

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS Z"L

Covenant & Conversation

There are words that change the world, none more so than two sentences that appear in the first chapter of the Torah: Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. (Gen. 1:26-27)

The idea set forth here is perhaps the most transformative in the entire history of moral and political thought. It is the basis of the civilisation of the West with its unique emphasis on the individual and on equality. It lies behind Thomas Jefferson's words in the American Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal [and] are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights ..." These truths are anything but self-evident. They would have been regarded as absurd by Plato who held that society should be based on the myth that humans are divided into people of gold, silver and bronze and it is this that determines their status in society. Aristotle believed that some are born to rule and others to be ruled.

Revolutionary utterances do not work their magic overnight. As Rambam explained in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, it takes people a long time to change. The Torah functions in the medium of time. It did not abolish slavery, but it set in motion a series of developments – most notably Shabbat, when all hierarchies of power were suspended and slaves had a day a week of freedom – that were bound to lead to its abolition in the course of time.

People are slow to understand the implications of ideas. Thomas Jefferson, champion of equality, was a slave-owner. Slavery was not abolished in the United States until the 1860s and not without a civil war. And as Abraham Lincoln pointed out, slavery's defenders as well as its critics cited the Bible in their cause. But eventually people change, and they do so because of the power of ideas planted long ago in the Western mind.

What exactly is being said in the first chapter of the Torah?

The first thing to note is that it is not a stand-alone utterance, an account without a context. It is in fact a polemic, a protest, against a certain way of understanding the universe. In all ancient myth the world was explained in terms of battles of the gods in their struggle for dominance. The Torah dismisses this way of thinking totally and utterly. God speaks and the universe comes into being. This, according to the great nineteenth century sociologist Max Weber, was the end of myth and the birth of Western rationalism.

More significantly, it created a new way of thinking about the universe. Central to both the ancient world of myth and the modern world of science is the idea of power, force, energy. That is what is significantly absent from Genesis 1. God says, "Let there be," and there is. There is nothing here about power, resistance, conquest or the play of forces. Instead, the key word of the narrative, appearing seven times, is utterly unexpected. It is the word *tov*, good.

Tov is a moral word. The Torah in Genesis 1 is telling us something radical. The reality to which Torah is a guide (the word "Torah" itself means guide, instruction, law) is moral and ethical. The question Genesis seeks to answer is not "How did the universe come into being?" but "How then shall we live?" This is the Torah's most significant paradigm-shift. The universe that God made and we inhabit is not about power or dominance but about *tov* and *ra*, good and evil.¹ For the first time, religion was ethicised. God cares about justice, compassion, faithfulness, loving-kindness, the dignity of the individual and the sanctity of life.

This same principle, that Genesis 1 is a polemic, part of an argument with a background, is essential to understanding the idea that God created humanity "in His image, after His likeness." This language would not have been unfamiliar to the first readers of the Torah. It was one they knew well. It was commonplace in the first civilisations, Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt, where certain people were said to be in the image of God. They were the Kings of the Mesopotamian city-states and the Pharaohs of Egypt. Nothing could have been more radical than to say that not just kings and rulers appear in God's image. We all do. Even today the idea is daring: how much more so in

¹ What I take to be the meaning is of the story of Adam and Eve and the Tree of Knowledge is for another time. In the meantime, see Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, I:2.

an age of absolute rulers with absolute power.

Understood thus, Genesis 1:26-27 is not so much a metaphysical statement about the nature of the human person as it is a political protest against the very basis of hierarchical, class- or caste-based societies whether in ancient or modern times. That is what makes it the most incendiary idea in the Torah. In some fundamental sense we are all equal in dignity and ultimate worth, for we are all in God's image regardless of colour, culture or creed.

