

The Yearn to Learn

Proverbs; 2:4-5

*"If you seek it out like silver, and chase after it (Torah) like buried treasures, then you will understand the fear of God, and the knowledge of God will you find."
If your desire to learn doesn't match this excitement, seek a teacher who can uncover the beauty in Torah, until you view it as a 'plaything', just as King David did.*

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Beresheit

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth." (Beresheit 1:1)

The Torah begins with an account of the creation of the heavens and the earth. Rashi asks an important question. The Torah is a work of law. It presents a system of six

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POLITICS

A TALE OF TWO Visionaries

RABBI REUVEN MANN

As a New Year begins the reign of terror continues to afflict our holy land. The "Intifada of martyrdom" is not just a devastating problem it is one which is without any solution. No Israeli leader even pretends that he can eliminate the ongoing terrorism, which plagues the land. Years ago, long before the problem reached its present proportions there was a visionary who foresaw the inevitable and proposed a solution which was very bitter but exceedingly humane. This man was vilified and condemned by virtually all factions of the Jewish people. Not even fear of the Arab enemy united Israelis as did the loathing of this gadfly who dared to think the unthinkable. Yet his gloomy prophecies have come true. The land is reeling from explosions that come out of nowhere, everywhere. Israel assiduously and efficiently cleans

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RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The book of Koheles (Ecclesiastes) was authored by King Solomon, who was "wiser than all men..." (Kings I, 5:11.) (Maimonides notes that Moses was the wisest, Moreh Nevuchim, Book I, Chap LIV). King Solomon wrote this book with Divine Inspiration. In it, he analyzes which is truly the best philosophy. The Rabbis intended on hiding his book. They were concerned, lest the masses misconstrue King Solomon's intent, and his words be understood in a contradictory or heretical sense. However, the very fact that King Solomon wrote in such a fashion, must draw our intrigue. As he could have written his thoughts clearly, his purposeful, cryptic and seemingly contradictory style, must contain its own, additional lesson, aside from the underlying content.

Why did King Solomon write this way, and in this book only? (In contrast to Proverbs, for example.) Perhaps, when presenting a work on the correct philosophy, King Solomon wished to expose the false philosophies. To do so, he verbalizes the popular and "natural" base emotions. On the surface, it appears as though such verbalization is an endorsement. It may sound as though the King is vocalizing his own views. But in fact, he is not. He verbalizes false views so they may be exposed. Fallacy is not left unanswered, with no correction. King Solomon enunciates folly, and exposes the errors contained therein, finally, teaching the

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Koheles

true philosophy.

Why did the Rabbis state they "wished to store away this book of Koheles"? Was it simply an expression of concern? Or, perhaps, this was an intentionally, publicized sentiment. That is, the Rabbis wished to express this very concept; Koheles is in fact a series of statements which only 'sound' like support for heresy. By making such a statement, the Rabbis meant to teach that one must understand that portions of this book must be read as articulations of false ideas, not a support of them, and solely for the purpose of exposing their fallacy.

Pay careful attention to King Solomon's commencing words, with them, he sets the stage for the rest of his work. If King Solomon instructs us on a correct philosophy, he imparts basic ideas on psychology. By doing so, he enables us to determine if a philosophy suits our design. Without knowledge of human psychology, we have no means to judge a philosophy as deviating or conforming to man's design.

King Solomon opens with a series of verses describing the most basic elements in man's psychological nature. The Torah does so as well.

KOHELES

1:1) "The words of Koheles, son of David, king in Jerusalem."

King Solomon wished to inform us of his qualifications for exposing truths. "Koheles" is a form of the root "kahal", meaning, a group. He grouped, or gathered much knowledge. He was the son of a wise man, King David. As "king", King Solomon had all at his disposal to gather to himself the wise of his generation. His ideas were tested against the best minds, hence, his conclusions deserve earnest attention. "Jerusalem" was the seat of wisdom. (Sforno)

We are informed of the King's outstanding circumstances to study Torah and life, and impart his refined findings.

1:2) "Futility of futilities, says Koheles, futility of futilities, all is futile."

If we count the referred number of "futilities", we derive the number "7". How? Each word "futile" in the singular indicates 1, and each in the plural, 2. So the phrase, "futility of futilities" contains 3 references. Seven "futilities" are derived by adding all instances in this verse. 7 is indicative of the 6 days of Creation plus G-d's rest on the seventh day. King Solomon associates futility with the Creation! The Rabbis asked, "How can Solomon deny what G-d said, "and G-d saw all that He made, and behold it (Creation) was very good?" (Gen. 1:31) But King Solomon did not suggest Creation is futile. His intent is that when Creation is not used properly, only then it is futile. But when used properly, G-d is of course correct, "it is very good."

We must ask, "When is Creation misused, and when is it used properly? Additionally, aside from numerics, this verse must make sense in its plain reading. What is disturbing, is what King Solomon means by "futility of

futilities". I understand what a "futility" is; if someone seeks something vain, or improperly, we would call this a futility. But what is the additional futility to which King Solomon refers to as "futility of futilities"? What can be futile about a futility?

A Rabbi once answered this question with great insight; King Solomon's second "futility" is referring to "fantasy". Not only is the pursuit of money (for itself) a futile endeavor, but one's fantasy about his plan - before he acts - is an additional futility. "Fantasizing" about any material pleasure is what King Solomon refers to. Not only is the acquisition a futility, but one's energies being used for fantasy prior to the acquisition is an additional futility. King Solomon teaches that man doesn't simply follow an emotional attraction, while his thoughts remain blank. No. Man acts out his emotion as the last step in a series. Man's first step is "arousal". He then conjures up a picture-perfect fantasy. He imagines the abundant wealth and possessions he will soon acquire. But this is all fantasy. It is a futile use of his energies, which could have been used to study where true happiness lies. This is valuable time lost. Fantasizing is a futility, in addition to the actual amassing of wealth as its own ends.

Our first question is, "When is the physical an evil or a good?" It is a good, provided one uses it as a means for a life of wisdom. All was created for the sake of man's search for truth. If man uses any part of Creation without this goal in mind, then the object forfeits its purpose, and so does man. Of course, man has emotions, and they must be satisfied on some level. But satisfaction is only essential provided man is content enough to live a life as a philosopher. Overindulgence is not prohibited by Torah, but it also is not praised. "Kedoshim tihyu", "Sanctified shall you be" teaches that even with that which is permissible, man should curb his indulgence.

1:3) "What additional (gain) is there to man, in all his labor that he labors under the sun?"

What is King Solomon referring to here? Rashi explains this to mean "earnings plus extra". What "extra" is Rashi referring to? Is King Solomon criticizing one who labors to eat? This cannot be. But we do notice that he does not say "gain", but "additional gain". What is additional, over and above the earnings man receives for his labor? We must also ask what is so important about this question, that the King started his book with it.

One may view King Solomon's verse as his own question. But you may also read it as the King's verbalization of other peoples' question. Meaning, King Solomon is merely reiterating the futile thoughts on man's mind, not his own. King Solomon was exceedingly wise, let us not make the error and equate his words to those of a common person. In this verse, King Solomon points to an emotional need in man. This need is the "extra" which man seeks out, in addition to his earnings. What is this "extra"? It may be a feeling of honor one desires, so he works hard for decades to rise above others for this attention. He may wish to

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Koheles

be viewed as a sophisticate, so he dons certain clothing and dines at exclusive locations. But all these needs, emotional projections, or self images, are of no use to one seeking the correct life. King Solomon correctly states, "What extra is there?" King Solomon teaches that man should be anchored in reality, and not strive to concoct a plan for achieving imagined goals. Honor is in one's mind, as is one's self image of a sophisticate. Living in fantasy is futile. Only what is real, is worthwhile. Don't seek the "extra", i.e., imagined self images.

