

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

This week's opening parsha of the Torah can be viewed as having bookends. There are two main characters in the story of humanity that are introduced to us. At the beginning of the parsha, the Torah tells us of the creation of Adam, the original human being, and the progenitor of all of us. Thus, the Torah records the tragedy of his life and he becomes, so to speak, the story of all human beings who are prone and susceptible to sin and temptation, who live on in regret and recrimination.

Even though Adam will live an exceptionally long life, almost a millennium, we are not told much about the rest of his life. According to midrashic tradition, Adam spent most of his life in loneliness, isolation, sadness, and depression over his transgression, and this affected not only him, but all humanity as well.

Jewish tradition teaches us that there were 10 generations, over 1500 years, between Adam and the generation of Noah and the great flood. These generations sank further and further into the abyss of idolatry, paganism, immorality, robbery, tyranny, and brutality. Adam, who certainly was aware of what was happening, apparently was of no influence on these generations.

Instead of being an exemplary influence and a leader, he seemingly withdrew into his own isolation and sadness. We can certainly sympathize and even empathize with his behavior, but his non-actions do not, in any way, aid the cause of humanity, nor its spiritual and emotional development and growth.

At the conclusion of the parsha, we are introduced to Noah, who will be the central character in the drama of the Flood that we will read about in next week's Torah reading. We see a somewhat similar story with Noah as we saw with Adam. After surviving the flood and having the opportunity to build the world in a more positive fashion, he also fails the test, and loses influence on his children and succeeding generations.

He also lives an exceptionally long life, almost a millennium, but extraordinarily little is revealed to us about the rest of his days, or what other accomplishments, if any, he achieved. Noah, like Adam, remains an enigmatic figure, a reservoir of failed

potential and human decline. We are taught there were, once again, 10 generations from Noah to Abraham and that these 10 generations -- and Noah was alive for a great deal of them -- simply sank back into the idolatry, paganism and immorality of the time of Adam. And, once again, Noah apparently was of little of any influence in being able to stem this tide of evil and brutality.

It is only once we reached the story of Abraham and Sarah that we find people who not only were pious in their own right, as Noah certainly was, but who also had an enormous influence upon their times and all later times, as well. And Abraham and Sarah are the example that is set before us. We all are people of influence, on our families, communities, and societies. We must see ourselves in that light, and behave accordingly, and reveal ourselves as examples and influence. That has been our mission from time immemorial and remains so until today. ©2020 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

If leadership is the solution, what is the problem? On this, the Torah could not be more specific. The problem is a failure of responsibility.

The early chapters of Genesis focus on two stories: the first is Adam and Eve; the second, Cain and Abel. Both are about a specific kind of failure. First Adam and Eve. As we know, they sin. Embarrassed and ashamed, they hide, only to discover that one cannot hide from God:

"The Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.' And He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?' The man said, 'The woman you put here with me -- she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'" (Gen. 3:9-12)

Both insist that it was not their fault. Adam blames the woman. The woman blames the serpent.

The result is paradise lost: they are both punished and exiled from the garden of Eden. Why? Because Adam and Eve deny personal responsibility. They say, in effect, "It wasn't me."

The second story is tragic. The first instance of sibling rivalry in the Torah leads to the first murder:

"While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' 'I don't know,' he replied. 'Am I my brother's keeper?' The Lord said, 'What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground.'" (Gen. 4:8-10)

Cain does not deny personal responsibility. He does not say, "It was not me," or "It was not my fault." He denies moral responsibility. In effect he asks why he should be concerned with the welfare of anyone but himself. Why should we not do what we want if we have the power to do it? In Plato's Republic, Glaucon argues that justice is whatever is in the interest of the stronger party. Might makes right. If life is a Darwinian struggle to survive, why should we restrain ourselves for the sake of others if we are more powerful than they are? If there is no morality in nature, then I am responsible only to myself. That is the voice of Cain throughout the ages.

These two stories are not just stories. They are an account, at the beginning of the Torah's narrative history of humankind, of a failure, first personal then moral, to take responsibility -- and it is this for which leadership is the answer.