A similar idea appears later in the Torah, in relation to the Jewish people, when God invited them to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6). All nations in the ancient world had priests, but none was "a kingdom of priests." All religions have holy individuals – but none claim that every one of their members is holy. This too took time to materialise. During the entire biblical era there were hierarchies. There were Priests and High Priests, a holy elite. But after the destruction of the Second Temple, every prayer became a sacrifice, every leader of prayer a priest, and every synagogue a fragment of the Temple. A profound egalitarianism is at work just below the surface of the Torah, and the Rabbis knew it and lived it.

A second idea is contained in the phrase, "so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky." Note that there is no suggestion that anyone has the right to have dominion over any other human being. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton, like the Midrash, states that this was the sin of Nimrod, the first great ruler of Assyria and by implication the builder of the Tower of Babel (see Gen. 10:8-11). Milton writes that when Adam was told that Nimrod would "arrogate dominion undeserved," he was horrified:

O execrable son so to aspire
Above his Brethren, to himself assuming
Authority usurped, from God not given:
He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl
Dominion absolute; that right we hold
By his donation; but man over men
He made not lord; such title to himself
Reserving, human left from human free.
(*Paradise Lost*, Book 12:64-71)

To question the right of humans to rule over other humans without their consent was at that time utterly unthinkable. All advanced societies were like this. How could they be otherwise? Was this not the very structure of the universe? Did the sun not rule the day? Did the moon not rule the night? Was there not a hierarchy of the gods in heaven itself? Already implicit here is the deep ambivalence the Torah would ultimately show toward the very institution of kingship, the rule of "man over men."

The third implication lies in the sheer paradox of God saying, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." We sometimes forget, when reading

these words, that in Judaism God has no image or likeness. To make an image of God is to transgress the second of the Ten Commandments and to be guilty of idolatry. Moses emphasised that at the Revelation at Sinai, "You saw no likeness, you only heard the sound of words." (Deut. 4:12)

God has no image because He is not physical. He transcends the physical universe because He created it. Therefore He is free, unconstrained by the laws of matter. That is what God means when He tells Moses that His name is "I will be what I will be" (Ex. 3:14), and later when, after the sin of the Golden Calf, He tells him, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." God is free, and by making us in His image, He gave us also the power to be free.

This, as the Torah makes clear, was God's most fateful gift. Given freedom, humans misuse it. Adam and Eve disobey God's command. Cain murders Abel. By the end of the parsha we find ourselves in the world about to be destroyed by the Flood, for it is filled with violence to the point where God regretted that He had ever created humanity. This is the central drama of Tanach and of Judaism as a whole. Will we use our freedom to respect order or misuse it to create chaos? Will we honour or dishonour the image of God that lives within the human heart and mind?

These are not only ancient questions. They are as alive today as ever they were in the past. The question raised by serious thinkers – ever since Nietzsche argued in favour of abandoning both God and the Judeo-Christian ethic – is whether justice, human rights, and the unconditional dignity of the human person are capable of surviving on secular grounds alone? Nietzsche himself thought not.

In 2008, Yale philosopher Nicholas Woltersdorff published a magisterial work arguing that our Western concept of justice rests on the belief that "all of us have great and equal worth: the worth of being made in the image of God and of being loved redemptively by God."² There is, he insists, no secular rationale on which a similar framework of justice can be built. That is surely what John F. Kennedy meant in his Inaugural Address when he spoke of the "revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought," that "the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God."³

Momentous ideas made the West what it is, ideas like human rights, the abolition of slavery, the equal worth of all, and justice based on the principle that right is sovereign over might.⁴ All of these ultimately derived from the statement in the first chapter

² Nicholas Woltersdorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 393.

³ John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, Washington, DC, 20 January 1961.

⁴ Read Rabbi Sacks' Introduction to his *Essays on Ethics* to understand his expanded thoughts on this notion.

of the Torah that we are made in God's image and likeness. No other text has had a greater influence on moral thought, nor has any other civilisation ever held a higher vision of what we are called on to be. *Covenant and Conversation 5775 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©5775 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z"l and rabbisacks.org*

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd these are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, on the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." (Gen. 2:4). Imagine, for a moment, a world conducted according to strict Divine justice: punishment immediately meted out to a person committing a wrongdoing. What kind of world would this be?