A Rabbi once taught that King Solomon is exposing our base drive, underlying all others; the need for "accomplishment". Man is seeking to accomplish much in his life. Why? After one's needs are met, further accomplishment serves man's desire to remove insecurity from himself. All too often, working towards realistic security grows into an overabundance of wealth, which is never spent. The primary, propelling force, leading man to such imagined goals, is the "accomplishment" emotion.

"Under the sun": The fantasy of immortality is essential for one to entertain all other fantasies. If we knew we were dying, we could not invest our energy into amassing wealth. We would admit our time is ending. The reality of our mortality would be too stark, and it would tap all our energies. For this reason, King Solomon ends this verse with "under the sun." He thereby teaches that the remedy to a life of fantasy is to contemplate that we have a 'term'. "Under the sun" means, on Earth, a place which is temporal. This dose of reality helps one to temper his energies, and accept his mortality. With this reality factor, man will not indulge his fantasies so quickly. He safeguard himself, attending to what is truly real - G-d's wisdom. Man seeks truth, and what is true, must eternal, i.e., G-d and His wisdom.

Sforno writes on this verse, (1:3) "And he (King Solomon) said this on man's work under the sun in matters which are transient. For what use is this, that it is fitting for an intelligent being to strive at all to achieve (these matters)?" Sforno teaches that regarding matters which are transient and temporal, man must not invest his time. It is a waste.

1:4) "A generation comes, and a generation goes, and the land eternally stands."

What is the relevance of a "generation", and why do I need to know that one comes and goes? As we read through the book of Koheles, we must determine whether a given verse is King Solomon's advice, or is it him voicing the ignorance of others. The verses will address, either King Solomon's proper instruction, or his exposure of man's destructive, emotional counsel. Be sensitive to the issues, and be mindful that this book was written by our wise King, and only after he analyzed man's behavior. Remember; he was King David's son, and he had all the sages at his disposal to discuss and arrive at decisive, intelligent, and true concepts.

Clearly, with this verse, King Solomon attacks the core of the immortality fantasy, i.e., not only do individuals expire, but so do generations. Individual man

is dwarfed by a generation. The insignificance of the self is undeniably admitted in the face of "mankind". And in turn, mankind's expiration dwarfs one's individual, immortality fantasy. King Solomon wishes man to undermine this destructive fantasy of immortality. By doing so, man will not find the backdrop necessary for painting elaborate fairy tales for himself. He will be forced to confront reality, and will then be guided only by truth.

"...and the land eternally stands." If man is to truly accept his own mortality, there must be that which he recognizes will "outlive" him. For if all would expire with one's own death, the immortality fantasy would be replaced with yet another destructive phantasm; the ego. (Children feel when they close their eyes, or don't see a parent, that the parent is gone. Many adults retain a form of this infantile feeling.) If one was unsure whether the world continued when he was gone, he would thereby feed his ego. Therefore, King Solomon aligns man's expiration with the realization that the world continues - even without us. The knowledge that the universe continues without us, is the necessary measuring rod for our mortality. There must be something, to which we may contrast our lifespan, and that is the universe, which "eternally stands". Contrasting the endless span of the universe's existence to one's own few decades, man is assisted in confronting his mortality.

1:5) "And the sun shines, and the sun sets, and unto its place it yearns (to) shine there."

This is a prime example of the universe's unrelenting nature. This sentiment substantiates the previous comment that only the world endures. It draws on an example of the most prominent, celestial sphere. We also learn that a created entity, undiluted with extraneous agendas, i.e., the sun, performs perfectly when it functions precisely in line with its nature, designed by G-d. Man would be wise to take this lesson to heart.

But what strikes us is the term "yearns" being applied to an inanimate object. How can the sun "yearn"?

More than others, there is one element that is essential to our understanding of human psychology: the unconscious. This is the ever-functioning but hidden part of our emotional make up. We have many desires, fears, loves, hates, and numerous other emotions, that are completely hidden from our consciousness. We are truly blind to them. These emotions, wishes, and fears, are manifest in our dreams. They cause our "slips of the tongue", and continually - from 'behind the curtain' - motivate us. If we do not analyze our dreams, and examine our actions and feelings, we lose out greatly. We forfeit our perfection, as we allow these unconscious forces to control us, and not the reverse. Perfection requires one to be in as much control of his actions and opinions as possible. Although many emotions are elusive and remain undetected, simply not reflecting on ourselves is unacceptable.

What is it that "yearns" to shine? What is "shining"? Perhaps King Solomon alludes to this unconscious, which does both; it "rises" and "sets". It "rises", as it

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Konales

pushes forth with its force onto our waking state (rising), i.e., consciousness. It also "sets", as it recedes back into its hidden realm, the unconscious. It "yearns to shine," means that the unconscious always seek to affect man, who is functioning in a waking state. "Yearning" to shine means that the unconscious forces are relentless in their "desire" to control our actions.

"And Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until the coming of dawn".(Gen. 32:25) The verse says that Jacob was alone, yet he wrestled with someone - a contradiction. A Rabbi resolved this contradiction by explaining that Jacob was in fact alone, but was really wrestling with himself; Jacob was the "man". Jacob was wrestling with his unconscious. "until the coming of dawn", means that which could not exist in daylight, in consciousness. "Daylight" refers to man's consciousness, and "night" refers to the unconscious. Jacob was fighting with some internal, unconscious element in his personality, indicated by the struggle ending at daybreak. (This Rabbi taught that this struggle was initiated by Jacob's brother Esav, en route to attack him.)

I find King Solomon's selected metaphor revealing; he uses the sun (shemesh) for this lesson. "Shemesh" also means a servant, a "shamashe." Perhaps this is fitting, as the unconscious should serve us, not control us.

1:6) "It travels to the South, and circles to the North, circling, circling, travels the wind, and on its circuit does the wind return."

If I remember correctly, a Rabbi once explained this verse to mean that man continually sets his sights on new ventures. Traveling to the "South or North" means "making plans to accomplish new goals". He wishes to "get somewhere" in life. But such a path is not favorable. Perhaps we learn that in truth, one only imagines that he is "progressing" when he meets his own, subjective goals. His desire to progress, is only progress in his own terms, and not true progress according to Torah perfection. Man wishes to build empires, but in G-d's eyes, they are meaningless, and in fact, man regresses with such activity. How does King Solomon indicate that such a desire is fruitless? "Circling, circling" describes a repeating pattern. One does not actually change his location, he circles on the same parcel of ground, not moving forward. This rotating activity is akin to one who does not see true progress in his life. Man imagines he progresses with his material successes and plans, but in truth, he keeps going in "circles".

Here too King Solomon utilizes an appropriate metaphor; the "wind". We too refer to man's strength as his wind; "he knocked the wind out of me", "he lost the wind from his sails", "he popped your balloon". King Solomon teaches that man directs his energies towards goals to achieve a sense of worth. The underlying need for accomplishment has gone unchecked, and propels him to the "South and the North." Instead, man should contemplate that his energies are better used in search of truth, instead of reacting to the unconscious, pushing him to make himself great through empire building, fame and riches. Such actions are the result of the imagination, and not a thought-out philosophy which expose such vanity.

1:7) "All the rivers go to the sea, but the sea is not full, to the place where the rivers go, there they return to go."

"Water" is the perfect object to embody this verse's lesson, taught by a Rabbi. This verse is a metaphor for man's libido; his energies. This great psychological, reservoir of energy is the cause for the previous verse's teaching; that man has a great drive to accomplish. Man's energies are always "flowing", and they seek to become "full". "But the sea is not full", that is, man does not become fully satisfied. As one emotion is satisfied, he again seeks a new emotional satisfaction. Satisfaction, therefore, is temporary. Where man's emotions flow, "there they return to go", i.e., it is an endless process.

"All the rivers go to the sea" indicates that all man's energies have one focus for that period. Man is usually pulled in one direction, conveyed here by "sea", one destination. It is interesting that "rivers" are also mentioned in Genesis, also in the commencing chapters. Is there a relationship?