There is a fascinating phrase in the story of Moses' early years. He grows up, goes out to his people, the Israelites, and sees them suffering, doing slave labour. He witnesses an Egyptian officer beating one of them. The text then says: "He looked this way and that and saw no one" (*vayar ki ein ish* Ex. 2:12, or more literally, 'he saw that there was no man').

It is difficult to read this literally. A building site is not a closed location. There must have been many people present. A mere two verses later we discover that there were Israelites who knew exactly what had happened. Therefore, the phrase almost certainly means, "He looked this way and that and saw that there was no one else willing to intervene."

If this is so, then we have here the first instance of what came to be known as the "Genovese syndrome" or "the bystander effect," so-called after a case in which a woman was attacked in New York in the presence of a large number of people who all knew that she was being assaulted but failed to come to her rescue. (For a discussion, see tinyurl.com/ccvjccf.)

Social scientists have undertaken many experiments to try to determine what happens in situations like this. Some argue that the presence of other bystanders affects an individual's interpretation of what is happening. Since no one else is coming to the rescue, they conclude that what is happening is not an

emergency.

Others, though, argue that the key factor is diffusion of responsibility. People assume that since there are many people present someone else will step forward and act. That seems to be the correct interpretation of what was happening in the case of Moses. No one else was prepared to come to the rescue. Who, in any case, was likely to do so? The Egyptians were slave-masters. Why should they bother to take a risk to save an Israelite? And the Israelites were slaves. How could they come to the aid of one of their fellows when, by doing so, they would put their own life at risk?

It took a Moses to act. But that is what makes a leader. A leader is one who takes responsibility. Leadership is born when we become active not passive, when we do not wait for someone else to act because perhaps there is no one else -- at least not here, not now. When bad things happen, some avert their eyes. Some wait for others to act. Some blame others for failing to act. Some simply complain. But there are some people who say, "If something is wrong let me try to put it right." They are the leaders. They are the ones who make a difference in their lifetimes. They are the ones who make ours a better world.

Many of the great religions and civilisations are based on acceptance. If there is violence, suffering, poverty and pain in the world, they accept that this is simply the way of the world. Or, the will of God. Or, that it is the nature of nature itself. They shrug their shoulders, for all will be well in the World to Come.

Judaism was and remains the world's great religion of protest. The heroes of faith did not accept; they protested. They were willing to confront God Himself. Abraham said, "Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?" (Gen. 18:25). Moses said, "Why have You done evil to this people?" (Ex. 5:22). Jeremiah said, "Why are the wicked at ease?" (Jer. 12:1). That is how God wants us to respond. Judaism is God's call to human responsibility. The highest achievement is to become God's partner in the work of creation.

When Adam and Eve sinned, God called out "Where are you?" As Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, pointed out, this call was not directed only to the first humans. (Noted in Nissan Mindel, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, A Biography (New York: Kehot Publication Society, 1969).)

It echoes in every generation. God gave us freedom, but with freedom comes responsibility. God teaches us what we ought to do but He does not do it for us. With rare exceptions, God does not intervene in history. He acts through us, not to us. His is the voice that tells us, as He told Cain, that we can resist the evil within us as well as the evil that surrounds us.

The responsible life is a life that responds. The Hebrew for responsibility, *achrayut*, comes from the word *acher*, meaning "other." Our great Other is God

Himself, calling us to use the freedom He gave us, to make the world that is more like the world that ought to be. The great question, the question that the life we lead answers, is: which voice will we listen to? Will we heed the voice of desire, as in the case of Adam and Eve? Will we listen to the voice of anger, as in the case of Cain? Or will we follow the voice of God calling on us to make this a more just and gracious world? *Covenant and Conversation 5780 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2020 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

The beginning of our communal Torah readings once again with the Book of Genesis on the first Shabbat following the intensive festival period from Rosh Hashanah through to Shmini Atzeret-Simchat Torah is much more than a calendrical accident; the first chapters of Genesis serve as a resounding confirmation of the true nature of the human being on earth and what it is that God expects of him.

In his groundbreaking work *Family Redeemed*, my teacher and mentor Rav J.B. Soloveitchik typologically defines two aspects of the human being emanating from each of the first two chapters of Genesis. The first chapter is a majestic description of the Creation of the universe in six days (or epochs), with the human being emerging as an integral aspect of an evolutionary process of creation; the human may be the highest expression of this process, emerging as he does towards the conclusion of the sixth day after the earth has "brought forth every kind of living creature: cattle, reptiles and wild beasts of every kind" (Gen. 1:24), but he is and remains part and parcel of creature-hood nevertheless.

