

רמב"ן · אור החיים

## Ramban & Or HaChayim

### ראשון FIRST ALIYAH

**1:1** IN THE BEGINNING God created the heaven and the earth.

**RAMBAN**

**IN THE BEGINNING G-D CREATED.** Rabbi Yitzchak said: The Torah, which is the book of laws, should have begun with the verse, This month shall be unto you the first of the months, which is the first commandment given to Israel. What then is the reason that it begins with the creation? Should the nations of the world say to Israel, "You are robbers because you took unto yourselves the lands of the seven nations of Canaan," they [Israel] may reply to them, "The whole world belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He. He gave it to whom He pleased, and according to His Will, He took it [the land] from them and gave it to us." This is a homiletic exposition as quoted by Rabbi Shlomo [Rashi] in his commentaries. One may object that it was indeed very necessary to begin the Torah with the chapter of In the beginning G-d created for this is the root of faith, and he who does not believe in this and thinks the world was eternal denies the essential principle of the [Judaic] religion and has no Torah at all. The answer is that the process of creation is a deep mystery not to be understood from the verses, and it cannot truly be known except through the tradition going back to Moses our teacher who received it from the mouth of the Almighty, and those who know it are obligated to conceal it. It is for this reason that Rabbi Yitzchak said that it was not necessary for the Torah to begin with the chapter of In the beginning G-d created and the narration of what was created on the first day, what was done on the second and other days, as well as a prolonged account of the creation of Adam and Eve, their sin and punishment, and the story of the Garden of Eden and the expulsion of Adam from it, because all this cannot be understood completely from the verses. It is all the more unnecessary for the story of the generations of the flood and of the dispersion to be written in the Torah for there is no great need of these narratives, and, for people who believe in the Torah, it would suffice without these verses. They would believe in the general statement mentioned to them in the Ten Commandments: For in six days the Eternal made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day, and the knowledge of the process of creation would remain with individuals as a tradition from Moses who received the law on Sinai together with the Oral Torah. Rabbi Yitzchak then gave a reason for it. The Torah began with the chapter of In the beginning G-d created and recounted the whole subject of creation until the making of man, how He [G-d] granted him dominion over the works of His hands, and that He put all things under his feet; and how the Garden of Eden, which is the choicest of places created in this world, was made the place of his abode until his sin caused his expulsion therefrom; and how the people of the generation of the flood were completely expelled from the world on account of their sin, and the only righteous one among them — he

[Noah] and his children — were saved; and how the sin of their descendants caused them to be scattered to various places and dispersed to different countries, and how subsequently they seized unto themselves places after their families, in their nations, as chance permitted. If so, it is proper that when a people continues to sin it should lose its place and another people should come to inherit its land, for such has been the rule of G-d in the world from the beginning. This is true all the more regarding that which is related in Scripture, namely that Canaan was cursed and sold as a servant forever. It would therefore not be proper that he inherit the choicest of places of the civilized world. Rather, the servants of G-d — the seed of His beloved one, Abraham — should inherit it, even as it is written, And He gave them the lands of the nations, and they took the labor of the peoples in possession; that they might keep His statutes, and observe His laws. That is to say, He expelled those who rebelled against Him, and settled therein those who served Him so that they know by serving Him they will inherit it, whereas if they sin against Him, the land will vomit them out, just as it vomited out the nation before them. Elucidating the explanation I have written are the words of the Sages in Bereshith Rab-bah, wherein they say as follows: "Rabbi Yehoshua, of the city of Siknin, in the name of Rabbi Levi opened [his discourse on this chapter of Creation with the verse]: He hath declared to His people the power of His works. Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, reveal to Israel what was created on the first day and what was created on the second day? It is on account of the seven nations who inhabited the land of Canaan, so that they should not taunt Israel and say to them: 'Are you not a nation of robbers?' Israel could then reply to them: 'And you, is it not booty in your hands? Have not the Caphtorim that came forth from Caphtor destroyed them and dwelt in their stead? The world and the fullness thereof belong to the Holy One, blessed be He. When He willed it, He gave it to you, and when He willed it, He took it from you and gave it to us.' It is this which Scripture says, To give them the heritage of the nations. He hath declared to His people the power of His works in order to give them the heritage of the nations. Hence He told them the account of creation." There is yet another source for the subject I have mentioned: the mysteries in the process of creation. It is what our Rabbis of blessed memory have said: "He hath declared to His people the power of His works. To declare the power of the process of creation to a mortal being is impossible. Therefore, Scripture closed the matter: In the beginning G-d created." Thus is elucidated what we have said on this subject.

