that if you would better yourself you could withstand the moral failings and their ramifications? Is it not true that if we don't act properly, eventually, we will be thrust at the door of sin?"

Success and failure of all things spiritual is dependent on our own efforts and actions. Of course Hashem knew what prompted Cain's dejection. But there was no reason for Cain to be upset. There was no one but himself at whom to be upset. All Cain had to do was correct his misdoing. Dejection does not accomplish that. Correction does.

A person in this world has the ability to teach and inspire both himself as well as others. He can spread the faith that he holds dear. But his action can also spread more than faith. A person is the master of his own moral fate as well. And that type of fate, like a peanut butter sandwich, he can spread as well!

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RABBI EFRAIM LEVINE

Hadrash Ve-Haiyun

Dor Revei'i

Adam knew his wife again, and she bore him a son and named him Sheis, because: "Hashem has provided me another child in place of Hevel, for Kayin had killed him." (Bereishis 4:25)

In the fourth blessing of the *shemona esrei* prayer we recite "You graciously endow *Adam* with *da'as* and teach *Enosh, binah*." In this phrase we encounter two different titles for man and two different terms for wisdom. The commentators explain the word *Adam* relative to *Enosh* connotes a positive reference to man whereas *Enosh* connotes the weakness, frailty and mortality of man.

Similarly, the word *da'as* generally refers to the basic building blocks of understanding whereas the word *binah* represents a higher level of understanding. Chazal explain this refers specifically to the insight that is gained when one compares one thing to another.

We may note that it would seem proper to match the weaker title for man with the simpler term for understanding and the stronger term for man with the deeper level of understanding. In other words, it would seem that the phrase should properly read "you graciously endow *Enosh* with *da'as* and teach *Adam, binah*? Why are the terms and titles reversed?"

In order to answer this question we must understand the difference between the words *Adam* and *Enosh*. The most fundamental difference between the two is that *Adam* does not have a plural whereas the *Enosh* does, namely *An'osh'im*.

Rav Zadok HaKohen explains the word *Adam* comes from the word *ad'am'eh* which means "to be similar." Man is called *Adam* to convey "*ad'am'eh la'el'yon*," I will be similar to the most High, i.e., Hashem. Man's name reminds him that his goal in life is to emulate the characteristics and attributes of Hashem. This interpretation explains why the word *Adam* has no plural. Just as Hashem is One, likewise

when man emulates Hashem he achieves a similar uniqueness of being one.

In contrast the word *Enosh* does have the plural *An'osh'im*. The singular word *Enosh* connotes an individual man's willingness and desire to join others and work together as a team. Indeed, this is man's weakness. An individual can accomplish very little, it is only through a group or community that magnificent things are achieved and accomplished.

We may now understand why Sheis named his son Enosh. Originally, Adam's two sons Kayin and Hevel were not willing to live with each other. From our perspective it is difficult to understand how Kayin could kill Hevel when they were the only people in the world besides their parents and twin sisters. Was the whole world not large enough for both of them to share? The answer is that both Kayin and Hevel strove to fulfill their mission of being created as an *Adam*. They strove to be similar to Hashem. Just as Hashem is One above likewise they considered themselves one below. However, two kings cannot share the same crown. Kayin and Hevel thus could not coexist. One had to go. After the death of Hevel, Chava gave birth to Sheis. The *posuk* tells us that he was to be the replacement of Hevel. What was the purpose of a replacement? Just as Kayin and Hevel could not coexist, it would just be a matter of time before Kayin and Sheis try to kill each other.

In answer to this question the *posuk* says: "And as for Sheis to him also a son was born and he named him Enosh" (Bereishis 4:26). *Enosh* connotes man's willingness and desire to coexist with others. An *Enosh* has the plural *An'osh'im*. Sheis acknowledged that to prevent the tragedy of Kayin and Hevel from reoccurring he was to abandon the focus of being an *Adam*. Man's new mission was to be an *Enosh*. Man needs to live in peace together with his brother.