On the one hand, we would never have the question of why bad things happen to good people, because an evil act would be stopped in its tracks; after all, any innocent person's suffering would violate the principle of Divine justice. Thus, the Nazi soldier's hand would wither in the process of unsheathing his knife to harm a Jewish baby, and the individual's voice would be silenced before he was able to articulate a word of slander.

On the other hand, if evil could not exist because of the all-encompassing powers of Divine justice, how would a human being differ from a laboratory rat, conditioned to move down a certain tunnel, jolts of electricity guiding its choices?

For the world to exist with human beings granted the choice to wield either a murderer's knife or a physician's scalpel, with human beings not as powerless puppets but rather as potential partners with the Divine, God must hold back from immediate punishment.

Compassion (rahamim) must be joined with justice (din) so that the Almighty will grant the possibility of the wicked to repent, the opportunity to those who have fallen to rise once again, and offer the challenge to a fallible humanity to perfect an imperfect world.

Indeed, Rashi, the Biblical commentator par excellence, notes that the first verse of Genesis, in describing the world's creation, uses not the Divine Name "Y-H-V-H" ("Hashem"), associated with the Divine attribute of compassion, but rather the Divine Name "Elohim", associated with the Divine attribute of justice, because initially The Holy One, Blessed be He, intended to create a world of strict justice.

However, the Almighty realized, as it were, that the world could not endure in such a mode, and therefore gave precedence to Divine compassion, uniting it with Divine justice. This explains, says Rashi, why the verse (Gen. 2:4) that leads this essay utilizes

the Divine Names "Hashem Elohim", combining the Divine attributes of compassion and justice.

There is, however, a steep price we must pay for this Divine compassion and human freedom of choice: the suffering of innocents. If people have the free will to act, then some people will take actions that harm others. And even those who act appropriately will not necessarily see the blessings of their good deeds.

In fact, the Talmud declares, 'there is no reward for the fulfillment of commandments in this world' [Kiddushin 39b], leaving Divine reward and punishment for the afterlife. In effect, Divine compassion allowing for free will and ultimate repentance must enable individuals to do even what God, in a perfect world, would not allow them to do!

In accordance with this theology, a Hasidic teaching provides an alternative way of reading the first three words in the Torah, 'Bereishit bara Elohim,' usually translated, 'In the beginning God created...' Since there is an etnachta ('stop' sign; semicolon) cantillation underneath the third word in the phrase, the words can also be taken to mean, 'Beginnings did God create.' This reading provides hope and optimistic faith even in a world devoid of reward.

Anyone who has experienced significant lifestyle changes – whether repentant Jews, recovering addicts, or marriages between widowed or divorced people – understands the significance of the challenge and opportunity of 'another chance.' Free will, the concept of making your own choices, implies that sometimes mistakes will be made and tragedies will occur.

But instead of Divine justice descending as a bolt of lightning, Divine compassion emerges to absorb the lethal voltage. Holding off Divine justice is saying we always have another chance to better ourselves, to redeem the tragedy, to try again. And is this not what beginnings are all about?

True repentance means carving out a new beginning for oneself. Beginnings, therefore, go hand in hand with Divine compassion, and Divine faith in the human personality to recreate him/herself and to forge a new destiny. The sinner isn't shut out forever; he is always given another opportunity through repentance, another possibility of re-creating for himself and his immediate environment, a new beginning.