1:8) "All matters are wearying, man is unable to describe them, the eye does not become satisfied in seeing, the ear does not become full from hearing."

Why are the eye and ear unable to behold their complete sensations? Is King Solomon describing the ineptitude of these organs? Or, perhaps he means to point us towards understanding that element in man which seeks to "behold all." The latter would indicate that man has a desire to have complete knowledge in a given field - but he cannot. This desire stems from another need; security. Man wishes to have a complete grasp on matters, otherwise, he feels inept. This wearied state, King Solomon says is due to man's attempt to secure complete knowledge. Man desires to be secure that he has all the answers. Man is better advised to accept his limited scope of apprehension, than to deny his feeble nature and strive for the impossible. Seeing and hearing are the two major senses used in learning. Being "unable to describe them", teaches that man wishes to behold wisdom, so much, that he can competently discourse on matters - he wishes self sufficiency, the removal of insecurity.

1:9) "That which was, it will be, and what was done, will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun."

Which attitude is King Solomon responding to here? Note that he addresses both the "what", (things), and "events" (what was "done".) This encompasses all of man's experiences on Earth: man relates either to objects, or to events, categorized as "space and time".

King Solomon teaches that man seeks out "novelty", looking for that which is new in objects, or in events. Why? What satisfaction does man imagine he will experience with something new, or with a new event? Rashi correctly writes that in the universe, all has been created during Creation. Nothing afterwards can be created anew. In contrast, new ideas are in fact new to us, and afford enlightenment, and the invigoration that the soul is designed to seek.

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Koheles

"Novelty" is not an ends in itself, but a sought after 'cure' for man's stagnation. Man inescapably seeks enlightenment, but he seeks it in the physical realm. "under the sun", the arena which King Solomon critiques. Man will only find the rejuvenating pleasure of novelty in the area of wisdom. All Earthly attempts to fulfill this need will result in dissatisfaction.

Novelty has a funny way of vanishing immediately. Something is "new", as long as it goes unexperienced. It is a "Catch-22." Before we attain something, or go somewhere, it is new, but we have yet to enjoy our imagined pleasure. And once we attain it, or get there, it is no longer truly new. How many times have we anticipated arriving at a new destination, only to be disappointed, that when we arrive, the novel and alluring element of our vacation, i.e., being "there", goes unrealized. We are not "there", because once we get "there", it is now "here". "There" has not yet been realized, so it remains in the state of fantasy, a state in which man may project his flawless enjoyment. When the "there" becomes "here" (upon our arrival) the fantasy vanishes, and the very real elements of reality set in; the weather is not so warm, the luggage is missing, the water makes us sick, etc.

1:10) "There is a thing that you will say, 'Look at this, it is new', (but) it was already in history, that was before us."

This verse seems repetitive. Also, what is the specific "thing" to which King Solomon refers?

A Rabbi taught that this verse discusses the emotion of "modernity". Man wishes to feel that he lives in THE generation. We hear people ridicule ancient societies as backwards - an attempt to substantiate one's own generation as more advanced. We have electronics, we have something new. We live on the final frontier. We are different than all other generations.

Why do we wish to feel we are the most advanced generation? I believe such an emotion of modernity, attempts to deny mortality. If we live in the most advanced generation, this means, ipso facto, that no other generation may surpass us: we will never die.

The cure for the imagined sense of modernity, is to realize that others before us experienced what we do. Contemplating that other peoples have expired with history, forces us to recognize this: what we experience as new, will also meet with the same fate. We must identify with other generation's spans - they have come and gone. We are no different. We too will go the way of the world. This realization, that all mankind faces the same fate, enables man to apply this truth to himself. King Solomon describes the problems and offers correct solutions. He desired the good for all mankind. This good, means knowledge of what is truth, and a dismissal of fallacy.

King Solomon describes so many of man's pitfalls. Did G-d design man with destructive elements? No, He did not, "and behold it is very good." He designed us with attitudes and emotions which are to be studied, and directed towards living an extremely happy existence. "Ki yetzer lave ha-adom ra m'ha-urav",

"Mans' inclinations are evil from youth" (Gen. 8:21) means that only our "inclinations", not our faculties, are not steered by intelligence, initially. They drive towards what is evil and harmful. But with devoted study and self application of our knowledge, we are well equipped to direct our energies, emotions and attitudes towards the good. Man's mind is more powerful and convincing than his emotions. With intelligence and proofs, we are fully capable of attaching ourselves to the life outlined in the Torah.

By nature, man wishes to follow what he sees as true and good. This is our inherent design. As we study more and more, we abandon what is false, and naturally follow what is proven as good. Once we see a new idea clearly, we will naturally follow it. All that is required, is to devote many hours daily to study, and endure our research and analysis, until we arrive at decisively, clear and proven opinions.

Man's drives are only evil from youth. By nature, the emotions have a head-start on intelligence. This does not spell inevitable catastrophe. Our continual Torah study will refine our thoughts, to the point, that we see with ultimate clarity, how to use our energies to attain a truly enjoyable and beneficial existence.

1:11) "There is no remembrance to the first ones, and also to the later ones that will be, there will be no remembrance to them, with those that will be afterwards."

Facing mortality, so clearly spelled out in the previous verse, King Solomon now closes the loop by addressing man's final hope for immortality; to be memorialized in death. If man cannot achieve immortality in life, he still attempts to secure a memorial for himself. He wishes to go down in history. This fantasy strives at securing some vestige of his existence. But this will not be. How does King Solomon help man abandon such futility? He asks man to recall previous generations, and man cannot, "There is no remembrance to the first ones". This is an iron clad argument against hoping for memorialization - it does not happen. King Solomon wisely advances man's thoughts to the future, as if to say, "You think YOU will be remembered? let us see if this happens". The King's response: There is no remembrance to the first ones". It does not happen to them, it will not happen to you, nor to any future generation. Reality is the best teacher, and King Solomon places reality between man's eyes. ■

The Verses Defined:

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| 1. King Solomon's "Qualifications" to address this topic. | 7. "Libido": Man's unrelenting energies seeking satisfaction, and propelling his search for happiness. |
| 2. "Fantasy": The subject of Koheles. | 8. "Security": Mans attempt to remove all insecurities by attempting to grasp complete knowledge. |
| 3. "Accomplishment": Man's primary fantasy. | 9. "Novelty": Where it is, and is not found; an inherent need in man. |
| 4. "Immortality": The backdrop necessary for fantasy. | 10. "Modernity": Striving for immortality in life. |
| 5. "The Unconscious": The source of man's fantasy life. | 11. "Memorialization": Striving for immortality in death. |
| 6. "Progress": The goal of accomplishment. | |

Verse 11 concludes the first section of Koheles. With G-d's help, we will continue, addressing King Solomon's discoveries.

A TALE OF TWO Visionaries

RABBI REUVEN MANN

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up the body parts, hoses off the blood, removes the skeletal remains of Egged busses and rebuilds the shattered cafes and restaurants. Getting back to “normal” as quickly as possible after a bombing has become Israel’s way of saying: We will not let you defeat us. We will continue living in our dream world, come what may. This is Israel’s way of denying that it has relinquished its intrinsic right of self-defense and has come to terms with the steady annihilation of its civilians. From the gas chambers of Auschwitz to the discos of Tel Aviv a familiar refrain is sounded: Jewish blood is cheap. Yet no one stands up and shouts, “Never Again!” Never again will we stand idly by the blood of our brothers.

