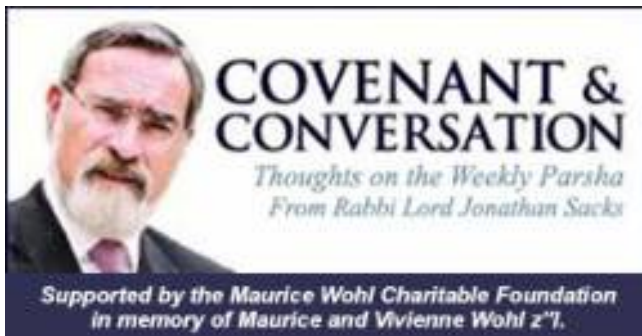


In this Issue

- **Covenant and Conversation** by *Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks*
- **M'oray Ha'Aish** by *Rabbi Ari Kahn*
- **Mayanot** by *Rabbi Noson Weisz*
- **Rabbi Frand On the Weekly Torah Portion** by *Rabbi Yissocher Frand*



The Genesis of Love

In *The Lonely Man of Faith*, Rabbi Soloveitchik drew our attention to the fact that there are two accounts of creation. The first is in Genesis 1, the second in Genesis 2-3, and they are significantly different.

In the first, God is called Elokim, in the second, Hashem Elokim. In the first, man and woman are created simultaneously: “male and female He created them.” In the

second, they are created sequentially: first man, then woman. In the first, humans are commanded to “fill the earth and subdue it.” In the second, the first human is placed in the garden “to serve it and preserve it.” In the first, humans are described as “in the image and likeness” of God. In the second, man is created from “the dust of the earth.”

The explanation, says Rabbi Soloveitchik, is that the Torah is describing two aspects of our humanity that he calls respectively, Majestic man and Covenantal man. We are majestic masters of creation: that is the message of Genesis 1. But we also experience existential loneliness, we seek covenant and connection: that is the message of Genesis 2.

There is, though, another strange duality – a story told in two quite different ways – that has to do not with creation but with human relationships. There are two different accounts of the way the first man gives a name to the first woman. This is the first:

“This time – bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’ [*ishah*]

for she was taken from man
[ish].”

And this, many verses later, is the second:

“And the man called his wife
Eve [Chava]
because she was the mother of
all life.”

The differences between these two accounts are highly consequential.¹ In the first, the man names, not a person, but a class, a category. He uses not a name but a noun. The other person is, for him, simply “woman,” a type, not an individual. In the second, he gives his wife a proper name. She has become, for him, a person in her own right.

[2] In the first, he emphasises their similarities – she is “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” In the second, he emphasises the difference. She can give birth, he cannot. We can hear this in the very sound of the names. *Ish* and *Ishah* sound similar because they are similar. *Adam* and *Chavah* do not sound similar at all.

[3] In the first, it is the woman who is portrayed as dependent: “she was taken from man.” In the second, it is the other way around. *Adam*, from *Adamah*,

represents mortality: “By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground (*ha-adamah*) since from it you were taken.” It is *Chavah* who redeems man from mortality by bringing new life into the world.

[4] The consequences of the two acts of naming are completely different. After the first comes the sin of eating the forbidden fruit, and the punishment: exile from Eden. After the second, however, we read that God made for the couple, “garments of skin” (“*or*” is spelled here with the letter *ayin*). and clothed them. This is a gesture of protection and love. In the school of Rabbi Meir, they read this phrase as “garments of light” (“*or*” with an *aleph*).¹ God robed them with radiance.

Only *after* the man has given his wife a proper name do we find the Torah referring to God Himself by His proper name alone, namely Hashem (in Genesis 4). Until then He has been described as either Elokim or Hashem Elokim – Elokim being the impersonal aspect of God: God as law, God as power, God as justice. In other words, *our relationship to God parallels our relationship to one another. Only when we respect and recognise the uniqueness of another person are we*

capable of respecting and recognising the uniqueness of God Himself.

Now let us return to the two creation accounts, this time not looking at what they tell us about humanity (as in *The Lonely Man of Faith*), but simply at what they tell us about creation.

In Genesis 1, God creates *things* – chemical elements, stars, planets, lifeforms, biological species. In Genesis 2-3, He creates *people*. In the first chapter, He creates systems, in the second chapter He creates relationships. It is fundamental to the Torah’s view of reality that these things belong to different worlds, distinct narratives, separate stories, alternative ways of seeing reality.

There are differences in tone as well. In the first, creation involves no effort on the part of God. He simply speaks. He says “Let there be,” and there was. In the second, He is actively engaged. When it comes to the creation of the first human, He does not merely say, “Let us make man in our image according to our likeness.” He performs the creation Himself, like sculptor fashioning an image out of clay: “Then the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into

his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

In Genesis 1, God effortlessly summons the universe into being. In Genesis 2, He becomes a gardener: “Now the Lord God planted a garden ...” We wonder why on earth God, who has just created the entire universe, should become a gardener. The Torah gives us the answer, and it is very moving: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” God wanted to give man the dignity of work, of being a creator, not just a creation. And in case the man should view such labour as undignified, God became a gardener Himself to show that this work too is Divine, and in performing it, man becomes God’s partner in the work of creation.

Then comes the extraordinarily poignant verse, “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’” God feels for the existential isolation of the first man. There was no such moment in the previous chapter. There, God simply creates. Here, God empathises. He enters into the human mind. He feels what we feel. There is no such moment in any other ancient religious literature. What is radical about biblical monotheism is not just that there is only

one God, not just that He is the source of all that exists, but that *God is closer to us than we are to ourselves*. God knew the loneliness of the first man before the first man knew it of himself.