This becomes patently clear when the Almighty declares, "Let us make the human being in our image and as our likeness" (Gen. 1:26), and Nahmanides (Spain, 12th century) interprets that God was addressing the animals and beasts: The human being will be subject to the same physical strengths and limitations, to the same cycle of birth, development, desiccation and death, to the same requirements of nutrition, procreation and elimination of waste, which characterizes the animal world formed together with him on that primordial sixth day (epoch).

Rav Soloveitchik calls this aspect of the human being Natural Man; I would suggest calling him Bestial Man. Herein lies the source for viewing the human being as no more than a complex animal, devoid of true freedom of choice to truly change himself or change the world; bestial man is naturally programmed, the world is based on a "survival of the fittest" and "to the victor belongs the spoils" mentality. War is an ideal because it tests physical prowess and courageous bravery, and

the weak and feeble are there to be enslaved or snuffed out.

From this perspective, morality is merely the hobgoblin of little minds and even weaker bodies, vainly attempting to curb the appetites of the truly powerful. This mind-set paves the way for totalitarian states, Aryan supremacy, Stalinist Soviet subjugation and the power of jihad to dominate the world. Might makes right. But this too must pass, for even the most powerful human being is, after all, only physical and mortal, a broken potsherd, a withering flower, a passing dream, so that a life becomes "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" ("Macbeth" by Shakespeare). Chapter 2, however, tells a very different story of the genesis of man, of a world created not only by a powerful E-lohim (the Hebrew E-I means Power) but rather by a loving HaShem (YHVH) E-lohim, YHVH is the Eternal loving Lord of Israel and the world (Ex. 34:6).

This chapter begins "when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted because there was no human being to till the earth" (Gen. 2:5), and so the loving "Hashem Elohim formed the human being from dust of the earth into whose nostrils He exhaled the soul of life." It is as though the entire physical world is waiting for the human being to activate it, to complete and perfect it, to redeem it; the human being, "the last for which the first was made." ("Rabbi Ben Ezra," a poem by Robert Browning)

And yes, the world is physical and the human being is physical, with all the strengths and the limitations of the physical, but it is an eternal and spiritual God who created the world, and it is an eternal and spiritual God who inspired part of His own spiritual being within the human physical form; and how meaningful are the words of the sacred Zohar and the Ba'al Ha-Tanya, "whoever exhales, exhales from within Himself, from His innermost, essential being" (as it were).

This is the creation of Celestial Man.

"The loving HaShem (YHVH) E-lohim...placed (the human) in the Garden of Eden (the primordial world at that time) to till it (le'abed, "to develop and perfect it") and to preserve it (le'shomrah, "to take responsibility for it"). Yes, the world is an imperfect creation, filled with darkness as well as light, with evil as well as good (Isa. 45:7); and yes, the human being is a hybrid creature, part dust of the earth and part tzelem E-lohim, who will engage in a perennial struggle between the bestial and celestial within himself. But the Bible promises that "at the very portals to life, until the very opening of the grave, sin crouches, its desire energized to conquer [the human], but the human will conquer sin, will overcome evil" (Gen. 4:7).

And so we conclude Yom Kippur with the exultant shout that HaShem the Loving Lord YHVH is

E-lohim, the God of Love is the essence and the endgame of the God of Creative physical Powers, that Right will triumph over might and Peace will trump jihad.

And every human being must find within himself the God-given strength to be an emissary towards perfecting this world in the Kingship of the Divine (Aleynu): to recreate himself, to properly direct his/ her children, to make an improvement within his/her community and society. May we not falter on this God-given opportunity to make our lives a partnership with God, to bring us and our world a bit closer to Redemption! ©2020 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Why does the Torah begin with the Genesis story? If it is a book of Law, ask the rabbis, why not start with the first commandment?

On an individual level, perhaps it teaches us that just as God first created light and that light came from darkness, so too does every human being have the power to transform their lives, face all challenges and turn the deepest night into day. (Genesis 1:2,3) As the chassidic rebbe said, a little bit of light has the power to drive away an abundance of darkness.