Thus, in the Torah's opening word, Bereishit ("beginning"), we find not only the theme of the Torah, but of the entirety of existence: God created an imperfect and sometimes unjust world to allow the possibility of change and growth. If change weren't possible, if human behavior were as fixed as that of all other mammals, then there would be no need for, and no uniqueness within, human beings. The Glory of God and humanity is to be found in the opening phrase of the Bible: 'God created beginnings' – new opportunities and manifold re-awakenings. ©2021 Ohr Torah

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RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The Torah in this week's opening reading begins with a description of the generations of human beings – the narrative of human life and civilization. It points out that originally there was a choice of whether to live in paradise in the Garden of Eden, or to attempt to reach for hoped-for human greatness and accomplishment through knowledge, intellect, and the human spirit.

That choice, which was made for us and for all the succeeding generations of human beings -the untold billions that have inhabited this planet for millennia, led to our expulsion from Paradise and the Garden of Eden, into a very dangerous and challenging world.

The epic poem of English literature by John Milton who entitled his work "Paradise Lost", shows that since the beginning of time humankind has attempted, somehow, to regain its foothold in that original paradise, but all to no avail. We can well imagine the fright and trauma of our biological ancestors, forced into the world of wild animals, great and fearsome reptiles, and an unforgiving earth that produced thorns and weeds, from which, somehow, by enormous effort, ingenuity and the sweat of their brows, food would have to be toiled for, produced, and then gathered.

The story of humankind until this day is the never-ending quest to be able to feed and sustain itself in all types of harsh environments and demanding situations. It may not be an exaggeration to view all the conflicts and wars that have marked human history until today, as the attempts to gain more land and territory to secure sustenance.

The Germans slaughtered tens of millions of innocent people, to achieve what they call 'lebenstraum' – room to live and find sustenance. However, such attempts to gain for oneself by destroying others is not only morally reprehensible but is also self-defeating in practice as well as counterproductive.

But this is only part of the human struggle. The other part, equally important and even more difficult to achieve, is to somehow find the way back to that Paradise, from which the human race was expelled. This search lies at the root of all our dissatisfaction, depression, and emotional turmoil. We know instinctively that we are not in our real homes and that we should be in a better and more spiritual place.

Judaism posits that through the Torah and the fulfillment of its value system, we can gain a foothold on the road that leads us back to paradise and eternity. This road is also strewn with thorns and obstacles. Paradise is not gained by the fainthearted, or by those who seek only leisure and comfort in their lives. In fact,

the difficulties that all of us encounter in life are themselves the very tools that will help us regain our footing and direction towards paradise.

This week's reading emphasizes that we were born to struggle, to suffer discomfort and constant challenge, and to live in a tense and dangerous world. Nevertheless, the road to paradise does exist, and each of us is tasked with finding it and negotiating with it to its eternal end. ©2021 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

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 AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Why is it that in Genesis chapter 1, male and female are described as being created together (Genesis 1:27), while in Genesis chapter 2, Eve emerges from Adam’s rib? (2:21–23).

Rashi suggests that Genesis 1 is a general story of creation in which the reader is told that male and female were created on the sixth day; Genesis 2 then details how and in what sequence Adam and Eve came into being (Rashi, Genesis 1:27).

The Talmud records that Adam and Eve were originally created with “two faces,” and the rib narrative concerns the bifurcation of Adam into two distinct beings, male and female (Ketubot 8a).

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, of blessed memory, in *The Lonely Man of Faith*, suggests that Adam of Genesis 1 portrays majestic and creative characteristics of the human being capable of accomplishing virtually anything. Therefore, male and female are created together, as Adam requires a work partner to collaborate with him in controlling the world.

While Adam in Genesis 1 is concerned with how to conquer the world, in Genesis 2, Adam deals with the existential question of “Why? For what purpose?” Adam in Genesis 2 senses his own finiteness and loneliness (Genesis 2:18). It is in response to this loneliness that God creates Eve. Together Adam and Eve give each other the comfort and love they desperately need.

In the end, the two chapters reflect different aspects of the human being. The goal is to merge these

aspects into one whole personality.