This generation of Jews is unlike any that has preceded it in the Exile. It has the ability to defend itself. Israel is one of the world’s most formidable military powers, yet a paralysis of the spirit has taken hold. The Jewish State was designed to be a safe haven for an endangered people, but today it is one of the most dangerous places for Jews to live. A Diaspora mentality pervades the psyche of its political leaders. From Labor to Likud, all affirm that there is nothing we can do, except absorb all of the blows they shower on us and keep on going. Somehow or other if we just go about our ordinary routine and pretend that we live in a normal environment it will deny the terrorists a victory. The government’s failure to destroy the terrorists calls into question the integrity of Israel’s sovereignty and lays bare the very foundations of Zionism. This can be clearly seen in its handling of the “Arafat situation.” The government considers him responsible for managing the Terrorist war against Israel. Yet it does nothing to put the mass murderer out of business. The strongest step it seems able to take is to threaten his expulsion. Pathetic. What would the US do if Sadaam or Osama was trapped in a building surrounded by American

troops? The U.S. and UN have no moral right to pressure Israel against “dealing” with Arafat. Let them explain how he is different from Uday and Qusay. Let Israel explain how it can even hope to demolish terrorism when it cannot eliminate its bloody chieftain.

I have digressed a bit and it is time to get back to the story of a man who foresaw the inevitable and sounded a warning. He met his death at the hands of an Arab assassin who wanted to put an end to the realistic analyses of this “dangerous Jew.” Perhaps the murderer was afraid that the Jews would wake up and grasp the cogency of his ideas. He need not have worried. His fears were hardly justified. Other “visionaries” were far more appealing to the Israeli mindset. In the midst of the latest rash of explosions the cream of Israeli society celebrated the 80th birthday of Oslo’s Architect. I don’t begrudge him a private party but this was a public and very ostentatious gathering to which all the dignitaries including the President who arranged the signing of the Oslo protocols on the White House lawn were invited. They convened to toast a lifetime of achievement whose crowning triumph was the Oslo Accords. The peace agreement from Hell. The self-inflicted wound which has wreaked untold destruction and suffering and which has turned the Zionist dream into a nightmare. The man whose ideas brought devastation was feted and extolled. This apparently is a real hero. Yet the other visionary who predicted the tragedy and sacrificed his life in the hope of preventing it was cursed and hated by the political and cultural elites who took off time from the Intifada for some much needed celebrating.

The words of the visionary Jew who tried to warn us should not be forgotten. As time goes by and reality begins to intrude ever so steadily into the Israeli psyche things may come to be seen in a different light. The time may come when, “They must go” will seem like a kind and humane solution compared to the alternatives. ■

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Beresheit

RABBI BERNARD FOX

hundred thirteen mitzvot. It would seem appropriate for the Torah to concentrate on the objective of teaching us the commandments. Why does the Torah begin with an account of creation?

Rashi provides a response. He explains that Hashem promised the land of Israel to Bnai Yisrael. However, the Jewish people would not occupy an empty region. They would dispossess other nations. The Torah teaches justice. How can we justify the seizure of the land of Israel from these nations?

The account of creation provides the response. The Almighty created the universe. Therefore, He has the right to apportion the earth to various nations. He also has the authority to command the dispossession of these nations.[1]

Rashi's answer is difficult to understand. The nations, which Bnai Yisrael would expel, were idol worshippers. They did not accept the authenticity of the Torah. Certainly, they would question the assertion that the Creator had promised the land of Israel to Jewish people. They would not agree that the Almighty – the true owner – had confiscated the land from them.

We encounter this very situation today. The nations of the world are familiar with the Torah, its account of creation, and its record of the Almighty's promises to the Jewish people. Yet, these nations do not recognize the Jewish people's Divine right to the land! Are we to assume that the Almighty did not fully understand the nature of his creatures? Did He think the entire world would accept the message of the Torah?

Rav Yisrael Meir Lau explains that we must carefully consider Rashi's comments. Rashi does not say that the nations of the world will be convinced of the Torah's argument. It seems that Rashi did not maintain that the message is addressed to these nations. Instead, the Torah is speaking

to Bnai Yisrael!

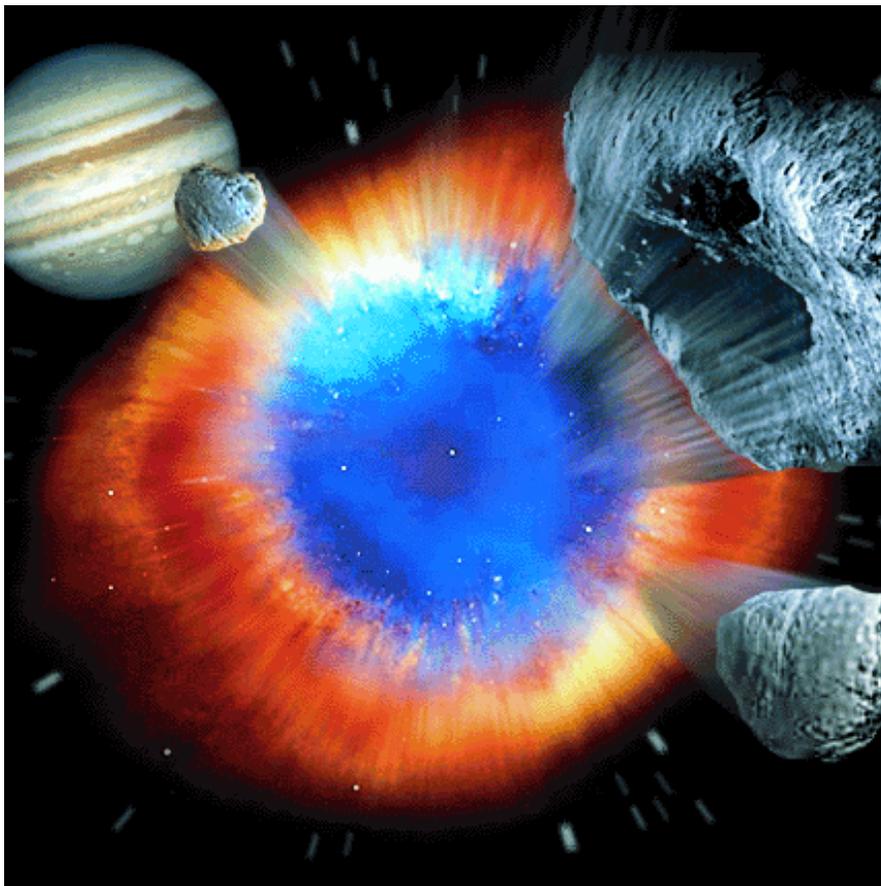
According to Rashi, Hashem recognized that the morality of the Jewish people would be challenged by the nations. He also realized that Bnai Yisrael would be sensitive to this reproach. We need to know that, despite all accusations, we have a Divine right to the land of Israel. Therefore, the Torah teaches us the basis of our claim.

This lesson is important today. The world does not recognize our right to the land of Israel. We must work to overcome this obstacle. We must also strive to live in peace in the land. This may require accommodation and compromise. But we should not abandon our assertion of the justice of our claim. We need to know that the Creator promised us the land of Israel. No other nation's occupation of the land supercedes this Divine right.[2]

“And the earth was without form and in confusion with darkness on the face of the depths. And the spirit of the Lord hovered on the waters' surface.”
(Beresheit 1:2)

The meaning of this pasuk can best be understood in conjunction with the previous pasuk. The Torah begins with the statement that Hashem created the heavens and earth. The terms heaven and earth are preceded with the article et. This article generally implies some inclusion. Our Sages explain that, in this case, the term et is intended to include all derivatives. In other words, the pasuk should be understood as stating that creation began with the forming of the heavens and the earth and all of their derivatives. The derivatives are the stars, plants and other elements that came forth on the subsequent days.[3]

Now this seems very confusing. The first pasuk asserts that the heavens and earth with all of their elements were formed on the first day. The subsequent pesukim assert that these various elements emerged during the full course of the



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Beresheit

 RABBI BERNARD FOX

six days of creation. Our pasuk resolves this difficulty.

The initial creation contained all that emerged on the subsequent days. However, these elements existed only in potential. This is the meaning of the earth's formless and confused form. The darkness also represents this concept. In darkness individual forms cannot be discerned. These terms describe the initial creation. The various elements had not yet emerged into their actual form. The Divine influence was required in order to transform the potential to actual.