That is what the second creation account is telling us. Creation of things is relatively easy, creation of relationships is hard. Look at the tender concern God shows for the first human beings in Genesis 2-3. He wants man to have the dignity of work. He wants man to know that work itself is Divine. He gives man the capacity to name the animals. He cares when He senses the onset of loneliness. He creates the first woman. He watches, in exasperation, as the first human couple commit this first sin. Finally, when the man gives his wife a proper name, recognising for the first time that she is different from him and that she can do something he will never do, He clothes them both so that they will not go naked into the world. That is the God, not of creation (*Elokim*) but of love (*Hashem*).

That is what makes the dual account of the naming of the first woman so significant a parallel to the dual account of God's creation of the universe. We have to create relationships before we encounter the God of relationship. We have to make space for the otherness of the human other to be able

to make space for the otherness of the Divine other. We have to give love before we can receive love.

In Genesis 1, God creates the universe. Nothing vaster can be imagined, and we keep discovering that the universe is bigger than we thought. In 2016, a study based on three-dimensional modelling of images produced by the Hubble space telescope concluded that there were between 10 and 20 times as many galaxies as astronomers had previously thought. There are more than a hundred stars for every grain of sand on earth.

And yet, almost in the same breath as it speaks of the panoply of creation, the Torah tells us that God took time to breathe the breath of life into the first human, give him dignified work, enter his loneliness, make him a wife, and robe them both with garments of light when the time came for them to leave Eden and make their way in the world.

The Torah is telling us something very powerful. Never think of people as things. Never think of people as types: they are individuals. Never be content with creating systems: care also about relationships.

I believe that relationships are where our humanity is born and grows, flowers and

flourishes. It is by loving people that we learn to love God and feel the fullness of His love for us.

1. Bereishit Rabbah 20:21.



Sins of the Parents

A new world begins; or perhaps we might better describe it as **another** new world. In the beginning, there was **the** new world, the world cryptically, even mystically, outlined in the opening verses of the Parasha. Now, there is another human history unfolding, a different sort of creation: the genesis of the post-Eden existence. This is a very different sort of creation. As opposed to *Eden*, which literally translates as a world of pleasure, this new world will be one of pain, hard work, frustration, and death.

And yet, the chronicle of this new world begins with life¹:

And the man knew Eve (Eve), his wife, and she conceived and gave birth to Kayin (Cain). She said, 'I have acquired a man with God.' (4:1)

The act of intimacy is described with the word *yada* – Adam “knew.” As this passage follows the episode of partaking from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, one cannot help but wonder if somehow Adam’s new knowledge is connected to the forbidden fruit of that very singular tree.²

Rashi avoids this line of thinking by observing that the word *yada* is (or can be taken to indicate) past tense: The intimacy had taken place at an earlier point in time – in Rashi’s opinion, prior to the sin.

And the man knew – prior to the episode recounted above, before he sinned and was expelled from the Garden of Eden; likewise, the pregnancy and birth. Had it said *va'yayda* Adam [i.e., in present or ongoing tense], it would imply that he had children after the expulsion. (Rashi 4:1)

Rashi’s comment indirectly points out that this is an unusual, perhaps even singular usage of the word *yada*; other references

to the act of intimacy use the form *va'yayda*.³ The unusual form used in this very particular instance is a purposeful switch; the message, Rashi explains, is that it relates to an event that had already transpired.

When Eve was presented to Adam we are told:

The man said, 'Now this is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She shall be called Woman (*Ishah*) because she was taken from Man (*Ish*).' A man shall therefore leave his father and mother and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the two of them were naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.⁴ (2:23-25)

Rashi draws from the verses – and the gaps between the verses – to fill in the lines of the narrative, revealing what transpired during this time of innocence.

AND THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE – What does this statement have to do with the passages that precede and follow it? It should appear just before the verse, “and He [God] made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed

them” (3:21). Instead, Scripture informs you with what plan the Serpent assailed them: he saw them naked and engaged in the act of intimacy, unashamed, and he lusted for her. (Rashi 3:1)

The Serpent was an interloper, a voyeur, who spied on Adam and Eve when they were engaged in coitus, and he hatched a plan to come between them and take Eve for himself; the Serpent’s lust is the catalyst for the sin that will follow, but Adam and Hava’s intimacy was untainted by the sin that they would soon commit.

Following Rashi’s reading and positing that *yada* indicates past tense, there are a number of alternative timelines to consider. One possibility is that as a result of eating the forbidden fruit, when their eyes were opened and they realized that they were naked, a new awareness of sexuality was ignited.⁵ In this reading, as in Rashi’s reading, “knowledge” is the key to understanding the narrative:

(6) The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable (lust?) to make one wise. She took of its fruit and ate, and she gave some to her husband with her

and he ate. (7) The eyes of both of them were opened, and they **knew** that they were naked. They sewed fig leaves together, and made for themselves loincloths. (8) They heard the voice of Hashem, God, walking in the garden in the breeze of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the Hashem, God, among the trees of the garden. (9) Hashem, God, called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” (10) He said, “I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself.” (3:6-10)

This knowledge, this new self-awareness, gives rise to a new sense of sexuality which is consummated in the Garden of Eden, immediately following the sin but before the punishment. At the same time, this same knowledge gives rise to Adam’s sense that he has something to hide: First, their nakedness, and then their sexuality, both of which result from their act of disobedience. They were caught in the act – in *flagrante delicto*. If this is indeed the moment of intimacy, it follows that Kayin is literally the child born in sin and of sin.