Rashi offers a nationalistic message. Having created the whole world, God establishes Himself as its owner. As a consequence, He has the right to give Israel to the Jewish people. Here, Rashi turns a universalistic story into a nationalistic one.

But it's left for Ramban to suggest that we begin with the Genesis story to teach a broader message that ultimately impacts the whole world. Specifically, it is to bring ethical monotheism into the world, the very mission of Jewish peoplehood. Note that the recurring theme of the first chapters is that sin results in estrangement from God; as Ramban writes, "until his sin expelled him from there."

- After Adam and Eve disobey God and eat from the tree, the Torah states "Adam and his wife hid from (mipnei) the Lord God." (Genesis 3:8)

- So, too, after Cain murders Abel, the Torah says "Cain left the face (milifnei) of God." (Gen. 4:16)

- Again, in the description of the wrongdoings of the generation of the deluge, the Torah proclaims "the earth was corrupt before (lifnei) God." (Gen. 6:11)

In all these accounts, the word *pane* is used as a metaphor to describe the exile taking place — an exile from God's presence — turning away from God's face.

It is after Adam and Eve are banished from the Garden of Eden, after Cain has killed Abel and after the world is destroyed by flood — only then do Avraham (Abraham) and Sarah enter the biblical story. Their mandate, and ultimately the mandate of the Jewish

People, is to bring God and God's system of ethics back into the world.

The Jewish people is called Yisrael. (Genesis 32:29) Yisrael has many possible meanings, one of them being a composite of *shur* and *El*, meaning to see or to perceive God. The name of the Jewish People reflects our ultimate purpose and challenge — to be aware of the Divine and bring His presence back into the world.

No wonder the Torah goes out of its way to record the place where the name Yisrael was given — Peniel, literally, the face of the God. (Genesis 32:31) Prior to Avraham, the generations turned their backs on the face of God. Israel's task is to turn around and "embrace" God fully. ©2020 *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*

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"And G-d saw that the light was good, and G-d separated between the light and between the darkness." (Beraishis 1:4) The things Hashem created during the six days were the way He wanted them to be. The light that emerged from Hashem's utterance, "Let there be light," was exactly what He wanted. Why, then, as the Gemara teaches (quoted by Rashi), would Hashem turn around and hide the light away? The Gemara explains that the light was too good to be used by the wicked so it was stored away for the righteous in the future. Hashem was not "surprised" by the outcome of the creation of light, so what was the point of creating something that could not be used now?

Furthermore, though day and night were not separated until the fourth day when the sun and the moon were created, the beginning of that separation is mentioned now, on the first day. What is the reason for immediately storing away this light even before Man was created? Surely no wicked people could use the light in the ensuing days when they didn't yet exist.

One final nuance. We have a rule that Hashem's name is not attached to something bad. Therefore, for example, it says, "And G-d called the light, "ohr," and darkness 'was called' night, and it was evening and it was morning one day." Though Hashem named the light, His name is not mentioned as directly calling the darkness night. Why, then, would Hashem's name be mentioned by the making of a distinction and the hiding away of the light? Is this not a "bad thing" that it could not be used?

The posuk ends by saying it was evening and morning, "one" day, not "the first day." This alludes to the fact that on that day, Hashem was One, meaning, alone in the Universe. Even the angels were not created until the next day. At that point, it was

necessary to hide away the light already, lest it be tainted by another viewpoint that didn't understand its perfection.

There is an ultimate truth in the world, and the original light illuminated it. However, it is possible to corrupt that truth and use it for the wrong thing, or pervert the truth by twisting it. Hashem understood that the existence of this light of truth was necessary, but also that it needed protection. Even the angels could not be trusted with it, so Hashem began the process now, when He alone was in the world.

He hid that light in the Torah, and those who properly and diligently study it are enlightened to the truths of the Universe. The ultimate goal, however, is for that light to shine forth across the world, when no longer will people seek to usurp its power nor manipulate the truth. On that day, Hashem will [again] be One, and His name will be One.