Yet another possibility also comes to mind. Genesis 1 deals with the essence of humanity; it is “internal” and qualitative, concentrating on the value of the human persona. What makes the human being superior to the rest of creation is that every person is created in the image of God. Tzelem E-lohim is not the monopoly of one gender; it is the common heritage of all humankind.

Hence, Genesis 1, which emphasizes the inestimable value of human beings, states, “male and female created He them” (1:27). This phrasing underscores the fundamental principle that male and female are of equal importance, equal value, with neither one greater than the other.

Genesis 2, on the other hand, may be seen as the story of how the human being was formed; it is an “external” and quantitative description not only of the internal mechanical process of creation but of the respective roles of men and women.

My sense is that the Torah is not fully egalitarian. In the vast, vast majority of areas, the roles of men and women overlap. There are, however, distinctions cutting in both directions – i.e., what women can do and men cannot, and what men can do and women cannot. This is true in both the physical and metaphysical realms.

Thus, when describing the creation of Eve, the Torah states: “And the Lord, God, said, it is not good that Adam is alone, let Me make for him [Adam] an ezer kenegdo” (2:18). Ezer (literally, help) refers to the overlapping roles; kenegdo (literally, against) refers to the distinctive roles.

In effect, God says, I will create a help (ezer) to stand near him (kenegdo), to share life experiences on a practical and existential level. From the Torah’s perspective, men and women, while almost always having identical roles, have some roles that are complementary as they relate to each other, to the Jewish community, and to the larger world. ©2011 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 differentiated between the light and the dark.” (Beraishis 1:4) It is a bit difficult to understand the separating of light and dark, as they are not really combined. Rather, when light exists, darkness does not, and vice versa. To explain this, Rashi tells us that once again (as in verse 1) we need to approach it through the Aggadic eyes of our Sages.

They say that Hashem realized the light was “too good” for the wicked, so He stored it away for the

righteous in the future. This harkens back to the first posuk, where Chazal teach us that at first Hashem wanted to create the world with the Midas Hadin, the attribute of Justice, but He realized the world could not exist that way. Therefore, He advanced Midas Harachamim, the attribute of Mercy and attached Justice to it.

The simple explanation, Rashi then says, is that Hashem did not want light and dark to be utilized in a mixed-up way, i.e. light in some areas, darkness in others, despite being close to each other, or else an hour or two of light then a couple hours of darkness, etc. Therefore, He established "time zones" where it would be day and night, in which the light and darkness would function.

If Rashi has a viable explanation for the separation, why does he declare, "we need to come onto the words of Aggada"? It seems that it is important for us to know that Hashem did not want the wicked to use the light of Creation so it was replaced with something else. Even so, why mention the earlier Aggadic interpretation? Are the two connected?

The concepts of "light" and "dark" represent clarity. When everything is illuminated, one can grasp the situation much more easily than when things are shrouded in darkness. Hashem did not want the two to overlap, lest people use the shadows to disguise their actions and intentions. He therefore hid this light of clarity away for the future when the righteous, who would use it properly, would be its sole beneficiaries.

This very much connects to the earlier thought. If the world were to operate solely on Midas Hadin, the people would never be able to survive. They would undoubtedly make mistakes and swift Justice would be the end of them. Therefore, Hashem made Mercy precede Justice and be taken into account as well. If the wicked were able to use the light of Creation, they might find a way to use the truth and clarity against others. Therefore, it was hidden away.

Though light and dark were separated, a vestige of the original creation remained. Mercy is not based on ignorance of the facts, but on full knowledge of them. However, it can rein in the Justice because it also is aware of other mitigating circumstances, even if that's just the damage which would be caused by strict justice. In this light, Mercy and Justice can operate hand-in-hand, and enable the world to survive.

A historian discovered a little-known, but very vicious disagreement that raged between a renowned Chasidic court and another big chassidus in the pre-war years. It seemed to this historian in hindsight that the well-respected group was wrong and the other Rebbe was right.