The key term, “knowledge,” is conspicuously absent from the description of the sin itself: What is otherwise identified as the “Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil” is described at the moment of sin as ‘pleasant’, a tree of ‘delight’ and of ‘insight’ – with an added tinge of lust.

Previously, all of the trees of the Garden were described in similar fashion:

And *Hashem Elokim* (the Eternal, Almighty God) made grow out of the ground every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; and the Tree of Life was in the [center of] the garden, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. (2:9)

As the sin unfolds, the tree from which they have been forbidden to eat is set apart from all the trees of the Garden with the addition of one descriptive phrase: This tree and its fruit possess one additional attribute: *taava*, desire, lust. How was this attribute awakened? What was the spark that ignited desire? Was the conversation with the Serpent the catalyst that sparked a lust for the forbidden, or did Eve spark this lust by simply observing the forbidden tree? In other words, was lust something external to the human psyche that was

introduced by the Serpent, or was this “evil inclination” an internal, integral and essential element of the human condition?

There is a third possible timeline for the act of intimacy referred to by the word **yada**: after the expulsion from Eden. In this case, while the word **yada** indicates past tense, it does not hark as far back as the other possibilities we have examined: After Adam and Eve are sentenced and expelled from the Garden, they start a new life. That is when a child is conceived.

The implications of this timeline debate go beyond the question of **when**, and ultimately attempt to grapple with a different question altogether, a question that goes far deeper to the core of human nature: What is the nature of this child? Was he conceived in the idyllic Garden of Eden, before man’s sin? Was he the child born of sin, part and parcel of the sin? Or was this child part of the new post-Eden world, the world of pain, estrangement, confusion and frustration? Was Kayin’s conception and birth unblemished by sin, a product of sin, or an aspect of mankind’s punishment?

One striking element of the narrative is perhaps easily overlooked – because it is striking in its absence: Adam, the father of

this first child, is nowhere to be seen. Kayin is *his* progeny,⁶ but we find no interaction between Adam and Kayin. It is left to his mother to name him – and perhaps raise him. When another son is born, Adam is similarly absent.⁷

The man knew his wife Eve. She conceived and gave birth to Kayin. She said, 'I have acquired a man with God.' She gave birth again, to his brother, Hevel. Hevel was a shepherd, while Kayin worked the land. (4:1,2)

What was the impact of the expulsion on this couple? How did each of them perceive their new situation? We might consider their very different origins, and consider the implications: Adam, who was formed outside of Eden and placed in the Garden,⁸ may have seen his current situation as a return to his roots. Eve, on the other hand, was a product of Eden; she had lost the only home she had ever known, and now had to contend with a harsh, unfamiliar “new normal.” Perhaps the trauma of leaving Eden was felt more acutely by Eve, than by Adam. Perhaps the gap between their perceptions of the situation – Adam felt at home in exile while Eve felt estranged and lost outside

the Garden of Eden – created a wedge that drove them apart.

Eve’s awareness of the results of her sin is acute, and she seeks healing, rapprochement; what we are unsure of is the nature of the “acquisition” she hopes for. Is she speaking of reconciliation with God, or with her estranged husband, or perhaps with her son? Either way, with the name she gives her son, Kayin will serve as a living reminder of the healing she seeks, the rekindling of intimacy in this strange new world.

The name of God with which Eve reaches out is surely not a random choice: She utters the ineffable name of God, which we translate as “The Eternal” – a name that invokes God’s attributes of warmth, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.⁹ This, in stark contrast to the aspect of God both Eve and the Serpent used in the moments before the sin, when referring to the command emanating from **Elohim**, “The Almighty,” the name of God related to strictness and judgement¹⁰ that forbade partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.

Now the Serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Almighty,

Eternal God had made. He said to the woman, “Has God Almighty (*Elokim*) indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God Almighty (*Elokim*) has said, ‘You shall not eat of it, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” The Serpent said to the woman, “You will surely not die. Rather God Almighty (*Elokim*) knows that in the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God Almighty (*Elokim*), knowing good and evil.” (3:1-5)

The difference between the command itself and the manner in which it is relayed is striking: The text teaches us that the commandment to abstain from the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was articulated by “The Eternal, Almighty God,” (“*Hashem Elokim*”) – both the Eternal God, indicating warmth and mercy, and the Almighty God of judgment. This same formulation is explained by Rashi’s comments on the opening verse of the Torah: “In the beginning Almighty God (*Elokim*) created heaven and earth”:

ALMIGHTY GOD CREATED – It does not state “The Eternal God created,” because at first God intended to create [the world] under the attribute of strict justice, but He realized that the world could not thus endure and therefore gave precedence to Divine Mercy, and joined it with Divine Justice. This is alluded to in the verse (Genesis 2:4) – “On the day that the Eternal, Almighty God (*Hashem Elokim*) made earth and heaven.” (Rashi 1:1)

In other words, the prohibition was intended to prevent death from entering the Garden; it was a commandment that created boundaries and limits, but it was a commandment emanating from love and compassion.

16) And the Eternal, Almighty God (*Hashem Elokim*) commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may surely eat; (17) but of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, you shall not eat of it; for on the day that you eat of it you will surely die.” (2:16,17)

Eve’s use of the name of God that implies judgement, boundaries, and limitations –

the name used by the Serpent to express a very subtly insidious philosophical position – reveals her own inner world: She perceives the law as arbitrary, the prohibition against the Tree of Knowledge coming from a place of strictness. This position is only possible if reality is obscured. The fruit of this tree is deadly. The prohibition was created in order to protect Eve and her husband, to save all of humanity. This is not a meaningless, arbitrary law. Her life depends on adherence. When God commanded not to eat from this tree, both names – Eternal and Almighty, *Hashem* and *Elohim* – were used to indicate that although it is a strict law with massive consequences, it emanates from a place of compassion. The Serpent turns the tables by shifting the focus; he refers only to the limiting aspects, speaks only to the power that is embodied by the ability to make life and death judgements, attempts to entice her with the promise of unlimited power unhindered by compassion and intimacy.