This idea further explains why precisely now there was a proliferation of idolatry. The *posuk* goes on to say "Then, they began to call in the name of Hashem" (Bereishis 4:26). Rashi explains this *posuk* to mean that at the time of Enosh the proliferation of idolatry began. At this point the focus of man was on the need to work together and build the world. They abandoned the concept of *Adam* which represented the idea of being similar to Hashem. They acknowledged that on earth there are many men who could coexist peacefully. They began to think that perhaps in heaven there are also many gods that coexist.

We may return to our question as to why we match the term *binah* with *Enosh*. The commentators explain the *da'as* represents the basic building blocks of wisdom. *Binah* represents a deeper form of understanding. *Binah* requires one to combine multiple pieces of information and compare them one to another.

One important example of *binah* is what the Mishna (Avos 6:6) lists in its forty-eight ways with which the Torah is acquired as *pilpul hatalmidim*, sharp discussion with students. Here, one gains insight through debate and dialogue with another, similar to the understanding one gains by comparing one thing to another. We may now understand that *binah*, which can only be accomplished through engaging one's fellow man relates to the word *Enosh* which also connotes man's willingness to work together with his fellow man.

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RABBI MORDECHAI WOLLENBERG

Weekly Thoughts

The Torah starts with the letter Beis, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The first word of the Torah, also the Hebrew name of the first book, is 'Bereishis'.

One might reasonably ask, why does the Torah not begin with Alef, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet? Alef often refers to Unity, to one-ness, to G-d, all seemingly appropriate ideas to start the Torah with. Yet the Torah begins with the letter Beis, which is the second letter, rather than Alef, the first.

We are told that G-d created the world in order that people would be able to do good. To do good usually involves being kind and generous towards somebody else. This is where Beis, where Two comes in - not just one, I, myself, not concerned for anyone else. There has to be a second person, another, to be concerned for, to do good for. The idea of two, of connecting to someone else, joining together, helping them, is expressed by the Beis.

There is a concept of Ahavas Yisroel, of loving one's fellow. The Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, said that any time a Mitzvah (commandment) is performed without incorporating a dimension of Ahavas Yisroel, it is not a complete Mitzvah. In some cases we can easily understand this - inviting others to partake in a meal on a joyous occasion, a Shabbat or festival, would express this idea, as would giving charity. For other commandments it is hard to imagine how it would apply. Nonetheless, the emphasis is on putting another person first, involving them, being concerned about them and their needs.

The Torah started off as it meant to go on - putting concern for another person and Ahavas Yisroel at the top of the agenda.

This Shabbat is known as 'Shabbat Bereishit'. There is an idea that wherever a person stands on Shabbat Bereishit, this affects their situation and their standing throughout the year. It is the first Shabbat after the festivals, the beginning of the 'regular' part of the New Year. We start as we mean to go on, therefore whatever frame of mind and attitude we have

now may carry on throughout the year. Many of us made resolutions for the new year and now is the time to stand firm, to follow up on our good intentions and start the new year on the right foot. © 2006 Rabbi M. Wollenberg & torah.org

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Why did Adam and Eve disobey God and eat from the tree of knowledge?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch argues that Eden was a society based on the system of divinely rooted ethics. For this reason, God instructs Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil as God is the ultimate arbiter. In disobeying God and eating from the tree of knowledge Adam and Eve were rejecting this principle. They opted for a world based on ethical humanism, where human beings alone decide right and wrong. This is dangerous for human thinking tends to be relative. What is unethical to one person is ethical to another. If, however, ethics have their source in God they become objectively true.

From this perspective, the goal of redemption is to return to the Eden milieu where God is acknowledged by all as the ultimate decider of good and evil.

Another possibility comes to mind. Perhaps Eden represents the perfect "angelic world" where evil does not exist. Adam and Eve found themselves dissatisfied in this world. After all, in a society which is totally good, there would, in reality, be no good says Rav Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Kohen Kook. For good is a relative term. There is good only when evil exists.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler adds, there would be no challenge in a perfect world. There would be nothing to overcome.