Based on this interpretation of creation, Rabaynu Avraham ben HaRambam explains the "hovering" mentioned in the pasuk. The term used for hovering is associated with the bird hovering over its nest. Why is this term used to describe the Divine influence? A bird hovers over its nest in order to protect and cultivate its eggs. The eggs contain a living entity - in potential. Through the efforts of the mother, hovering over the eggs, the potential of the eggs emerges in the form of offspring. In a similar manner, the earth included its eventual elements in potential. G-d's "hovering" represents His influence in converting potential to actual.

It is interesting to note the correspondence between this understanding of creation and the modern scientific view. Science maintains that the building blocks for all that now exists were formed during the initial creation. Over time, the universe we now see eventually emerged. This occurred through the organization of these primitive elements. However, science is faced with the challenge of explaining the emergence of design and organization from chaos. The Chumash provides the resolution of this riddle. G-d's influence caused the normal pattern of the physical universe to be reversed and organization emerged from chaos.

“And He chased out the man. And He stationed at the east of Gan Eydan the cherubs and the revolving sword blade to guard the path to the Tree of Life.” (Beresheit 3:24)

Hashem places Adam and his wife Chava in Gan Eydan. Adam and Chava sin and are driven from the Gan – the garden. Hashem places cherubs – angels – at the entrance of the Gan. These angels are accompanied by a revolving sword blade. Together they guard the approach to the Gan and the Tree of Life.

Early explorers understood the account of humanity's experience in Gan Eydan and the eventual banishment in the literal sense. Ancient maps suggest probable locations for the Gan. These explorers believed that a complete exploration of the globe would result in locating the Gan.

However, this literal interpretation does not provide a full understanding of these incidents. These events communicate a deeper message. This message can be appreciated through looking beyond the literal meaning of the passages. An exploration of the full meaning of the experience of Gan Eydan requires a lengthy analysis. We will limit our discussion to the meaning of the cherubs and the sword that guard the Gan.

We must begin our analysis by understanding the significance of the Gan and the Tree of Life. Adam and Chava lived a life of leisure in Gan Eydan.

This life is very different from our existence in today's world. Most must toil to secure daily sustenance. Even those that are more economically established must deal with the aggravations of everyday existence. Life is uncertain and economic success cannot insulate us from the frustrations and tragedies that occur in everyday life. Gan Eydan represented an idyllic existence immune from the problems we experience in today's world. Humanity's banishment from the Gan introduced into our lives these difficulties. The Tree of Life epitomized the perfect existence. The exact nature of this tree is debated by the commentaries. Nonetheless, it seems to represent the potential to achieve longevity and happiness. According to this interpretation, banishment from the Gan is much more than exile from a geographic location. Banishment represents a change in humanity's environment. With banishment, humanity is confronted with a new more difficult reality.

We constantly attempt to return to Gan Eydan. We have abandoned our search for its geographical location. Instead, we attempt to transform our world into the Gan. We strive through the application of science and technology to improve our lives. We endeavor to make our world more perfect. We seem to believe that we can eliminate suffering and our personal frustrations. However, we never really succeed. We created automobiles to transport us. We are plagued with the pollution they generate. We released the power of the atom and now we are confronted with the dilemma of disposing of nuclear waste. We invented vaccines and antibiotics only to be plagued by new diseases and antibiotic resistant infections. It seems that every advance is associated with a new problem or challenge.

How do we react to this phenomenon? We assume that these new problems can be solved. More science and better technology will solve the problems created by our latest technological breakthrough. We have absolute faith in the ultimate triumph of human knowledge. Yet, a question must be asked. Can we ever succeed in our quest? Can we recreate Gan Eydan?

Perhaps, this is the message of the cherubs and the sword that guard entrance to the Gan. Perhaps, the Torah is telling us that the Almighty has blocked the road to success. Hashem banished humanity from the Gan. He decided that humanity is better nurtured in a less perfect world. He does not want us to return to the Gan. The failures and frustrations we encounter in our endeavors to recreate the Gan are not a result of inadequate knowledge. Our objective is unrealistic. We can work towards improving life. However, a certain level of toil and frustration is built into nature. We can never overcome the inherent limitations of our material existence. ■

- [1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 1:1.
- [2] Rav Yisrael Meir Lau, Why Does the World Contest Our Right to Eretz Yisrael?
- [3] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 1:14.



PRAISING INTELLIGENCE & Deriding Evil

MATT SCHNEEWEISS

“A man should be praised according to his intellect, but the twisted of heart should be shamed” (Mishlei 12:8)

Rabbeinu Yonah writes:

[1]According to a man's intellect he should be praised: It is proper that a man should be praised according to his intellectual capacity. A person should not disgrace his friend if he finds that his friend has a lesser intellect than he. Rather he should praise him according to his own intelligence, for it is proper to praise anyone who has an intellect, whether [his intellectual ability is] small or great.

On the surface, this verse seems quite easy to understand. Seichel, or intelligence, is a virtue, which demands praise. Unlike other qualities, seichel is not evaluated through comparative analysis. Rather, each man must be praised according to his own level. Upon closer examination, however, several questions arise:

Question #1: Why does the verse insist that a man is praised for his seichel, in particular? Judaism acknowledges many different virtues, but it does not insist that every virtue be praised. Physical strength, beauty, good character traits, and wealth, are virtues, yet, we do not find verses in Tanach, which urge a person to praise those who possess these qualities. What, precisely, distinguishes seichel from other virtues and singles it out as demanding praise?

Question #2: Does the injunction to praise a man according to his intellect apply to those who misuse their intellect? Our Sages discuss the personality of a chacham l'rah – an intelligent person who uses his seichel for evil purposes.[2] Does such a person deserve the same praise for his intellect as one who lives a righteous life?

Question #3: In a similar vein, are we to praise a person who has tremendous seichel, but arrives at false beliefs and distortions of the Torah? There are many people who possess outstanding intelligence, but are led by their intellect to deny fundamental principles of Torah. Are we to praise such people for their intellect?

Question #4: Finally, why must seichel be evaluated on an individual basis? Why isn't seichel evaluated on a comparative, like other virtues? Take, for example, a millionaire businessman and a shoe-polisher who can't earn enough money to support his family. Nobody would even think to praise both men as “wealthy,” saying, “Each individual is wealthy on his own level.” Instead we evaluate them comparatively and praise the businessman as wealthy, compared to the poor shoe-polisher. Why don't we use the same method of comparative evaluation in praising intellect?

Rabbeinu Yonah addresses all of these questions in his commentary on the second half of the verse:

But the twisted of heart should be shamed: one whose mind is confused, who upon hearing the truth does not admit to it nor recognize it, but instead claims the opposite due to his distorted logic[3] – such a person should be shamed. It is neither proper to praise him nor honor him, for his mind is prone to support and assist falsehood, and to call the bad “good” and the good “bad,” and it is not proper to honor falsehood, but only to disgrace it.[4]

Rabbeinu Yonah's words contain one fundamental principle: seichel is praiseworthy only insofar as it is a means of arriving at truth. Upon consideration of this principle, the answers to all of our questions become clear. The answer to our first question concerning the difference between seichel and other virtues is that seichel is the only virtue,

which is, by its essential nature, an instrument whose function is to discover truth. All other virtues only aid a person in arriving at the truth insofar as they facilitate the function of the intellect, but there is nothing inherent in these virtues, which characterize them as instruments for discovering truth. This distinguished role elevates seichel above all other traits as the only virtue truly deserving of praise.[5]

The answer to the second question, concerning a person who uses his seichel for evil, is based on the following premise: truth has two components – the knowledge of the truth, and the translation of that knowledge into action. A person can have as much true knowledge as Shlomo haMelech, but if that knowledge does not affect the way he conducts his life, it is of no value. Truth, without expression of that truth in action, is not truth. A person may possess the greatest intellect, but if his actions do not reflect the truth, which his mind has discovered, then his seichel is all but worthless; a chacham l'rah does not deserve praise.