In the desolation of the aftermath, Eve takes charge. Determined to fix the shattered world, Eve now speaks of the aspect of God which is identified with mercy and compassion. She counters the

specter of death with a commitment to life, and healing¹¹ as her son Kayin arrives.

Apparently cognizant of the role he was born to play in human history, Kayin sets out to make things right. He dedicates his life to working the land, to workings the earth that has been cursed as a result of that same sin. This is his destiny.

But there is a slight complication. Another brother arrives. We are told nothing about his parents' intimacy or the pregnancy; without fanfare or expectation, he simply arrives. This child's name is not explained; he simply is, he comes to be, his existence almost an afterthought. Even his name indicates this ephemeral, weightless existence: "Hevel" is nothingness, or close to it. It is a wisp or a whisper. He seems devoid of importance.

She continued to give birth to his **brother** Hevel. (4:2)

The one piece of information which is shared is that Hevel is Kayin's brother. We don't know if they are twins, but brothers they are. As their story unfolds we learn that "brotherhood" is an emotion that is absent in Kayin. Perhaps his hyper-focus on fixing his mother's world leaves his own inner world with no room for another

task – even if it is the task of building a loving relationship with his own brother. Perhaps Eve's dismissive attitude toward her second son is internalized by her first son. Perhaps in her quest to create life and rekindle hope, Eve paved the way for the actualization of the curse which she brought into the world: Indeed, there is death, and she is its unwilling architect.

Kayin's downward spiral was avoidable. We see it set in motion – in terms of language and content – by his mother. His failure to gain God's favor – which was, quite literally, his *raison d'être*, the meaning and purpose of his existence – was more than he could bear. Coming in second in a two-person race, bested by someone whose existence was a mere afterthought at best, sent him into a depression. Healing the world was his job, his only job, and his alone; how had he failed? The problem seems to be that his offering was, in a sense, "Hevel-like," an afterthought, another check on the checklist, and was therefore not accepted by God.

(5) But He did not favorably regard Kayin and his offering, and Kayin was very angry, and his face fell. (6) The Eternal (*Hashem*) said to Kayin, "Why

are you angry, and why has your face fallen?(7) If you do well, will you not be uplifted? And if you do not do well, sin crouches at the door. Its desire is for you, but you shall rule over it.” (4:5-7)

Kayin becomes depressed, but God admonishes and instructs him, reminding him that he has the ability to control these feelings. We should not overlook the cluster of words used here that echo God’s words to Kayin’s parents:

(16) To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply your travails in pregnancy. In sorrow you will bear children; and your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” (17) To Adam He said, “Because you have listened to your wife’s voice, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground on your behalf. Through sorrow you will eat of it all the days of your life. (3:16,17)

Eve was punished with the pain and sorrow of childbirth, and Adam with the pain and sorrow of working the land. Kayin inherited their combined sorrow, but

his pain was different than theirs. Neither childbirth nor even physical labor broke his spirit or his resolve; it was his brother’s success that tormented him. God reminds Kayin that he has the ability to rule (*timshol* תִּמְשֹׁל־בּוֹ) over his desires, to control his passion (*teshuka* תִּשְׁוּקָתוֹ), using the same words He used to describe to Eve the impact of her sin on the human condition in the post-Eden world.

Kayin was born with the innate ability to control his passions, but he fails to develop this ability. He sees himself as the savior and his brother as expendable, unimportant, an annoyance standing in the way of his mission. He has no sense of brotherhood. He takes no pleasure in his brother’s success, learns nothing about the service of God from his brother’s offering. In a fit of passion, Kayin snuffs out the wisp that was his brother.

Apparently, the sins of the parents are, indeed, visited on the children.

While Eve may have been convinced that as she and her husband still live and breathe, the ultimate punishment has been avoided and death has been averted, Kayin bears the curse. Through Kayin and Hevel, punishment is exacted.

We do not know if Eve experienced the pain of childbirth; this would depend on when she conceived and gave birth. Perhaps she thought she could skip over the pain of raising children by channeling all her hopes and dreams through Kayin, who would fix the world from the ground up and clear the way for their return to Eden. But eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil results in Eve carrying two children, one who would prove to be good by living his life to serve God with the best of what he has, while the other son would carry evil within – evil which he should have controlled, but did not.

Kayin goes through the perfunctory steps of serving God, as he was programmed to do, as he must, but he allows the evil within to control him. And when that evil is allowed to metastasize, Kayin morphs into an angel of death. Eve’s hope for redemption, for life, becomes the source of death.

Perhaps only when her other son lay lifeless on the ground, as his blood seeped into the cursed earth, did she come to understand that the curse of death she had brought upon the world was unavoidable. Now, the pain of childbirth, the sorrow of raising children, and the finality of death

become wrapped together for all time. At that moment she finally learns that man can hide from God but cannot avoid His gaze. Death has invaded her home, and will continue to visit the homes of her descendants – even as they bring more life into the world. She is, indeed Eve, the mother of all life – but she is also the mother of Kayin, and the mother of all death.