In Vilna, a woman had a shaila on a chicken. After her husband went off to the Rov, she remembered that R' Eliyahu, the saintly Vilna Gaon lived nearby and presented the shaila to him. He pronounced it treif (forbidden). Her husband returned joyfully a few moments later and said, "The Rov said it is kosher!" The woman told her husband what the Gaon had said, and he returned to the Rabbi quite shaken.

"Do not fear," said the Rov. "Tell your wife to prepare the chicken, for tonight both I and R' Eliyahu will partake of it in your home." The man rushed home to tell his wife the exciting news. The Rov then went to visit the Vilna Gaon. "R' Eliyahu," he said, trembling before him, "I know that I may not be as great as you in Torah scholarship. However, I am the Rov in this city, not you, and my word must be law." R' Eliyahu agreed and together they went to the man's home to eat from the chicken.

As the woman placed the plate before the solemn-faced Gaon, the tallow candle on the table suddenly fell over and landed in it, making it forbidden without question. Shaken, the woman thought it was an omen that her chicken was indeed treif.

With a smile, the Vilna Gaon told the couple, "Enjoy your chicken for our venerable Rabbi has proclaimed it Kosher. As for me, I have a personal stringency that I do not eat foods which have had a shaila on them, even if they are determined to be Kosher. I am pleased that in Heaven, it was seen fit to allow me to keep this stringency and I was thus prevented from eating the chicken tonight." ©2020 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

Lemech's Marital Mistake

The genealogical lists of descendants in Parashat Bereishit are often glossed over, yet there are many interesting things that can be found within these lists. One such section is the story of Lemech

and his family. According to the lists, there are really two different Lemechs, as one is a descendant of Kayin(Cain) and one is a descendant of Sheit (Seth). The Lemech that we are interested in was the descendant of Kayin.

The Torah tells us, "And Lemech took two wives, the name of one was Adah and the name of the second was Tzilah. And Adah gave birth to Yaval, he was the father of those who dwelled in a tent and with livestock. And the name of his brother was Yuval, he was the father of all who handle the harp and flute. And Tzilah also she gave birth to Tuval- Kayin, sharpener of any shaper of copper and iron, and the sister of Tuval Kayin was Na'amah. And Lemech said to his wives Adah and Tzilah, listen to my voice wives of Lemech and give ear to my speech, have I slain a man by my wound and a child by my bruise? For Kayin suffered vengeance at seven generations, then Lemech at seventy-seven."

This section of the Torah leaves out many details which are explained by the Midrashim. This is the first instance in the Torah that mentions that one man took two wives. Rashi explains that this became the practice in that generation to take two wives, one who would be used for procreation and the other for pleasure. The one who became pregnant and was used for procreation was scorned and treated almost as if she were a widow. She would be with her husband only until she became pregnant and then was almost discarded. The other wife was given a concoction of roots that would make her sterile yet maintain her beauty. She was adorned as a bride and would be treated to delicacies. Adah was this scorned wife whereas Tzilah was the cherished one. Yet we see that Hashem did not accept this practice and caused Tzilah to become pregnant also.

The Kli Yakar brings evidence of the inappropriateness of this practice. The first son born to Adah, the wife set aside for procreation, was Yaval. He is described in the Torah as a dweller in tents and with cattle. The same term is used also to describe Yaakov and is interpreted by the Rabbis as saying that he learned in the Yeshivot of Sheim and Eiver. This is a positive connotation. The second term of "with cattle" was also associated with Avraham who grazed animals. The second child born to Adah was Yuval who is described as a person who handled the harp and the flute. The Kli Yakar explains that this trait was also found in the King David. He demonstrates the difference between these children and the son who was born from Tzilah, who had been set aside for pure pleasure. Her son is named Tuval-Kayin, a name which connects him to his evil ancestor who was a murderer. He is described as a sharpener of any shaper of copper and iron. The Kli Yakar explains that these were tools of war, negative inventions for the world. The Kli Yakar sees the problem of the separate

functions of these two wives as directly responsible for the introduction of new evil into the world. Had Lemech accepted both wives for the purpose of pleasure and procreation, there would not have been a problem.