The answer to our third question, concerning the intellectual person who arrives at false beliefs, is clear from Rabbeinu Yonah's description of the na'avei lev, or the twisted of heart: “due to his distorted logic . . . his mind is prone to support and assist falsehood.”¹ A person may be capable of high-level, complex thought, but if his rationale is distorted such that he is led to deny certain fundamental truths,⁶ he is considered a na'avei lev. This also answers our fourth question. When praising the intellect, it is not the quantity of knowledge a person has accumulated which matters, but the quality of that person's intellect. If a person's intellect is characterized by the quality of “prone to discover truth” he “should be praised,” but if his intellect is characterized by the quality of “prone to support falsehood” he “should be shamed.”⁷ It is for this reason that seichel cannot be subject to comparative analysis. A child of eight and a chacham of eighty should both be praised for

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PRAISING INTELLIGENCE & Deriding Evil

MATT SCHNEEWEISS

their intellect, for each one discovers truth at his own level, and that is all that matters.

There is a fifth question, which remains unanswered: *eevut ha'lev*, "distortion of the heart," may be a bad trait, but why should a *na'vei lev* be shamed? Judaism rarely encourages people to openly scorn and deride people who possess bad character traits. What differentiates *eevut ha'lev* from other traits in this regard?

The Rambam sheds light on this issue in the introduction to his commentary on *Masechet Avot*:^[8]

[Concerning] man's speech: a person should speak only those words that are necessary to bring him a benefit or to ward away harm from his soul or body, or to learn a positive virtue, to praise a virtue or a great man, or to criticize a bad character trait or an evil man, for the condemnation of people who possess bad character traits and the deprecation of their esteem is an obligation and a virtue when one's intent is to belittle them in people's eyes so that others will take heed and refrain from emulating their conduct.

Seichel is man's most valuable asset, for it is his only means of relating to his Creator.^[9] The *nefesh hamaskelet*, the intelligent aspect of man's soul, is what defines him as man and differentiates him from the animals.^[10] Hence, corruption of the *seichel* is the corruption of man's essence, and the severance of his only connection to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Consequently, a person whose *seichel* is distorted ought to be discredited in the eyes of others in order that they not err in his ways and be influenced by his twisted ideas. Other character flaws are damaging, but their harmful effects can be avoided through the strategic implementation of *chochma* and *mussar*, combined with reliance on *Hashem*. A corrupt *seichel*, however, impairs man's

ability to employ these strategies, rendering him vulnerable to bad traits and false beliefs. Thus, the verse urges us to openly condemn and deride^[11] those who possess this destructive trait, and in doing so, exemplify the attitude expressed by David *haMelech*, "You who love *Hashem*, hate evil! . . . Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for those with straight minds."^[12] □

Footnotes

[1] Rabbeinu Yonah of Gerona (Gerondi), Commentary on *Sefer Mishlei* 12:8

[2] *Sefer Yirmiyahu* 4:22. See the Rambam's commentary on *Masechet Avot* 5:13.

[3] Literally: "his topsy-turvy reasoning."

[4] See also Rabbeinu David Kimchi (Radak), Commentary on *Sefer Mishlei* 12:8 for a similar approach.

[5] See Rabbeinu Menachem ben Shelomo *haMeiri*, Commentary on *Sefer Mishlei* 12:8, who states this explicitly.

[6] This is a necessary implication, for a person who makes a mistaken judgment in the area of *kashrut* is not comparable to someone who makes an illogical mistake in the area of *yichud Hashem* – the Oneness of God. A mistake in the latter is catastrophic compared to a mistake in the former. It is absurd to think that a person who makes a few small mistakes in relatively insignificant areas would be classed as a *na'vei lev*. This classification must, by necessity, be reserved for only those who arrive at false conclusions due to their distorted logic continually, and even then, only in areas of fundamental importance.

[7] It is difficult, if not impossible, to say who and at what point a person may be classified as a *na'vei*

lev (except for extreme cases, like a *chacham* who openly professes belief in a corporeal God or denies the authenticity of *Torah*). But one may ask: if such classifications are virtually impossible to make, why did *Shlomo haMelech* include them in *Sefer Mishlei* – a practical guide to living a life of *chochma*? The answer is actually quite simple: *Mishlei* deals in absolute classifications – *tzadik*, *chasid*, *chacham*, *rasha*, *leitz*, *k'siel*, etc. But these personalities are not meant to be treated as rigid stereotypes which are to be applied to people in the real world. Rather, they are to be treated as abstract characterizations, "personalities" whose traits we must look for in ourselves to either cultivate or reject.

[8] Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides), Commentary on the *Mishna*, *Shemoneh Perakim: Hakdama l'Masechet Avot*; Chapter Five.

[9] See the introduction to the Rambam's Commentary on the *Mishna* in the section where he explains *Aggadata*. There, the Rambam discusses the role of the intellect and its role in the purpose of man.

[10] See Rabbeinu Yonah of Gerona (Gerondi), Commentary on *Sefer Mishlei* 1:22; Rabbeinu *Bachya ben Asher*, *Kad haKemach: Taanit*; and Rabbeinu *Avraham ibn Ezra*, Commentary on *Sefer Kohelet* 3:7.

[11] Needless to say, one must study the relevant *halachot* of *lashon hara* before taking this course of action.

[12] This translation of "yishrei lev" is based on Rabbeinu *Ovadia Sforno*, Commentary on *Sefer Tehillim* 97:10-11, who explains the injunction of "hate evil!" as "distancing oneself from all false ideas and repulsive actions," and "upright of heart," as "those who grasp the truth of *Torah*."

The Sabbath

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Abstaining from labor on the Sabbath, the Jew reiterates the truth of creation, proclaiming of the existence of the Creator. Mimicking what G-d did - resting on the 7th day - we announce G-d's presence to the other nations through our cessation from labor. As they ask us why we rest, we respond explaining the historical truth of creation by G-d. We publicize the Creator's Existence in the world. (Maimonides)

On the Sabbath, one is involved in pursuits of wisdom, and we do not labor for our material needs. The "Licha Dodi" which we sing each Friday evening in temple states, "sof maaseh, b'machshava techila", "[Sabbath is] last in creation, [but] first in His thought". Meaning, although the Sabbath came last in creation, its place in creation's order does not reflect its level of importance. What does this mean? It means that the physical world was created for a reason - the Sabbath.

The physical world's purpose is only to serve as a means in the pursuit of wisdom. As King Solomon stated in his commencement of Ecclesiastes (Koheles), "all is futile" referring to the created world. The rabbis ask, "how can Solomon say that the world is futile, when G-d said, "and behold, it is very good?" What King Solomon meant to teach is that one who seeks the physical world as an 'ends', is missing the purpose of the world. It was only created so that mankind have the ability to procure his material needs - to the point that he facilitates a life of wisdom. Without a home and food, one cannot involve his mind in learning. He must feel that his needs are met prior to engaging in loftier pursuits. Therefore, the Sabbath is the goal of creation, as its prohibition from labor directs man to study, without distractions for concerns with his with material needs.

What is interesting, is although we

focus on the stupendous marvels of creation from nothingness (creation ex nihilo) Licha Dodi teaches us that our real focus must shift from the 6 days of universal creation - to the Sabbath. The physical world, in all its splendor, and against popular opinion, was not created for itself! It was created only to enable man to contemplate his Creator and be involved in a discovery process during his short stay on Earth. This concept is quite intriguing. G-d created the elements of each day, but they were truly unrealized in their purpose until man and the Sabbath appeared on the horizon. Only then did the physical world have purpose in its creation.

Today, scientists marvel at Creation, and with good reason, it is awesome. But we are not to be scientists alone in this life. We are to be Torah-adhering individuals. This means that we don't gaze star struck at matters attractive to our senses, but we seek G-d's instruction for where we should direct our attention. If G-d focuses His Torah more on Sabbath than on creation, we must seek out primary ideas behind the Sabbath laws, if we are to truly understand creation, and Torah. We must study what is more significant about G-d's rest, than His creation. G-d created the physical universe, but then He "rested." His "rest" was not an unnecessary lesson to man.