1. Adam named his wife Chava- because of her identity as the mother of all life Bereishit 3:20.
2. See Bereishit 3:5, 19:33, 38:16, 39:6 for other uses of the word which are intriguing.
3. See Bereishit 4:17, 25
4. See the comments of Rashi (2:25) – prior to eating the fruit they didn’t **know** of modesty to distinguish between Good or bad.
5. See the comments of Radak 3:7, Seforno 3:7
6. Regarding the possibility that Kayin is not the progeny of Adam, see my Echoes of Eden Bereishit – chapter one, “In Search of the Serpent”.
7. Bereishit 4:25. Also note that as opposed to the birth of Kayin when the name of God is used, in this naming “Elokim” is used.
8. See Bereishit 2:15:

9. "God Elokim, took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it."
10. See Rashi Shmot 34:6, and Bereishit Rabbah 8:4, and note the use of the word *yodaya* יָדָע from Psalms 1:6.
11. This is the attribute of Divine mercy. The one (the first ה') alludes to God having mercy on the sinner before he sins and the other after he has sinned and repented:
12. See Rashi Shmot 20:1.
13. See the comments of Bkhor Shor, Hizkuni and Rabbenu Bachya on Bereishit 4:1.

בכור שור בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק ד פסוק א

קִנִּיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־ה'. קִנִּיתִי אוֹתוֹ בְּגוֹפִי וּבְצַעְרִי וּבְעֶצְבוֹנִי אֶת הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְשֵׁב אֶת עוֹלָמוֹ, וְאִם אִישׁ הִמְתִּי הִנֵּה אִישׁ שֶׁלֹּמֶתִי.

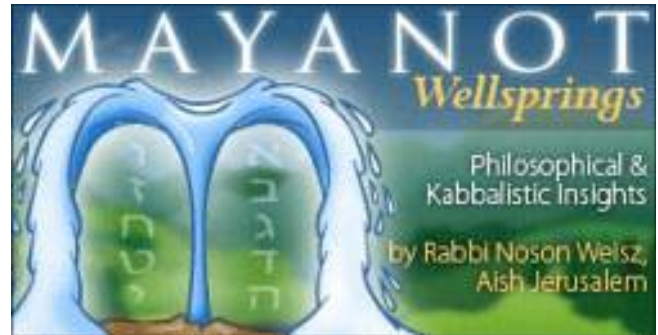
חזקוני בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק ד פסוק א

[והאדם ידע את וגו' למשכב]. קניתי איש את ה' בבריאת עולם דהיינו מבראשית עד אלה תולדות השמים לא נזכר הקדוש ברוך הוא אלא בשם **אלקים** לומר שברא עולמו במדת הדיון ובעשיית העולם ובתיקונו דהיינו מאלה תולדות השמים עד והאדם ידע הוא נזכר בשתי אזכרות לומר לך ששיתף הרחמים עם מדת הדיון אולי יוכל עולמו לעמוד ואל תשיבני אף כי אמר אלקים, אשר בתוך הגן אמר אלקים, כי יודע אלקים, לפי שהן דברי הנחש וחיה, ופן והאדם ידע ואילך שיצר הרע בא ומתגדל בבריות סילק הקדוש ברוך הוא את מדת דיון ונזכר במדת הרחמים לבדה להתנהג בה עם בריותיו כדי להעמיד ולקיים עולמו.

רבינו בחיי בראשית פרשת בראשית פרק ד פסוק א

והאדם ידע את חוה אשתו. אחר שראה שנטרד מגן עדן בחטאו ונקנסה עליו מיתה ולא יחיה לעולם,

הוצרך להזדווג עם חוה לקיום המין להשאיר אדם אחריו. ודע כי התשמיש בלשון התורה נקרא "ידיעה", ...ועוד תאות התשמיש היתה סבתה עץ הדעת, ולכן נקרא בשם ידיעה.



The Determinism of Free Will

The most important single creation described in Genesis is the creation of the first human being. Most of the confusion in the world stems from the fact that we human beings do not fully comprehend the nature of this creation. This lack of comprehension has allowed widely divergent opinions to flourish even among serious students of human behavior.

One school of thought maintains that man is merely a very complex animal, a product of the evolutionary process, a creature that managed to climb to the top of the philo-genetic scale by dint of some type of primeval struggle. The details of the theory of evolution keep changing

constantly as each new version is discovered to be scientifically faulty, but all the versions fall under the umbrella of Darwin's original concept of the "survival of the fittest."

The opposite school maintains that man is primarily a spiritual being whose bodily component is his less significant part. Man's mind is a unique phenomenon in the cosmos and could not possibly have evolved from any lower life form. In this view man is almost an alien to this planet. Indeed, it has been suggested by more than one serious thinker that man is actually a space colonist whose origins are to be found in another galaxy.

GOD'S POINT OF VIEW

It should surely be fascinating to explore what the Creator Himself had to say about the subject.

A good way to begin the presentation of God's point of view is with the following passage of Maimonides:

Every human being has control over himself. If he wants to push himself towards the right path and become a *tzaddik* (holy man) he is able to do so. If he wants to go down the wrong path and be a *rasha* (evil man)

he is able to do so. This is what the Torah writes: *Behold man has become like the Unique One among us knowing good and bad: and now, lest he put forth his hand and take from the Tree of Life and eat and live forever.* (Genesis 3:22)

That is to say: This species man is unique in the universe and there is no other creature like him in the respect of 1) being able to determine what is right and what is wrong through the use of his own thought processes without any outside guidance; and 2) being able to do as he wishes without anyone being able to stop him. Seeing that this is so, there is a distinct possibility that he may choose to eat from the Tree of Life if he is left where he is in Paradise; therefore God banished him. (Maimonides, Laws of Repentance, 5,1)

(A careful reading of the text will reveal that the Garden of Eden contained two special trees. The famous one is the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, whose forbidden fruit prompted the commission of the first sin. The other special tree was the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:22). The fruit

of this tree was not originally forbidden as Adam was created as an immortal anyway. But after the edict of mortality was imposed on him following his sin, God naturally did not want him to partake of its fruit and thus reverse His edict.)