**IN THE BEGINNING G-D CREATED.** Rashi wrote: "This verse calls aloud for elucidation, as our Rabbis have explained it: "For the sake of Torah which is called reshith, as it is said, The Eternal made me as 'reshith' (the beginning) of His way, and for the sake of Israel who is called reshith, as it is said, Israel is the Eternal's hallowed portion, the 'reshith' (first-fruits) of His increase." This Midrash of our Rabbis is very hidden and secret for there are many things the Rabbis found that are called reshith and concerning which they give Midrashic interpretations, and

those wanting in faith count their multitude. For example, they [the Rabbis] have said: “For the merit acquired by [fulfilling the commandments associated with] three things has the world been created: for the merit of the Dough-offering, for the merit of Tithes and for the merit of the First-fruits. In the beginning G-d created. Reshith surely signifies the Dough-offering, as it is said, The first of your dough. Reshith surely signifies the Tithes, as it is said, The first of thy corn. Reshith surely signifies the First-fruits, as it is said, The first-fruits of thy land.” The Rabbis have further said: “For the merit acquired by Moses [the world has been created], as it is said, And he chose a first part for himself.” Their intent in the above texts is as follows: the word bereshith alludes to the creation of the world by Ten Emanations, and hints in particular to the emanation called Wisdom, in which is the foundation of everything, even as it says, The Eternal hath founded the earth by wisdom. This is the Heave-offering [referred to in the Midrash mentioned above], and it is holy; it has no precise measure, thus indicating the little understanding created beings have of it. Now just as a man counts ten measures — this alludes to the Ten Emanations — and sets aside one measure of the ten as a Tithe, so do the wise men contemplate the tenth Emanation and speak about it. The Dough-offering, which is the single commandment pertaining to the dough, alludes to this. Now Israel, which is called reshith as mentioned above, is “the congregation of Israel,” which is compared in the Song of Songs to a bride and whom Scripture in turn calls “daughter,” “sister” and “mother.” The Rabbis have already expressed this in a homiletic interpretation of the verse, Upon the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him, and in other places. Similarly, the verse concerning Moses, And he chose a first part for himself, which they [the Rabbis in the above Midrash] interpret to mean that Moses our teacher contemplated [the Deity] through a lucid speculum, and he saw that which is called reshith (the first) for himself, and therefore he merited the Torah. Thus all the above Midrashim have one meaning. Now it is impossible to discuss this explanation at length in writing, and even an allusion is dangerous since people might have thoughts concerning it which are untrue. But I have mentioned this [i.e., the above brief explanation] in order to close the mouths of those wanting in faith and of little wisdom, who scoff at the words of our Rabbis.

**IN THE BEGINNING.** Rashi wrote: “If you wish to explain it [the word bereshith] in accordance with its plain meaning, explain it thus: at the beginning of the creation of the heaven and earth, and the earth was formless and void and there was darkness, the Holy One, blessed be He, said, Let there be light.” If so, the whole text leads into the creation of light. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra explained it in an identical way. However, he established that the letter vav in the word vеха’aretz (and the earth) does not serve [as a connecting letter as it normally does and which would mean “and,” but it serves rather as the word “when.”] There are many such examples in Scripture. The meaning then according to Rabbi Abraham would be: at the beginning of the creation of heaven and dry land, there was no habitable place on earth; rather, it was unformed and void and covered with water, and G-d said, Let there be light. According to Abraham ibn Ezra’s opinion, only light was created on the first day. The difficulty which Rabbi Shlomo [Rashi] had which led him to the above interpretation is, as he said: For if Scripture intended to teach the order in which the acts of creation took place, it should have written barishonah [instead of bereshith], since wherever the word reshith occurs in Scripture