Shabbos is not merely the abstention of G-d's creative process. We read in the Torah something which seems redundant, "G-d completed His work,.....G-d rested". I wonder, doesn't the first statement that "G-d completed His work" teach that He rested? If so, for what reason do we need the additional phrase "G-d rested?" I believe this is to teach that G-d's Sabbath was not merely an abstention from creation. That is passive. G-d wanted to teach that His

Sabbath is actually a "positive institution", the intentional withdrawal from the physical and not just the mere cessation from labor. Shabbos has a positive, real quality and status as a day whose definition is not just a break from work, but primarily "a day dedicated to the involvement in the metaphysical". A day devoted to study and awe of the Creator. But this is only derived by the additional word of "rested".

Our inactivity on Shabbos also demonstrates our true belief in the ability for G-d to sustain us, as we do not work according to His word, and thereby, we do not feel we will suffer monetary loss. This explains why we do not make request for material needs in the prayers on Shabbos. This also ties in with the concept that the manna in the desert did not fall on Shabbos, to teach the Jews that they should have complete confidence in G-d's word that he would sustain them. During the 6 weekdays, the manna fell each day just enough for that day. Anything left for the following day by a Jew, demonstrated his disbelief that it would again fall tomorrow, as G-d promised. Leftover manna would become wormy and rot for the purpose of forcing the Jews to comply with a belief in G-d's word. But on Friday, the Jews were commanded to gather enough for that day, and that they may leave over for the Sabbath. When they did so, they found when they measured the manna in their homes, it miraculously doubled in size, to sustain them on Shabbos as well (Exod. 16:5 -Rashi). This miracle was enacted by G-d to engender the Jews' faith in His word, that G-d would and will sustain them. Similarly, our abstinence from labor on the sabbath demonstrates this concept today.

We are even commanded by the prophet Isaiah (58:13-14) not to talk about our business on Shabbos. Meaning, our involvement in concerns for our material needs should not exist on the Sabbath. One who truly abandons discussions concerning work, and involves himself in Torah study and appreciation of the creation, is one who lives in line with G-d's plan that

man have true faith in G-d's word. (See Rashi on Talmud Sotah, page 48a, Rashi heading: "Men of faith" - "Anshey emunah"). Isaiah states that the one who doesn't just refrain his speech and actions from business but rather idealizes the Sabbath as a true enjoyment (involvement in wisdom), this person will be given all his physical needs, "If you abstain from going in your way, seeking your (physical) desires and don't talk about these matters, then will you rejoice in G-d and He will ride you on the high places of the Earth and feed you the inheritance of Jacob". It is counter intuitive, but true, that he who follows G-d's laws of abandoning business matters on the Sabbath will actually have his physical needs addressed by G-d.

The Sabbath teaches; 1) the world has a Creator, 2)that G-d prefers our pursuit of wisdom over material gain, and 3)it affirms our complete trust in G-d's ability to provide.

G-d created the universe, but let this not steal the show. Yes, the universe is truly a display of G-d's might and existence. But without Torah, man misses the point: G-d "rested". G-d created the institution of a day - the Sabbath - where man's creative activity must come to a halt. Man must be given at least one day a week, where he is not involved in physical labor, or concerns for his Earthly security. On this Sabbath day, man must actualize his true purpose: a life of wisdom.

We were given intelligence so that we may engage it. G-d teaches this by devoting a day to absolute cessation from creation. Although creation was complete, and G-d does not tire as man, G-d still desired that it be known that He "rested". He did not rest for Himself, but as a quintessential example of what is the true focus of creation; that the universe is a "means", not an "ends". Our study of the Creator starts with the universe, but it must culminate in our higher study of G-d's wisdom.

The physical universe, in all its glory, is here to supply our human needs. Our true purposes is to indulge in G-d's wisdom encapsulated in creation and the Torah. This is the lesson of G-d's "rest" on the Sabbath. □

the Snake III

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Recently a question was asked on a discussion group I am a member of, I have no idea what the answer would be, could you enlighten us, please? Here it is: "Can you tell us what the snake (discussed in Genesis in connection with Adam and Eve) being cursed, and being forced to move on its belly, and eat dirt all its days are suppose to mean?"

Mesora: The snake itself was a real creature, as stated once by a Rabbi. The Rabbi taught that if we are to take the snake metaphorically - as some commentators do - then what prevents us from taking Adam and Eve metaphorically? This approach would destroy the entire Torah as it gives license to all to interpret anything in the Torah as metaphor; including Moses, Abraham, and even God and His actions. Based on the very fundamentals of Torah, we do not accept this path. But the same Rabbi taught that the understanding of a literal snake, does not obviate deeper ideas disclosed in the Scriptural account connected with it.

I will offer my own suggestion. As the snake was the precipitant of sin, it may also embody the workings of his emotions - i.e., that which caused sin. Perhaps as a rectification of the emotional makeup of the snake, God addressed two factors: 1) "Going on its belly" may imply the slow down of the emotions, as crawling is a much slower process than walking. (We learn from Rashi that the snake's legs were amputated.) Emotions have no other function than to seek gratification. They are not the apparatus which perceives right and wrong, and they cannot function outside of their design, therefore they continually seek satisfaction with no cessation. Such a path leads to

destruction, so a slower 'movement' of the emotions allows other positive forces to kick-in, and hopefully steer the creature back on the right path. 2) Additionally, even if the emotions with their slower state are in fact successful at achieving wrongful desires, "eating dirt all the days of its life" may teach that one other change was made to the snake: It was also given less satisfaction when desires were obtained, so "eating dirt" may allude to the 'sour taste', or the lessened satisfaction realized by the being - even when it achieves the very same desires as it had before. Again, this minimizing of satisfaction hopefully steers the being away from only seeking emotionally driven goals. □

Adam's Longevity and the Purpose of Learning

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Since youth we have read stories from Genesis, many times with much amazement. Of the personalities mentioned in Genesis, what is striking is their longevity. Adam lived to the age of 930, and others lived until 1000 years. Currently, most of us do not exceed 100 years of age, so 1000 years seems unreal. These ages were real, however there are discussions among our Rabbis as to who lived that long aside from those named.

Ramban' argues on Maimonides, recorded by the Ramban in Genesis 5:4. The Ramban's reason for Adam's longevity is due to his being the "Handiwork of the Holy One". He was created in "absolute perfection as regards beauty, strength and might." The Ramban explains that because of man's sin and environmental changes after the flood and the dispersion, did man's lifespan decrease. The Ramban holds that all of mankind shared this longevity, and all mankind suffered a shorter lifespan.

The Ramban criticizes The Maimonides' opinion:

"Now what the Rabbi has written in the Moreh Nevuchim does not seem right to me, namely that the longevity was only in those individuals mentioned, while the rest of the people in those generations lived lives of ordinary natural length. He further said this exception was due to the mode of living and food of such people or by way of miracle. But these words are without substance. Why should this miracle happen to them since they were neither prophets nor righteous, nor worthy that a miracle be done for them, especially for generation after generation. And how could a proper mode of living and proper food prolong their years to the extent that they are so many times greater than that of the entire generation? It is possible that there were others who observed such a mode of living, in which case all or most of them should have attained similar longevity. And how did it happen that enough of the wisdom concerning this good mode of living did not come down to just one of all the sons of Noah after the flood (to enable him to match the longevity of his ancestors), for there was among them a little wisdom of their ancestors even though it steadily decreased from generation to generation?"

The Rabbis stated, "The purpose of learning is svara" (definition). Man finds his ultimate goal in study when he "defines" what he perceives as the complete uniqueness of a given phenomena, law or any area of knowledge. Perception of a "new", previously not encountered phenomena means we have perceived something for the first time, and we are closer to understand G-d's wisdom.