But surely, if God is able to banish man from Paradise then He is equally able to prevent him from reaching out to eat from the Tree of Life even if he were allowed to stay. What is the conceptual difference between putting the Tree of Life out of man's reach by banishing him from Paradise or leaving him where he is but preventing him from reaching out to the Tree of Life by force?

In answer, what Maimonides is telling us is that even God cannot interfere directly with man's freedom of action. Such interference would need to assume one of two forms:

- A. God could program man's mind so that he is not tempted to reach for the Tree of Life. This He cannot do, as man must be capable of deciding on his own what is right and what is wrong. Or,
- B. God could forcibly restrain man from surrendering to his temptation to partake of the Tree of Life. But

God cannot do this either, this sort of interference would also nullify man's free will.

The conclusion:

Nullifying man's free will amounts to destroying him, because the ability to determine his own choices is not one of the facets of man; it is his very essence.

As God was not prepared to destroy man, He was forced to transport him to an environment where he could be allowed the fullest freedom of will and yet still not be able to eat from the Tree of Life.

Thus, man's free will is his human essence according to the Torah view. To be human is to be free to make up your own mind and implement your decisions. A restriction on human freedom is a negation of humanity itself.

Indeed, the first interaction between man and God described in the Torah revolves around reward and punishment and the consequences of making free will choices. The present state of humanity and the universe it occupies is presented by the Torah as the end result of man's losing the first battle with the Satan.

It is through our own act of choice that we were driven out of Paradise and were

condemned to a mortal existence. The Torah emphasizes that man's mortality and his life of struggle and travail was a matter of his own choosing. It was not the type of existence imposed by God at creation.

DOES FREE WILL EXIST?

But does man really have free will?

A psychologist would offer the following argument:

In a sense man is free as there is no outside force compelling him to make most of the choices that he makes. But this freedom is an illusion. Every human being has a mind that is infinitely more sophisticated than the most complex supercomputer ever devised. Each mind is programmed in a particular way by a mixture of heredity and early environment that is unique to each individual human being. Heredity and early environment are both factors that are clearly outside the area of human choice.

This program contained in man's mind - that was formulated and inscribed totally without man's choice - always tells man how to optimize his possibilities whenever he is faced with a choice. When a human being makes a choice, he is merely following this optimal solution presented by his own personal program. As this

program is imposed on him, he really is compelled.

The psychologist holding the above point of view might even concede that it is possible to alter man's program with the aid of proper conditioning. However this requires the will to undergo such a regimen. If there is such a will to alter one's program, it is by definition also built into the program itself. Even when he decides to change, man is not acting out of free will.

Consequently, the psychologist concludes that free will is more of a sensation than a reality. We all feel that we are choosing freely as we are doing what we want, but what we want was programmed into us by the evolutionary process and our own early environment. The psychologist gets stuck as early as Chapter 3 of Genesis when he attempts to read through the Bible.

How can we meet this objection?

BODY VS. SOUL

Here is the way Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto, a well known post medieval Jewish thinker describes man in his work "Derech Hashem":

God built man out of a mixture of opposites. On the one hand, man is an

earthy creature driven by his physical desires and sensations just like any other animal. This aspect of man is impermeable to spirituality and has a very self-centered approach to every experience and relationship. The predominant issue under consideration when making decisions for this aspect of the human being is always whether this experience or relationship will afford him pleasure or gratification.

On the other hand, God also gave man a soul. Man's soul is totally uninterested in physical gratification and has no drive toward self-interest. Its fondest wish is to become reunited with its Divine origins and become part of the Infinite. It is this aspect of man that finds pleasure and beauty in knowledge for its own sake, and in selfless commitment to relationships with other human beings and with God.

This dual aspect of man is described clearly in the Torah itself.

And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the earth, and He blew into him the soul of life; and man became a living being.
(Genesis 2:7)

Nachmanides, basing himself on Onkelos and other rabbinic sources explains this verse thus:

God took a creature called Adam, who was created along with the other higher animals on the sixth day, and who therefore was already walking around in his present animal form, and He blew into this humanoid the "soul of life," turning the humanoid into the present day human being by adding a soul to his earthy animal part. The soul is software in contrast to the body which is man's hardware.

Thus each element of man contributes something positive to the entirety. The sense of individuality is primarily based in the body, while the ability to make selfless commitments and relationships on the grounds of pure idealism is rooted in the soul. Luzatto describes the union between the soul and the body as an eternal bond; man is defined by this mixture of opposites. He can only be human as long as he is possessed of both parts.

Remove his soul and man becomes an animal; remove his body and man ceases to be an individual.

The separation of soul and body that we are familiar with as death is temporary in the eternal integrity of the human being; it is a later development introduced to repair the damage inflicted by the sin of the first human couple. (Just how death

accomplishes this repair is outside the scope of this discussion.) Once the damage is repaired man will reassume the body-soul format for eternity at the time of the resuscitation of the dead.

EXISTENTIAL CONFLICT

But this dual aspect of man, while basically positive, also places him into a permanent and insoluble state of existential conflict; the soul and the body each have mutually exclusive interests and yet are condemned to be parts of a single integrated entity through this shotgun marriage of opposites arranged by God. Naturally each tries to sway man in its own direction. Foreseeing this in advance God gave each the power to transform his opposite.