it is in the construct state. But there is the verse, Declaring the end ‘mereshith’ [from the beginning]. And if one will connect it with the missing word davar [thing — thus making the verse read: “Declaring the end of a thing from the beginning of a thing”—] here too it could be connected to a missing word. There is also the verse, And he chose ‘reshith’ (a first part) for himself. [Here again the word reshith is not used in the construct state.] And Rashi raised other objections. Now listen to the correct and clear explanation of the verse in its simplicity. The Holy One, blessed be He, created all things from absolute non-existence. Now we have no expression in the sacred language for bringing forth something from nothing other than the word bara (created). Everything that exists under the sun or above was not made from non-existence at the outset. Instead He brought forth from total and absolute nothing a very thin substance devoid of corporeality but having a power of potency, fit to assume form and to proceed from potentiality into reality. This was the primary matter created by G-d; it is called by the Greeks hyly (matter). After the hyly, He did not create anything, but He formed and made things with it, and from this hyly He brought everything into existence and clothed the forms and put them into a finished condition. Know that the heavens and all that is in them consist of one substance, and the earth and everything that is in it consist of one substance. The Holy One, blessed be He, created these two substances from nothing; they alone were created, and everything else was constructed from them. This substance, which the Greeks called hyly, is called in the sacred language tohu, the word being derived from the expression of the Sages: “betohei (when the wicked bethinks himself) of his doings in the past.” If a person wants to decide a name for it [this primordial matter], he may bethink himself, change his mind and call it by another name since it has taken on no form to which the name should be attached. The form which this substance finally takes on is called in the sacred language bohu, which is a composite word made up of the two words bo hu (in it there is [substance]). This may be compared to the verse, Thou art not able ‘asohu’ (to perform it), in which case the word asohu is missing a vav and an aleph [and is a composite of the two words] aso hu. It is this which Scripture says, And he shall stretch over it the line of ‘tohu’ (confusion) and the stones of ‘bohu.’ [The tohu in Hebrew or hyly in Greek] is the line by which the craftsman delineates the plan of his structure and that which he hopes to make. This is derived from the expression, Kavei (Hope) unto G-d. The stones are forms in the building. Similarly it is written, They are accounted by Him as nought and ‘tohu,’ as tohu comes after nothingness and there is nothing yet in it. So the Rabbis have also said in Sefer Yetzirah: “He created substance from tohu, and made that which was nothing something.” They have furthermore said in the Midrash of Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakanah: “Rabbi Berachyah said: ‘What is the meaning of the verse, And the earth was ‘tohu’ (without form) ‘vavohu’ (and void)? What is the meaning of the word “was?” It had already been tohu. And what is tohu? It is a thing which astonishes people. It was then turned into bohu. And what is bohu? It is a thing which has substance, as it is written, [bohu is a composite of the two words] ‘bo hu’ (in it there is substance).”

**AND ‘ELOKIM’ (G-D) SAID.** The word Elokim means “the Master of all forces,” for the root of the word is e-il, meaning force, and the word Elokim is a composite consisting of the words e-il heim, as if the word e-il is in a construct state, and heim, [literally] “they,” alludes to all other forces. Thus Elokim means “the