One day the historian was walking in Boro Park, Brooklyn, and saw a shingle indicating the shul inside belonged to a Rebbe of that lineage. He approached the Rav, offering to write a book that would

vindicate his grandfather and likely help him build a larger following.

The young Rebbe demurred, saying: "The Holocaust buried 6 million precious neshamos -- perhaps we can let it bury one machlokes as well?" (as heard from R' Betzalel Mandel, Moscow Community Kollel.) © 2021 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

Kayin and Hevel

The story of Kayin and Hevel has long been a difficult section of the Torah. We are presented with the first murder, we are not informed of the reasons for the rejection of Kayin's offering and the acceptance of Hevel's, and we are unclear as to the significance and the severity of the punishment. With some insight from the commentaries, at least we will be able to clarify some of the difficulties with this passage.

The Torah states, "And Hevel was a shepherd and Kayin was a worker of the land." From our short introduction to the two brothers, we can understand several things. Kayin, the firstborn, worked in the field. This was a very natural profession, as everything that he would need could come from agriculture. Man needed food, clothing, and shelter, all of which could be acquired by planting and harvesting. According to HaRav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch, the agricultural profession is a time-consuming and energy-consuming profession which totally absorbs a person who has chosen to be involved in it. The punishment upon leaving Gan Eden, of the yoke of providing food for one's self, makes the farmer subjugated to his work. The worker then can become influenced by the forces of Nature and he may begin to worship those forces. This leads to the rise of idolatry and the misuse of other humans by slavery. An ideal and necessary occupation (agriculture) can become the downfall of those who chose it.

Hevel, on the other hand, chose a profession which is pastoral. Since the very existence of the animals is not through Man, there is less misunderstanding that any success is "by my strength and the power of my hand". Man as a shepherd is more readily free to allow his mind to examine the world and Hashem and Man's relationship with both. Man becomes more caring and understanding of the needs of others. A shepherd, with his time spent on more ethereal tasks, is able to discern the uniqueness of Hashem and the failings of idols.

It would be a mistake to assume that there was something inherently wrong with Kayin's offering. Rashi comments that Kayin's offering was "from the worst", and quotes a Midrash that says that it was flax. Is that to mean that since he did not bring Hashem food, but instead something as unimportant as flax, that the offering was lacking something? HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin explains that agriculture was an important

profession for two reasons, food and clothing. Only Adam and Chava were given clothes made of animal skin, which were prepared by Hashem. The tanning process had not yet been invented. Man had to use cotton and linen (flax) for clothing. If we would argue that Hevel's gift of an animal was more important, we must remember that meat was not sanctioned by Hashem until the time of Noach. Hevel raised sheep for the wool that he could gather. His sacrifice was a loss of wool not a loss of food.

Hirsch explains that two people can bring the same offering, pray the same prayers, and yet present themselves to Hashem in two completely different ways. The pasuk says, "and Hashem turned to Hevel and to his offering." At the same time, we are told "and to Kayin and his offering He did not turn." The fact that Hashem's turning was mentioned before Hevel's name, indicates that it is the person who was accepted or rejected by Hashem. Kayin's offering did not truly differ from Hevel's. It was Kayin's attitude when bringing his offering and when facing his rejection that indicated his poor relationship with Hashem.

Kayin brought "from the fruit of the ground". Kayin is criticized because his action does not appear to have any foresight. The words do not indicate any thought behind his actions. It would seem that the Torah would have indicated exactly what he brought and perhaps given us some insight as to the significance of his choice. Hevel brings "from the firstborn of his flock and from their fats". Here the Torah is more specific, and one can sense that there was reason behind Hevel's gift.