The body can harness the soul into vastly enriching simple physical experience and lending it a semi-spiritual aspect. For example, a cultured individual will go to a high-class restaurant to satisfy his physical craving for nourishment. He will look for esthetic beauty in the furnishings and table implements, and a spiritual ambiance in the atmosphere besides excellence in the food, and thus vastly elevate the simple animal experience of eating.

On the other hand, the soul can transform the body and render it sensitive to spiritual experience thereby lending an aspect of individuality and joy to an otherwise abstract and impersonal experience. For example, the Torah requires that an observant Jew should eat and drink well on the Sabbath and on Holy Days, although the focus of such days is primarily spiritual, not physical.

Which aspect of man will gain the ascendancy and transform the other is the area allocated to man's free will and the object of man's life in the physical world.

THREE ASPECTS OF SOUL

How does this work in practice?

Man's soul has three aspects to it - called *nefesh*, *neshama*, and *ruach* - which function as follows:

The *nefesh* is man's physical life force and is attached to the blood in his body.

Only be strong not to eat the blood - for the blood it is the soul (nefesh) - and you shall not eat the soul (nefesh) with the meat. (Deut. 12:23)

The commission of sins related to one's physical urges, such as forbidden acts of intercourse, are attributed by the Torah to

the urgings of the *nefesh*. Thus at the end of Leviticus 18, the chapter devoted to the definition of illicit sexual acts, the Torah writes:

For if anyone commits these abominations, their souls (nefeshot) will be cut off from among their people. (Leviticus 18:29)

Man's *neshama* refers to the part of man that originated in the Divine breath blown into his nostrils described in Genesis 2:7 quoted above.

In between these two is man's *ruach*. It is man's *ruach* that is the subject of the tug of war between his *nefesh* and his *neshama*. It is in this part of the human being that the capacity of choice is located.

If man chooses to respond to the tug of his *neshama*, his *ruach* becomes aligned with the Divine breath of God within him, pulling his *nefesh* along and the *nefesh* itself becomes transformed into a spiritual entity.

On the other hand, if he chooses to follow the tug of his *nefesh*, his *ruach* becomes aligned with it pulling as much of the *neshama* along as it is able, transforming parts of the *neshama* into a semi-physical entity in the process.

According to Luzatto, this process is ongoing as long as we are alive. The fact that we are unable to observe these transformations taking place as they actually happen in real time is due to a Divine edict against their becoming manifest.

This decree was issued for two reasons:

1. to preserve the free will process; if we could directly observe the consequences of our decisions as translated into transformations of physicality to spirituality, or vice versa, it would considerably hamper our freedom of choice;
2. to allow a situation where people in various stages of spiritual development, who no longer resemble each other but still have to interact, do so.

Nevertheless, apparent or not, each human being effects an integration of body and soul that is unique to himself, reflecting the results of the free will choices made during his lifetime. It is this unique integration that determines the nature and quality of every person's individual existence through the rest of eternity. In a very palpable sense each of us is the direct product of his or her choices.

TUG OF WAR

But just as the results of this tug of war are different for every person, the actual struggle is different as well.

For example, for a person that was brought up Orthodox, Sabbath observance is not a subject for inner conflict. For such a person, to consciously violate the Sabbath laws would be an anxiety-laden experience. On the other hand, for the non-Orthodox person who is contemplating the adoption of an observant life, Sabbath observance could be a major stumbling block. Accepting all the restrictions imposed by the Sabbath laws is often a major obstacle.

The same holds true for character traits. For the person who was given a generous nature by his genes and early conditioning, the prospect of sharing his possessions with others presents no conflict. For the person who was not programmed for the trait of generosity, sharing is extremely difficult and always involves some inner conflict.

In the tug of war between the *nefesh* and the *neshama* each person is holding at a different point. Rabbi Dessler referred to this point as his "point of choice." This point of choice is the only point of

conflict. Whatever is too far behind this point towards the *nefesh* is no longer tempting. Whatever is too far beyond this point towards the *neshama* is not yet attractive enough to be attainable. We move this point forward or backward according to the choices we make in true free will situations, situations of genuine conflict.

This means that the psychologists are partially correct. While it is true that every thing that happens to us is meant to further our spiritual growth, most of the events of our lives do not challenge this point of choice, and for the most part we follow our programs.

However, every person that manages to move his point of choice - so that situations that were conflict-ridden in his past are no longer - has altered the balance in the tug of war between his *nefesh* and his *neshama* in the favor of one side or the other. The amount that one alters this balance defines who one is and how one views reward and punishment.

Looking back at our example, if the person who was contemplating becoming Orthodox goes ahead with it and Sabbath observance eventually becomes a matter of routine for him, he is rewarded for his

Sabbath observance even after it becomes a matter of course. Similarly, the person who practices generosity out of conflict until he turns into a generous person will be rewarded for all his acts of generosity for the rest of his life. The loss of free will that results from winning the tug of war with the *nefesh* is the reward he has earned through the exercise of free will.

Needless to say, although all our mitzvot earn us reward, as, strictly speaking, we are theoretically able to overcome our inner programs, our greatest spiritual uplift is always in the area that we have mapped out through our own choices. In terms of our example, the person who was raised Orthodox will never be able to find the same spiritual inspiration in Sabbath observance as the person who turned it into routine by winning his conflict. For the latter, Sabbath will always provide great spiritual inspiration no matter how routine its observance becomes. Our areas of inspiration are always located in the same place as our former conflicts.

The aim of free will is to lose it!