Rashi's indicates that all of the children from this separation of wives were tainted. Rashi brings several Midrashim which indicate that Yaval and Yuval were also evil. When the Torah tells us that Yaval was a dweller in tents, the Midrash indicates that these were houses of idol worship, *noy Yeshivot*. The term cattle is also related to the word jealousy (*mikneh* and *kinah*). Yuval played music, but Rashi indicates that this was music that was used in idol worship. Rashi seems to indicate that evil permeated Lemech's entire relationship with his wives, and therefore all of the children were "spoiled." Interestingly enough, the women themselves are not held responsible for this evil. This is clear in that the only sister mentioned here comes from Tzilah, Na'amah. According to Midrash, she became the wife of Noach and she is credited with the positive benefit to the world of the birth of Shem from whom all Jews are descended.

HaRav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch views this entire episode as a global picture of the history of mankind, man's moving to dependence on city life instead of nomadic life, which was dependent on Hashem. He ties the word *mikneh* to the word *koneh* (purchase) which could mean that Yaval was a tradesman. Hirsch further differentiates between the man of trade (with cattle) and the grazer of sheep, as used to describe Avraham. Yosef describes his brothers to Par'oh as, "shepherds, but they were men who traded in herds and flocks." Yosef told Par'oh that his brothers were established, city-dwelling businessmen but had to liquidate their possessions and become nomadic shepherds. This was to alleviate the Egyptians disgust with people who led the more pastoral life. Yuval is described as the creator of musical instruments which would elevate human nature. Tuval-Kayin was the inventor of metal cutting instruments which enabled man to form industry. This also took man away from the field and dependence on Hashem.

Hashem was displeased with Lemech's attitude towards procreation and pleasure. Man is commanded to be fruitful and multiply, and Lemech did fulfill this mitzvah. But pleasure received in a relationship of a husband and wife is not merely of a sexual nature. Children are a wonderful gift from Hashem, and the raising of those children brings much nachat and joy to a husband and wife. Yet the raising of children is not the only purpose of the sexual relationship of marriage. The closeness that one shares with another is part of Hashem's gift to us too. Lemech wished to separate those two aspects of a marriage by having two wives with separate purposes. Hashem is telling us that this separation diminishes the importance of the

relationship of each. It is only when one chooses to eliminate one part of that relationship on purpose that the relationship is diminished. May we each be blessed with this gift from Hashem. © 2020 Rabbi D. Levin

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Light

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

Certain *mitzvot* are dependent upon light, whether daylight, moonlight, or candlelight. *Mitzvot* which require daylight include a *Kohen* looking at *nega'im* (leprous lesions) to determine if they are impure, and a rabbi determining whether a particular stain renders a woman a *niddah* (menstruant). Additionally, rabbinic courts do not convene at night.

There is one mitzva – *Kiddush Levanah* (the prayer sanctifying the new moon) – which requires moonlight.

For some *mitzvot*, we are required to make use of candlelight. For other *mitzvot*, we are not allowed to make use of the light. For still other *mitzvot*, a candle is not required, but it still contributes honor and joy.

Mitzvot for which we are required to make use of candlelight include the search for *chametz* on the night before Pesach. Shabbat and Yom Tov candles are meant to provide useful light. By helping people to avoid tripping and bumping into each other in the dark, the candles contribute to *shalom bayit* (peace in the home). The blessing over the light of the Havdalah candle is not recited unless one needs the light and derives benefit from it. This is one of the explanations for our custom to hold our hands up to the light and look at our fingernails during Havdalah.

In contrast, one may not derive any benefit from the light of a Chanukah menorah. (This is to make it clear that the candles are being lit to publicize the miracle, and not for any other reason.) In earlier times, when the original Menorah was lit in the *Beit HaMikdash*, the *Kohanim* may have avoided using its light. (When guarding the Temple, they would carry torches to light their way.)

Sometimes we light candles to enhance honor and joy. We do this in the synagogue, as well as during celebrations such as weddings, circumcisions, and festive meals.

When studying the laws pertaining to light, an interesting question arises. May we substitute one type of light for another? For example, as we have seen, rabbinic courts convene only during the day. If a room is candle-lit, would the court be permitted to convene at night? Similarly, kosher slaughtering may not be done in the dark. If a room was lit up using a torch, would it then be permissible? *Acharonim* (15th to 20th century rabbis) disagree about this, with some insisting on sunlight for these activities.