When Hashem rejected Kayin's gift, the Torah tells us that "it was very annoying to Kayin and his face fell." Hashem asked Kayin, "why are you angry and why is your face fallen?" Amazingly Hashem instructed him on the proper attitude that he should have. "Is it not true that if you do good you will be forgiven and if you do not do good sin crouches at the opening, its longing is towards you yet you will rule over it." Hashem told Kayin that he is capable of controlling the evil which is waiting to entice him if he is prepared to do good. Kayin must realize that his misfortune was caused by himself and his attitude. He must accept the responsibility of his actions and search within himself to find a different approach to Hashem's world. Instead, however, Kayin argued with Hevel and murdered him, giving in to that sin which crouched at his door.

We live in a world which has difficulty accepting responsibility. Psychiatrists and counselors make a comfortable living from our need to place the blame for our failure, popularity, rejection, and nearly every emotion on our parents, teachers, friends, bosses, religion, or any other factor, rather than on ourselves. Kayin's first reaction towards his sin and punishment is typical of this attitude. He questions whether Hashem is overreacting to his sin by making him a wanderer

who no longer can till the soil and receive its reward. "Is my iniquity too great to be borne?" Even though he admits to his sin, he is reluctant to face any consequences.

It is interesting that agriculture becomes the major profession of the B'nei Yisrael once they enter the Land. Agriculture ties one to a particular plot of land. But it is only after receiving the Torah that the land takes on all of the mitzvot attached to it. These mitzvot changed the time-consuming aspect of agriculture into a way to serve Hashem. This raised Kayin's profession to the same level as Hevel's. Mitzvot enable Man to serve Hashem through all of his actions. May we also learn to serve Hashem, each through our own professional and personal lives.

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RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

Clouds of Chesed, Rain of Din

“Now all the trees of the field were not yet upon the earth, and all the herb of the field had not yet sprouted. Hashem Elokim had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to work the soil." Beer Mayim Chaim: "How should we look at rainfall? Should we attribute it to din, the attribute of judgment within G-d, or to chesed, to His attribute of lovingkindness?"

We may not have to look any further than our pasuk, and its puzzling use of two of G-d's Names: Hashem and Elokim. The pasuk may be hinting to us that rain should be appreciated as a combination of both attributes -- of chesed and of din.

Without our pasuk, we could make the argument on behalf of either attribute. On the one hand, rain is so vital to life, that we would place it squarely in the chesed column. We depend on what we grow for our nutrition. The success of agricultural endeavors depends on adequate rainfall. If life begins as chesed, rainfall sustains it.

Chazal, on the other hand, apparently link rain to din. They call the berachah in Shemonah Esrei that speaks of precipitation gevuros geshamim; (Taanis 2A) gevurah, of course, is practically synonymous with din. They point to the phenomenon of rain sometimes falling with great -- even destructive -- force as the reason for linking rain with din. The Zohar (Terumah 154B) speaks explicitly of rain originating in chesed, but handing it off, as it were, to din, which becomes an active agent in its delivery. (Think, says the Zohar, of the way we perform netilas yodayim. We hold the vessel in our right hand -- which is associated with the primary attribute of chesed -- in order to fill it. We then pass it to the left -- or din. It is the left that pours the water, but those waters were obtained through the right!)

It seems, then, that both chesed and din are important. We can offer a simple reason why. Chesed, as we experience it, comes about as a kind of partnership with din -- a mixture we sometimes call rachamim. The pure form of chesed is so powerful that it would overwhelm us. This world cannot deal with the intensity of its power. In effect, pure chesed must be tempered by the limitations of din to be available and useful to us. Rain, an offshoot of Hashem's chesed, reaches us in a cooperative venture between chesed and din.

This amalgam is expressed in the Name Hashem Elokim, combining both attributes. Seen this way, our pasuk says that this combination did not result in rain falling upon the earth, because Man had not yet been created to perform the work, the avodah, that was necessary. That avodah is Man's occupying himself with Torah and with prayer at all times. Hashem made His responsiveness to the needs of the earth contingent upon Man living up to Hashem's expectations of him.