And Rabbi Chaim Volozhin notes, that without evil we could not do wrong; the essential part of humanity would be lost, the ability to possess free will and choose between good and bad. Without freedom of choice, we would be stripped of our humanity.

Adam and Eve eat from the tree of knowledge because they opt to leave the "angelic world" and enter the "real world" - a world in which good exists, challenge prevails and the human being is blessed with freedom of choice.

From this perspective, the goal of humankind is not to return to Eden. Rather it is to shape a messianic society in which one attains goodness despite the existence of evil. The pathway to reach that "ideal world" is in fact the Torah and the halakha. (Halakha comes from the word halakh to go, as it takes us on the path toward redemption.)

Eden is not the ideal. For this reason Adam and Eve leave Eden, to face evil and overcome it. The expulsion from Eden is commonly perceived as the

gravest sin of humanity. Yet the Eden experience is rather a lesson in human nature. And is even a necessary prerequisite for the redemption of the world. © 1999 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. 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.

TORAH CENTER OF DEAL

The Rabbi's Message

by Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

“Hashem had not sent rain and there was no man to work the soil.” (Beresheet 2:5) Rashi tells us that the plants and grass were created on the third day, but stood at the surface of the ground and did not sprout until Adam was created, for when Adam saw that the world needs rain to make the vegetation grow, he prayed to Hashem for rain, and it came down and made everything grow.

We can learn from here that Hashem prepares what we need before we even see it. We don't have it, however, because we don't realize we need it, and therefore don't pray for it. It is only when we recognize our need for something and turn to G-d for that thing, that Hashem makes it happen for us. This is true both for spiritual matters and physical things. We first have to recognize what we are missing to be able to ask for it, and then Hashem will make it "sprout."

As we begin the new year, let us remember to ask Hashem for our needs, especially those involving our spiritual life. Let us ask Him for peace of mind and tranquillity to be able to study and pray and bring up our children the right way. © 2003 Rabbi S. Choueka & Torah Center of Deal

RABBI LIPMAN PODOLSKY

Yeshivat HaKotel

In this, the Foundation Parsha, we are introduced to one of the pillars of existence, the mitzvah of Shabbos (Breishis 2:1-3). Indeed, Shabbos is designed to remind us of the unfathomable miracle of Creation ex nihilo-Zeicher l'Maaseh Breishis (Shmos 20:10). One seventh of our lives is devoted to the observance and sanctification of this special day. But what is this mysterious Shabbos? Why do we do it?

In our Shabbos morning tefillos we recite: "You, Hashem our G-d, did not give it [the Shabbos] to the nations of the lands; nor did You, our King, bequeath it to idol-worshippers; and in its contentment the uncircumcised shall not abide. For to Israel, your nation, have You given it with love; to the descendants of Yaakov, whom You have chosen." Similarly, in Kiddush we proclaim: "For us did You choose, and us did You sanctify from all the nations; and the Shabbos of Your holiness, with love and favor, did You give us as an inheritance." What is so singular concerning the relationship between our nation and Shabbos,

something apparently totally irrelevant to the gentiles? After all, they also have their “day off”!

The Maharal, in “Derech Chaim” (his commentary on Pirkei Avos, pp. 13-15), explains: Creation can be subdivided into two main categories: 1) Space (including all physicality); 2) Time. Since Hashem is the ultimate and only “One”, everything that He creates must also be one; all aspects of Creation must necessarily be directed to one unified aim. What is that purpose? The order of Creation provides a hint. Whatever was created last is the purpose. All else was created in advance as a preparation, to set the stage for the ultimate design.

The purpose [Tachlis] of Time is Shabbos [note: Vayechulu derives from the same root as Tachlis]. Thus Shabbos was created last. The preceding days serve the Shabbos (see Beitza 16a). Shabbos crowns Time; Shabbos breathes meaning and purpose into the soul of Time. Shabbos is the “One” in the realm of Time.