Now let us flip the question around. When candlelight is required, may sunlight or moonlight be

used instead? May one search for *chametz* during daylight hours?

Nowadays, these questions extend to electric lights as well. Some maintain that lightbulbs may be used as Shabbat "candles." (This does not necessarily mean they can be used for Chanukah candles or a Havdalah candle, since the reasons for the lights in each case are different.) People relate that Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski (author of *Achiezer*) made a point of using incandescent bulbs for Havdalah (others say it was for Shabbat candles). He did this to demonstrate that electricity is considered fire in *halacha*. People would then understand that turning electric lights on or off on Shabbat is absolutely forbidden. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Opposites Attract

The creation of man was no simple feat. In fact, Hashem seems to be disappointed with his less-than-perfect creation. He looks at Adam and declares, "It is not good for man to be alone I will create an ezer k'negdo." The word ezer means helper, and the word k'negdo takes on various explanations, each defining the role of woman in completing and perfecting creation.

Simply put, the word k'negdo means opposite him. It can even mean against him. Rashi quotes the Talmud that explains that there is no middle ground in relationships. If one merits than the spouse is a helper; and if one does not merit, then the spouse is a k'negdo, against him.

Though the word k'negdo may mean opposite him, it need not mean a negative connotation. Opposite him, however, defines a relationship. One can not be opposite of no one. Why, then, does the Torah define this helper in such interesting terms? Why would it not have sufficed to call the new spouse a helper and leave it at that?

With the baseball playoffs fast approaching, a therapist in our community told me a fascinating story that reflects upon the strange state of affairs in some households.

A couple came to him for counseling in their predicament.

"My husband is only interested in the baseball playoffs! All he's interested is in that stupid baseball! Yankees, Shmankees! That's all he wants to do each night."

"That problem," thought the doctor, "is not so unique. It occurs pretty often in households across the country."

He was expecting to hear the husband defend himself with lines like, "it's only once a year," or only when New York is in the playoffs."

He didn't. In response the husband put his hands on his hips and faced-off.

"And what about her? All she wants to watch are the evening sitcoms and serials! They are meaningless fantasies! How does she expect me to see real men earning an honest living playing ball, when she wants to watch those silly dramas?"

The therapist pondered this modern-day struggle and offered his suggestion. "I see that your interests in televised entertainment are quite polarized. But I think there is a simple solution."

He smiled broadly and with the confidence of responding with Solomonic wisdom he continued. "You are quite an affluent couple, and," he added, "you have a large home. Why don't you just buy an additional TV set, and each of you watch your desires in different rooms!"

The therapist's smile faded as the couple stared at him in horror. "DIFFERENT ROOMS??" they shrieked in unison. "How can we watch in different rooms? That's the time we spend together!"

Through its contrasting definitions of a spouse's capacity, the Torah does more than warn us of problems. It explains what the best helper is. The appropriate helper and mate is not one who spends his or her time in a different world with different interests and no concern for the other's. Rather, it is one who stand opposite the spouse and faces him. The shared enjoyment of each other's company, the companionship of k'negdo, should outweigh a set of four eyes glued to an event in the distance. The Torah wants two sets of eyes facing each other. Sometimes in agreement, sometimes in disagreement as long as they are k'negdo, opposite the other. ©2020 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky & torah.org

RABBI NAFTALI REICH

Legacy

I'm sure the question has occurred to many of you: Haven't we been through the ritual of concluding the Torah and beginning again from Breishis many times before? Doesn't it seem as if our excitement and inspiration tends to wane rather quickly? This year it occurred to me that rather than work to preserve the Yom Tov's emotional and spiritual high, we might do better attempting to implement the festival's core message.

Over the course of the year, our level of interpretation and understanding of the Torah and its Divine laws are expected to expand as we gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the Torah's message through our learning. Perhaps the message that we need to take from the Chag is that we must try to shed the superficial, materialist way with which we tend to interpret the world around us. We need to expand or reshape the prism with which we view the events of our lives and reach for a deeper and truer grasp of their meaning.