Force of all forces." A secret will yet be disclosed in connection with this. If so, the simple correct explanation of the verse is as follows: In the beginning G-d created the heavens means He brought forth their matter from nothing; and the earth means that He brought forth its matter from nothing. And the earth, includes all the four elements, [not merely the land] as in the verse, And the heaven and the earth were finished, which includes the entire lower sphere, and in Praise the Eternal from the earth, ye sea-monsters, and all deeps, and as in many other verses. Now with this creation, which was like a very small point having no substance, everything in the heavens and on the earth was created. The word *eth* — [*eth hashamayim ve'eth ha'aretz*] — is like "the essence of a thing." The Sages have always set it forth as serving to include, since it is derived from the expression, The morning '*atha*' (cometh), and also the night. And so did our Rabbis say: "'*Eth hashamayim* (the heavens)' — *eth* includes the sun, moon, stars and constellations. '*Ve'eth ha'aretz* (and the earth)' — *ve'eth* includes the trees, herbs, and the Garden of Eden." These include all created things which are corporeal. Now after having said that with one command G-d created at first the heavens and the earth and all their hosts, Scripture returns and explains that the earth after this creation was *tohu*, that is, matter without substance. It became *bohu* when He clothed it with form. Then it [Scripture] explains that in this form was included the form of the four elements: fire, water, earth, and air. The word *ha'aretz* (the earth) includes these four elements. In this verse, the element of fire is called "darkness" because the elemental fire is dark. Were it red, it would redden the night for us. The element of water with which the dust was kneaded is here called "deep." This is why the waters of the oceans are called "the deeps," as it is written, The deeps cover them; The deeps were congealed; The deep was round about me. The bottom of the ocean is also referred to as "deep." And He rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up, and He led them through the depths, as a wilderness; He led them through the deep as a horse in the wilderness. And the element air is here called "spirit." Now it is already known that the four elements fill up the whole space with matter. That which stands still is the sphere of earth. The waters surround the earth, the air encompasses the waters, and the fire envelopes the air. Scripture thus states that the earth took on form, and the fire above enveloped the intermingled waters and dust, and the wind blew and rose in the darkness and hovered over the waters. It appears to me that this [primeval] point, [which G-d created out of absolute nought], which took on form and became *bohu*, is what the Sages call: "'The rock of foundation' from which the world was founded." The purport of the verses is thus: In the beginning G-d created the heavens from nought, and He created the earth from nought. The earth, when created, was *tohu* and then it became *bohu*, and in these there were "darkness" [i.e., fire, as explained above], water, dust and the wind blowing upon the water. Thus everything was created and made. The reason why *ruach* (wind) is attached to the name of G-d [as it says, and the spirit of God] is that it is the least substantial of all elements and is above them, hovering upon the face of the waters only by command of the Holy One, blessed be He. In case you seek information concerning the creation of the incorporeal angels, you will not find it explained in the Torah. The Sages, however, have explained concerning them that they were created on the second day, so that you should not say that they assisted in the creation of the world. But if you will merit and understand the secret of the word *bereshith* and why Scrip-

ture does not begin by saying, "G-d created in the beginning," you will know that, in the way of truth, Scripture tells about the lower creations and alludes to the higher ones and that the word *bereshith* refers covertly to the Emanation called Wisdom, which is the head of all beginnings, as I have mentioned. This is why they translated *bereshith* in the Jerusalem Targum to mean "in wisdom," and the word is adorned in the Torah with a crown on the letter *beth*.

## OR HACHAIM

The heavens opened and I beheld visions of the Lord, the Creator of the universe from one end to the other, and I was endowed to understand as much as it was deemed appropriate to reveal to me at the beginning of my sacred words. I feel that I have been awakened by the advent of Torah from the East. The first word of the Torah *בראשית*, is in the genitive, meaning *ראשית דבר*, the beginning of some matter. (Had the Torah written *בראשונה*, "at the beginning," this would have been normal). The possessive form, however, poses a problem. What if anything could this word be related to, seeing nothing existed as yet? The *"דבר"*, the something, which this *ראשית* is supposed to belong to is absent. Nobody is better aware of this than G'd Himself; after all everything emanates from Him.

A second problem is the fact that the Torah appears to describe the *שמים*, heavens, as being the first entity created. Our sages (Chagigah 12) explained the word *שמים* as a combination of *אש* and *מים*, "fire and water." This appears as a very daring explanation; it is apt to strengthen the view of those who believe that the beginning of the creative process was the heaven and the earth, but that fire and water had already existed, and that G'd Himself had not created these two elements. If G'd had indeed created the waters, this fact should have been mentioned at the beginning of the items listed as having been created. Our sages were very careful and explained the first verse in the Torah to mean: "At the beginning of the process of creation of heaven and earth there was a kind of earth which was *Tohu Vavohu*," i.e. in a totally confused state. They did not say that the beginning of the creative process was heaven and earth. I do not believe that their words are sufficiently clear to remove possible errors; why did the Torah afterwards not also mention the creation of water, fire, earth, and wind (the four basic elements of the physical universe)? This in spite of the fact that later on (1,9) the text speaks of G'd commanding the waters to congregate in order that the dry land should become visible. This still is not proof that the waters had been created by G'd. It is much more reasonable to understand that verse as referring to G'd giving instructions to matter, such as earth, which had long been in existence already but which G'd made visible only at that time.