The Tachlis of Space is Am Yisrael. Thus, we were introduced on the stage of Creation after all of the seventy root nations. “Breishis-Because of Israel, who were called Reishis (Yirmiya 2:3), the universe was created (Rashi, Breishis 1:1, quoting from the Medrash).” All else was created to serve Am Yisrael (Sanhedrin 37a; Brachos 58a). Am Yisrael completes and perfects all existence; it breathes meaning and purpose into the soul of the universe. Am Yisrael is the “One” in Space.

It is not, therefore, surprising that the two “Ones” join together as “One”. “Said the Shabbos to Hashem, For each [day] You have provided a mate [Sunday-Monday; Tuesday-Wednesday; Thursday-Friday], but for me You did not provide a mate. Replied Hashem, The Jewish People shall be your mate. And when Yisrael stood at Mount Sinai, Hashem said to them, ‘Remember the day of Shabbos to sanctify it’ (Shmos 20:7) -- Remember that which I said to the Shabbos, that ‘the Jewish People shall be your mate’ (Breishis Rabba 11:8).”

Only Hashem, the infinite, omnipresent Creator, can truly be One. All creations must be mated. “It is not good for man to be alone... (Breishis 2:18)” (See also Bava Basra 74b.) Every day has a partner except for Shabbos. Every nation has a partner [e.g. Yishmael and Esav-just read the papers!], except for Am Yisrael. Despite their individuality, their ‘Oneness’, they both craved to be paired up. Thus Hashem made the shidduch: a bond between Time and Space, between Shabbos and Yisrael. This relationship is most manifest when the Jew sanctifies the Shabbos.

Consequently the Torah was given specifically on Shabbos (Shabbos 86b). For it was at Har Sinai that Klal Yisrael was born a nation, a distinct entity in-and the underlying Tachlis of-Space. On that day, Hashem singled us out from among all the nations, and gave us

His Torah-the culmination and raison d’etre of Creation (Rashi Breishis 1:31). On that very day the Jews were commanded: Remember the day of Shabbos to sanctify it [‘kadosh], sharing the very same terminology through which a Kallah becomes bonded to her Chassan [Harei At Mekudeshes Li]. Henceforth, Shabbos became our Kallah; as we sing, Bo’i Kallah, Bo’i Kallah.

Practically speaking, how should a Jew utilize his day off with his Kallah? Merely abstaining from forbidden labor would seem to fall far short of the ideal (imagine spending the day with your Kallah simply abstaining from insulting her). And the Torah does require a certain sanctification. Whatever does it mean?

The Ramban defines: “We should view the cessation [of forbidden labor] in light of the fact that it is a holy day, a day on which to free ourselves from mundane thoughts and the nonsense of the Times; a day on which to provide spiritual pleasure to our souls in the ways of G-d, to go to Torah scholars... to hear the words of G-d... (Vayikra 20:7).”

Shabbos is not a day for reading newspapers (even the Times). Shabbos is not a day for Risk and/or Monopoly. Shabbos should not be squandered devising innovative ways to kill Time. Shabbos is a golden opportunity to recharge our batteries with the life-giving energy of spirituality, of our Neshama Yeseira (additional soul). The more we invest in Shabbos, the more we receive in return-in more ways than we can imagine.

A Jewish, American, Olympic bicycle champion made Aliyah. He idealistically chose to devote his talents to his newly adopted country. Finally, Israel would win the ever-elusive gold medal. His victory was a matter of course. The rules, however, stipulated that he participate in the tryouts for the Israeli Olympic team, which happened to be scheduled on Shabbos. Our champ had only recently become a Shabbos observer. How ironic and tragic, he thought, to be forced to desecrate the Shabbos in the country of the Jews. He tried to sway the committee to change the day, or to at least make an exception in his case, but his pleas fell on deaf ears. The committee preferred to forego a certain gold medal rather than accommodate a Shabbos observer. He missed the tryouts, and as a result, was prevented from participating in the 1972 Olympics in Munich.

He later commented: “I thought that I had given up my life for the sake of Shabbos. In the end, I was shown that it was Shabbos that gave me life.”

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