How does Man's spiritual output relate to this special Name: Hashem Elokim? We need look only so far as another pasuk (Devarim 4:39) that uses this Name. "You shall know this day and take to your heart that Hashem, He is Elokim." The word for "your heart" is levavcha, which is a plural form. Chazal take that plural to suggest that Man need serve His Creator with two hearts, as it were. He need serve Hashem with the two opposing tendencies he finds in his heart: the yetzer tov, and the yetzer hora. Now, the very existence of a yetzer hora and Man's capacity to make poor choices are sourced in din. Din, which limits the illumination of Hashem's chesed, allows Man to look away from it, or not notice it at all, and thus leaves room for finding evil attractive. Man often, however, summons up the determination to tame and even break the powers of evil within him. He finds that strength through joyously attaching himself to the yetzer tov, which is sourced in the goodness of Hashem's chesed.

In other words, Man is the constant platform upon which two Names of G-d -- Hashem and Elokim -- contrast with each other through their outgrowths: the yetzer tov, and the yetzer hora. By resisting the message of pure yetzer hora, Man "sweetens" din by forcibly combining it with the chesed of the yetzer tov.

The unusual implication of our pasuk turns out to be understandable. Our pasuk uses a full, compound Name to relate how Hashem did not make it rain in the Garden of Eden. Why would the Torah such a full Name to convey not what Hashem does, but what He did not do? We now understand. The blessing of rainfall, containing aspects of both chesed and din, requires that the two midos be merged. This could only happen through the avodah of Man.

Only Man, by virtue of the exercise of his free-will and suppressing his yetzer hora, can make a

contribution to the cosmic drama of producing a gentler, kinder form of din. ©2013 Rabbi Y. Adlerstein & torah.org

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

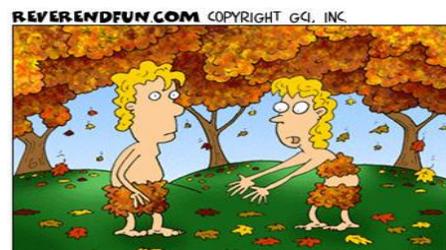
Weekly Dvar

Adam said, "The woman that You gave to be with me - she gave me of the tree and I ate." (Breishis 3:12). Rashi explains that this is evidence of a lack of gratitude, which is why Adam was banished from the Garden, to work the soil from which he was taken (Breishis 3:23). Why was expulsion his just punishment?

A wealthy family raised an orphan in their home from infancy. His treatment and style of living was absolutely equal to the other siblings. One day a poor man came to the door of this wealthy man. A deep chord of sympathy was struck within the wealthy man, so he gave to him one hundred gold coins. The man started to praise his benefactor with every benevolent phrase. The wife turned to her husband and remarked on what a stunning display of gratitude they had just witnessed. She then addressed the phenomena that this fellow with a single donation could not stop saying thanks and is probably still singing praises as he sits in his home. In contrast, the orphan, who has been the beneficiary of kindness worth much more, has never once offered even a hint of thankfulness.

The husband called over the orphan boy and pointed him to the door. He held his head low and left. The days to follow were a bitter example of how brutal life can be "out there". Without food and shelter he was forced to take the lowest job. For weeks he struggled and suffered just barely subsisting, and all the while looking longingly back at the blessed and dainty life he left behind. At a calculated time the wealthy man sent for the boy to be returned to his former status within the family. However, now having gone through what he had, he thanked his host constantly for every bit of goodness with the joy of genuine appreciation.

As a nation and as individuals we have all witnessed this pattern and experienced it too many times. The key to holding a blessing is appreciation. Without that attitude of gratitude the weight of the goodness that surrounds a man pushes him into exile till he is ready to gratefully surrender. This is only the most fundamental and the oldest lesson in history. ©2007 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc



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WILL YOU PLEASE PICK UP ALL YOUR CLOTHES?