A recent incident concerning a painting by a

young student at the Yeshiva, who is an unusually gifted artist, brought this concept graphically to life. A couple of months ago, I commissioned this student, Binyomin Allen, to draw a painting of my beloved Rebbe, the Nesivos Shalom ztl, surrounded by the great personalities and Hassidic rebbes of yesteryear that molded his life values. Binyomin produced a spectacular work of art, masterfully incorporating the various institutions that the Rebbe founded and led during his lifetime.

The picture now hangs in my dining room, unfailingly eliciting gasps of admiration from our guests. Over the Chag, a legacy graduate who is now a beginner student in the Yeshiva, joined us for a meal and was transfixed by the painting. I asked him what aspect of it moved him so. He was gazing at the frame of Rav Mottel of Slonim, a saintly man whose rather gaunt features and large hat created a striking image on the canvas. "Rabbi, it's that 'Clint Eastwood guy' on the left," he exclaimed. "He is some cool dude. I really like that guy."

Well, Clint Eastwood and I'havdil the heiliger Rav Mottel are, of course, so drastically different, they almost can't be said to inhabit the same universe! But the comment made me more fully aware that we can only interpret what we see with the values and outlook that form the template of our minds. Our home is a reflection of the finite world that encompasses us. We are limited by that finite world and have difficulty stepping outside of it. We interpret events, relationships and Hashem in a manner that that doesn't threaten our sense of security, and will not force us to step outside our comfort zone physically or spiritually. Our challenge is to open up our minds to a far more honest and objective grasp of ourselves and the world around us.

A story my dad once related to me highlights a person's tendency to superimpose his mindset -- and frequently, his tunnel vision -- on whatever confronts him. My dad, born and raised in Manchester, England, recalled that when he was eight or nine years old, a saintly Chabad chasid, Rav Yitzchok Masmid, came from Russia for a visit. He was raising funds for Chabad activities behind the Iron Curtain. This tzaddik barely ate more than a bit of dry bread with drink. He learned all day and avoided even sitting on a chair, so as not to benefit too much from this world. He would sit on the edge of a chair and get up every ten seconds, afterwards sitting back down! My grandfather and father accompanied him on Shabbos to the central synagogue where he was scheduled to make an appeal. This was in 1928 when the public's favorite recreation was to attend the Sunday horse races and bet on their favorite horse.

Rav Yitzchok sat during the services next to the president at the front of the shul. After he made his appeal, my Dad heard the president asking a fellow nearby, "Jake, what did you think of that Rabbi's

sermon"? The man replied, "Tell you the truth, Sam, I didn't understand a word, but Blimey -- he'd sure make a good jockey!"

The nimshal is pretty clear. We can only absorb from a 'spiritual exposure' as much as the vessels are equipped to receive. It's amazing how we can witness things that are so elevated and yet perceive so little!

Due to my weakness for Jewish art, our home has quite a varied collection of contemporary and Renaissance-style paintings, as well as lithographs in various rooms. In the children's room hangs a colorful depiction of Noah's ark replete with many different animals positioned on deck. The giraffe's head sticks out, and Noah's Zaidy -- like image is rather amusing. It reflects the childlike vision that we had in first grade of this Biblical drama. But do we ever graduate from that vision?

Stepping out of our homes into the Sukkah allows us to do just that; to leave behind the limited vision to which we've been conditioned, and to realign our mindset directly with our Neshama's source. The culmination of the Chag is our spirited dancing with the Torah when we commit ourselves to gaining a truer appreciation of the Torah's teachings. Let's attempt to expand our spiritual horizons with a deeper, more Torah-aligned analysis and interpretation of Hashem's message to us. © 2020 N. Reich and torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

Bereishit begins with the story of creation, with the purpose and culmination of it resulting in the creation of humanity. After Adam and Eve falter by eating from the forbidden tree, they hide, which prompts G-d to ask them, "where are you?" (3:9). Why would G-d rhetorically ask for them where they were?

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky explains that G-d was impressing on Adam, Eve and teaching future generations that even when we make mistakes, He is still looking for us. G-d isn't looking for our errors, but rather is looking for us to own up to our mistakes and improve our actions. It's not our mistakes that define us unless we let them determine our future. May we always associate positive actions as our authentic selves and errors as simply lapses in our true character. © 2020 Rabbi S. Ressler and LeLamed, Inc.

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WILL YOU PLEASE PICK UP ALL YOUR CLOTHES?

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