A third difficulty in the first verse of the Torah is the word *אח* which precedes both the word *השמים*, and the word *הארץ*. Why did the Torah need to add these two words?

Before explaining the meaning of the verse, let me first provide you with a small glimpse of the greatness of the Creator which has been revealed to us. He is able to express in words things which none of His creatures are able to understand. Our sages (Midrash Hagadol) have stated this when they explained Exodus 20,1, the verse preceding the Ten Commandments. The Torah writes: "G'd spoke all these words saying:" This refers to words which the mouth (human) is unable to utter and the ear is unable to hear. G'd uttered the entire Ten Commandments in a single utterance, not a single word either preceding or following the adjoining one.

This brings us to the explanation of what the Torah has written in its first verse. When G'd created the universe and all that is contained therein He did so with a single utterance. This is the meaning of בראשית ברא אלוקים את השמים ואת הארץ. The reason the Torah added the word את before the word for "heaven" and the word for "earth," was to tell us that all that is contained in either heaven or earth was included in that utterance. The Torah alluded to this so that we should not think that G'd created only the ten items which our sages (Chagigah 12) have enumerated as having been created on the first day and which are discernible by a careful analysis of the first verse. In addition there are many other forces which were created and concealed within basic forces of the universe. Some of these forces we become aware of only through realisation that certain materials are in reality a combination of several elements such as alloys; others we become aware of through the study of climate, astronomy, and other disciplines, i.e. changes that occur in our world as a result of the passage of time, etc. etc. They are far too numerous to list. This is why the Creator has subsumed them all under the two words את which precede the definition of "heaven" and "earth" respectively in our verse. You will find that our sages said that the verse commencing with the word בראשית is to be understood as one of the ten directives by which G'd created the universe (Avot 5,1). If this were not so you would encounter the word ויאמר only nine times in the story of creation which concludes with Genesis 1,31. As it is G'd created the entire universe with a single utterance; however, the universe lacked order. After having created the universe, G'd proceeded to put order in His universe. This is the meaning of the nine verses each of which commences with the words: ויאמר אלוקים. These verses introduce the directives which produced order in the universe. On the first day G'd proceeded to separate light from darkness, the first step of creating order in His universe. On the second day He established a division between different kinds of waters.

You will find proof for the correctness of our interpretation if you look at how the Torah describes the completion of the process in 2,3 where the wording is: כי בו שבת מכל מלאכתו אשר ברא, "אלוקים לעשות," "for on it (the Sabbath) He rested from all His work which He had created, in order to complete it." In view of what the Torah had already reported in 2,2, these words would have been quite superfluous unless they wanted to draw our attention to the fact that the act of creation was a comprehensive one all carried out at the very beginning of the first day. The wording of the verse clearly indicates that what occurred during the six days was merely the establishment of order in an existing universe. Perhaps the following example clarifies the matter. An architect wants to build a palace. In order to do so, he first arranges for the various materials such as timber, stone, mortar, cement, etc. to be at hand. Once he has assembled all the components required for his project, he begins the actual construction. When G'd created His universe, He proceeded along similar lines. He prepared all the materials He knew He would require. However, they were all in a confused heap. He then proceeded to put all those various materials in order.

When He wanted to create the heavens, for example, He would proclaim: "Let the sky remain between the waters, etc." In other words, G'd assigned a place to the heavens in His universe. The heavens themselves, however, already existed previously. The same holds true for the earth. It too had existed but was only now put in its place.