The object of transformation is to become changed people who have grown past the tug of war. True victory in the tug of war with the *nefesh* turns the entire human

being into a *neshama*. Such victory is the only way to find true inner peace.



Adam: A Work in Progress

And Adam gave names to all the animals and all the birds of the sky and all the beasts of the fields. (2:20)

Adam was a man of astonishing insight. He could take one look at any of the myriad creatures of the earth and recognize its essence, its function, its very *raison d'être*. Even the angels in Heaven did not have this uncanny ability.

The Midrash relates (*Bereishis Rabbah* 17:4) that God challenged the angels to assign Hebrew names to all the animals, but they were unable to do so. Then He commanded Adam to assign names to the animals, which he did with perfect accuracy, demonstrating the superiority of man over the angels.

In other languages, words do not have any special connection to the things they represent. They are simply arbitrary sounds that have become associated with those things over a period of time. If you analyze the words cat or elephant or fire, you will not find any hint to the particular characteristics of those things. In Hebrew, however, the names of things reflect what they are all about. Since the angels could not discern the essence of all the animals, they could not assign names to them. Only Adam, with his extraordinary insight and perception, could pair each animal with its correct name.

Nonetheless, when it came to choosing a name for himself, Adam seems to have been strangely uninspired. He chose the name Adam, because he had been formed from the *adamah*, the earth. A human being is the pinnacle of creation, the highest form of living being, spiritual, intellectual, creative, complex, profound, a *tzelem Elohim*, formed, as it were, in “the image of the Lord.” How then can it be that Adam, with all his insight and perception, could find no better definition of a human being than that he had been formed from the earth?

The Alter of Slobodka explains that, quite to the contrary, Adam’s choice of a name

for himself showed his greatest insight. Man represents the ultimate paradox in creation. On the one hand, he is such a sublime creature, higher than the angels, capable of reaching the most transcendent levels of spirituality. And yet, at the same time, he is so painfully human, so incredibly frail. With one slight misstep, he can plummet from the highest pinnacle to the abyss. He can easily fall to the level of the humble dust from which he was originally formed.

This is a critical aspect of the human condition, one that man must always keep in sight and mind if he is to be successful on this earth. Therefore, the choice of the name Adam to recall the *adamah* from which he was taken touches on the very essence of a human being. He had the wisdom to recognize that man can never declare, “I am beyond temptation.” No matter how high he has risen, man is never far from the earth from which he was formed. Until the very end, man can always plunge to rock bottom. Ultimately, this lifelong struggle defines the greatness of mankind.

We find the same dichotomy on Yom Kippur. For the morning Torah reading, *Chazal* chose selections describing the divine service of the *Kohein Gadol*, the

High Priest, in the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies. As we read these words, we are transported to the holiest place in the universe on the holiest day of the year. And yet, a few hours later, the Torah reading during Minchah enumerates the prohibitions against illicit libidinous encounters.

Is this what we need to hear on Yom Kippur after spending so many hours in fasting and prayer? Is this what we need to contemplate in our exalted condition during the waning hours of the day as Yom Kippur draws to a close? Why did *Chazal* choose this particular reading for us on the holiest afternoon of the year?

The answer is that Yom Kippur of all days is exactly when we need to hear this. On Yom Kippur, we allow neither food nor water to pass our lips, and we ascend into the heavens on wings of prayer. Ethereal spirits with but a tentative connection to the physical world, we reach for the heights, soaring above the angels of Heaven. And so we can easily lose perspective and delude ourselves that we are indeed like the angels, creatures of pure spirit. Therefore, *Chazal* remind us that even in our moments of greatest inspiration we are never far from the carnal desires of the flesh. They make us

aware that we invite disaster if we ever lose sight of the abyss that stretches before us.

Along the same lines, we can perhaps resolve another anomaly in the creation story. With regard to the creation of all the species, the Torah tells us, “*Vayar Elokim ki tov*. The Lord saw that it was good.” The insect gets a *ki tov*. The elephant gets a *ki tov*. Every creature gets a *ki tov*. But the creation of man does not get a *ki tov*. Hashem examines His handiwork after each step of creation and pronounces it “good.” But He makes no such pronouncement after the creation of man.

Rav Yosef Albo, in his *Sefer Ha’ikrim*, explains that every element of creation is a finished product. When Hashem forms an insect or an elephant or an apple tree, it becomes what it is. It will never rise in stature nor will it ever fall. Therefore, it can be evaluated and declared “good.”

Man, however, is a work in progress. He is a vast bundle of potential whose final form is as yet undetermined. Will he blossom? Will he flourish? Will he rise to the exalted spiritual levels of which he is capable? Or will he languish in mediocrity or worse? These unresolved questions must be answered by each and every individual

human being throughout a lifetime of struggle. There is, therefore, never a time when he can be considered a finished product and declared “good.” Man is always in a state of potential.

The Talmud states (*Berachos* 17a) that when the Sages took leave of each other they would say, “*Olamecha tir’eh bechayecha*. May you see your world during your lifetime.” What exactly does this mean?

Rav Shimon Schwab offers a beautiful interpretation. The word *olamecha*, your world, is cognate with *he’elamecha*, the part of you that is concealed. A person’s world is the part of him that has not yet seen the light of day, the part that is still potential. That is the arena where he works and struggles and strives to achieve. Realizing the full potential is the work of a lifetime.

This was the blessing the Sages wished each other. May you see your world during your lifetime. May you achieve during your sojourn in this world the full realization of all the potential Hashem has invested in you.

**Get more great parsha
content:
[aish.com/weekly-
torah-portion](http://aish.com/weekly-torah-portion)**