Studying the wisdom of the universe was central to Adam's purpose and longevity. Longevity represents the amount of knowledge available to man. Man can live to 1000 years and barely scratch the surface. Perhaps this is one of the reasons man was initially blessed with such a long life.

Maimonides held that only those people mentioned in Scripture enjoyed longevity. The Ramban held

all men sustained this duration of life. My understanding of the verses leads me to an additional reason for man's longevity, in accordance with Maimonides' theory that only those men mentioned actually lived that long.

The verses describing the lives of Adam and about ten of his direct descendants repeatedly follow a 3-verse pattern, focusing on a singular idea. An example is this verse pattern found in Genesis 5:6-8:

5:6 And Seth (Adam's son) lived 105 years and bore Enosh. 5:7 And Seth lived after having bore Enosh 807 years and he bore sons and daughters. 5:8 And all the days of Enosh were 912 years and he died.

(This verse series repeats for about ten more men, only their ages change at their first son's birth and total years lived.)

In this example, it is Seth's life that is mentioned due to his involvement in procreation. We read of Seth's age at the birth of his first son, and his years during his many offspring, and finally his age at his death. What is the significance of mentioning the first child, and that it is male? I believe it teaches us that Seth desired offspring and so he procreated. The first child mentioned teaches that Seth's participation in procreation establishes the world. A male child was considered a milestone. Since the male controls life it's significant that it be mentioned. Without male participation in intercourse, there are no offspring. In the second verse with connection to Seth, he lived many years and had many offspring. Perhaps teaching the connection between lifespan and procreation. As procreation is G-d's will, Seth and others are granted longevity.

This theory would answer Ramban's critique of Maimonides. Maimonides holds that this miracle of longevity was not bestowed on an individual based on his particular merits. Rather, G-d granted long life as He desires world population, and these men procreated. Procreation was their focus and we do not read about anything else in connection with the men listed here. According to Maimonides, all other members of mankind not mentioned during the

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Adam's Longevity and the Purpose of Learning

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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beginning generations lived until 70 or 80 years.

An interesting insight into miracles is derived: Maimonides holds that G-d alters nature to achieve a goal. Although certain members of mankind benefited from this miracle of longevity, Maimonides holds that personal perfection is not necessarily a consideration when G-d renders miracles. What determined longevity was one's involvement in procreation. Ramban disagrees and says only perfected people could benefit from G-d's miracles. Therefore, the Ramban holds that for mankind to have this longevity is due only to design. (Rashi says that initially, men had two wives, one for procreation and one for sexual intercourse.) This teaches us that there were two distinct institutions then. Man could have selected both or one. This might corroborate Maimonides' theory that not all men merited longevity unless they selected procreation.

It was discussed that longevity contributed to man's self aggrandizement which ultimately drove him to sin against others through robbery and sexual promiscuity. By removing factors contributing to man's downfall is G-d's way of assisting man. Man's lifespan was decreased by G-d to assist man, by removing man's focus on himself. His energies could be redirected towards the world of wisdom.

In summary, longevity was initially a blessing given to those who according to Maimonides procreated and according to the Ramban, those who were perfected. This also teaches that man can engage and content himself in study for many years, since the knowledge available to man is endless, even if he lived 1000 years. ■

The Spirit of Wisdom

RABBI REUVEN MANN

In recording the transition of leadership from Moshe to Joshua the Torah states (Devarim 34:9) "Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands upon him, so the Children of Israel obeyed him as Hashem had commanded Moses."

At first glance this verse seems to contain an incomprehensible idea. It is true that Joshua acquired his Torah knowledge from his Rebbe (teacher) Moshe. However, it must be assumed that this was accomplished through engagement in a learning process not some type of physical contact. Yet the pasuk emphasizes that he became wise because Moshe "placed his hands upon him". What meaning can we derive from this seemingly baffling proposition?

The entire verse must be read very carefully. It does not say that Joshua was filled with wisdom, but with the "spirit of wisdom". This is an entirely unique phenomenon. Many people acquire expertise in various fields of intellectual endeavor. However the knowledge they gain does not impact on the very core of the personality.

The distinct feature of the authentic sage of Israel is that his whole personality is affected by the love of wisdom. This is the driving force of his life, the "prime mover" of his soul. Thus he does not limit himself to one or two areas of inquiry but embraces all areas of knowledge. This is not true of the secular intellectuals one encounters in the academic world. They confine the use of reason to certain limited spheres but on the most crucial issues pertaining to one's value system, follow their instinctual impulse and live in a state of philosophical ignorance. The genuine Torah scholar (Talmid Chacham) abhors ignorance especially in matters that govern his way of life. His spirit of love for the truth motivates his approach to every activity in which he is engaged. Thus Tanach says "David was wise in all of his paths and God was with him".

The question arises: How does one obtain this unique and special "spirit of wisdom"? Judaism maintains that

real Torah knowledge is not easily attained. Many years of tireless and diligent study are needed to give one the ability to penetrate to the depths of Torah. Good Rabbeyim (teachers) are necessary to provide the instruction and training essential to becoming a scholar. The Rebbe-Talmid encounter is, however, not limited to formal pedagogy. It contains an element of equal importance which is known as "shimush Talmidei Chachamim", ministering to Torah scholars. Abstract ideas can be transmitted by formal educational procedures. However the spirit which motivates the "soul" of the Rebbe is something the student gains access to in a different way. He must spend time with his Rebbe outside the classroom and observe how his love of wisdom affects every facet of behavior. The Talmud in Tractate Brachot asks (47b): Who is considered an ignoramus (Am Haaretz)? The Gemara considers various opinions and concludes as follows, "if one studied the written and oral law but did not minister to Torah scholars, he is an ignoramus. Rav Huna said the law is in accordance with this position."

We can now understand what the verse about Joshua is seeking to teach us. Of course he had obtained vast Torah knowledge and even reached the level of prophecy. However it was his possession of a "spirit of wisdom" that rendered him suitable for the role of Moshe's successor. Love of knowledge was the essence of his personality and expressed itself in every endeavor. This was not only due to his lifelong dedication to the study of Torah. It was developed and nurtured by his exposure to the personality, character, and very "soul" of his Rebbe, Moshe Rabbenu.

The placing of the Rebbe's hands on the head of the Talmid is the classic form of granting ordination (smicha). It expresses the close personal contact between Rebbe and Talmid which is a vital element of the Jewish learning experience. The students' mind and heart must be transformed by the all-embracing

character of the Rebbe/Talmid relationship. Now we can understand why the Pasuk says that Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moshe has placed his hands on him. The personal relationship between the Master and the "Ministering" disciple was the vehicle through which the special ruach of Torah was transmitted.

The rest of the Pasuk now flows smoothly. It says "and the children of Israel listened to him and did as God had commanded Moshe." The Torah emphasizes that they "listened and did". On the surface this may appear redundant. However the Torah is drawing our attention to the fact that there are different levels of success in teaching Judaism. Some Rabbis are able to inspire people to listen but not necessarily to act. The ultimate goal is to communicate in a manner which motivates people to learn for the sake of living correctly. This is possible when they regard the teacher not as a storehouse of information but as a role model worth emulating. The ideal Rebbe is one whose personality reflects the attributes of humbleness, compassion and devotion to wisdom in all areas. Joshua was able to succeed Moshe because he was as studious in learning from the actions of his Rebbe as from his formal teachings. He inspired the people to "listen and do" because he was a living example of one whose behavior reflects the Derech Hashem (way of God).

This lesson has great relevance to our lives. The Rabbis' say (Pirkei Avot): "Acquire for yourself a Rav". Our obligation is not only to study Torah as an abstract discipline, but as a practical guide to the challenges of life, as well. We must therefore seek to establish close relationships with genuine Torah personalities. We need to have ongoing association with people who apply the teaching and values of Torah to the complexities of day to day life. Our goal should be to study Torah for the sake of perfection. We should strive to become Talmidei Chachamim who are imbued with the "Spirit of Wisdom". ■