There is a reason that the Torah does not specifically mention that G'd assigned a certain place in the universe to fire such as He did to the heavens and to the earth. He did not want to make fire such a powerful source (presence). Had He allowed for fire to be as powerful a presence in the universe as, say the oceans or the earth, the universe could not have been able to endure. This is why G'd left fire in the place it was when He had originally created it, i.e. concealed in the heavens until such time as it is needed by man. At such a time G'd strikes the clouds releasing the required amount of fire from them. Our sages have said that this is the reason we recite the benediction בורא מאורי האש, "the One who has created the radiant flames of fire" at the end of the Sabbath over a candle (Pessachim 54) This is another instance in which G'd demonstrated that basic elements existed in a state of confusion at the time they were created, before G'd had assigned their proper place and function to each one. Had G'd not proceeded in such a fashion the human mind could never have comprehended how different elements could exist within a single mixture, especially such elements as earth and fire which seem to have nothing in common with each other.

While it is certainly true that had G'd but wanted to, He could not only have created the whole universe at one stroke but could also have established it in the desired order, He had many reasons for not doing so. Our sages have revealed one of these reasons to us when they comment on the above quoted Mishnah in Avot 5,1 that though G'd could have created the universe with a single directive, He wanted to provide additional reward for the righteous who by their deeds maintain a universe G'd had laboured hard to create, or, alternatively, to impose commensurate punishment for the wicked who set out to destroy a universe G'd created with so much effort.

Do not ask why our sages in the Mishnah use the term נברא, "was created," (a term normally reserved for creation ex nihilo) when they describe the ten directives used by G'd to "create" the world. The fact is that anything which is incomplete in the sense that it lacks something essential is considered as if it did not exist at all. Consider, for example, the earth. As long as G'd had not assigned to earth a place wherein to function so that it was not even visible to other creatures, the term נברא is justified. The same applies to all other creatures which had not yet been assigned their function by G'd such as the mixture of light and darkness, for instance.

Do not wonder either why the Torah described the creative process in the manner we have explained instead of saying outright: "G'd created the waters, the dust the fire and the wind," and that would have precluded anyone from misunderstanding the process of creation. Remember that it is the Torah's purpose to inform and reveal all that is hidden in such a way that the power residing in G'd's deeds is revealed thereby to His people.

He has informed us of the order of creation and its manner as well as the fact that He is mighty and has girded Himself with might and has created the entire universe and every existing thing with a single utterance. This is something that G'd wanted His friends to know; He was not willing to deny us this knowledge because of a few fools who misinterpret what is written in the Torah.

In addition to this consideration there is another reason that obligated the Torah to report the creation in the order it did. Had the Torah chosen to report the sequence in the manner the fools would have liked, namely that He created the earth and He created the waters, etc., the impression would have been cre-

ated that He created each element separately, something which does not correspond to the truth. We know that G'd does not like those who utter lies, and that such people cannot endure in His presence. How could He Himself then begin His Torah by telling something that is not so? This is why He spoke the truth about the manner in which the creation took place, and relied on the principle: כי ישרים דרכי השם צדיקים ילכו בהם ורשעים יכשלו בהם, "for the paths of the Lord are smooth, the righteous can walk on them while the sinners stumble on them" (Hoseah 14,10).

The Torah's report of creation is designed to overawe us and to induce us to give thanks and recognition to the Creator. If the Torah used the word בראשית instead of בראשונה, this is precisely what the psalmist (Psalms 111,6) meant when he said about G'd: כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו, "He revealed to His people His powerful works." The foregoing teaches that He who is able to call into existence simultaneously a whole universe with a single utterance, without one word having to follow another, also did not require the letters in a word to follow one another. He uttered the letters ש-מ-י-ם in the word שמים simultaneously. The same applied to all other words in the directives that G'd issued.

After G'd has informed us of all this it emerges that these are the things that G'd wished to teach us by means of the word בראשית. Everything is ראשית, a beginning; there was not a single thing which came into existence earlier or later than others.

We must understand that the reason the Lord decided to do things in this fashion -apart from the reasons we have already cited- is that He wanted to reveal to us part of His Omnipotence, something which is embodied in the very name אלהים. His ability to create the universe in the manner He did, is related to the attribute represented by the name אלהים. Our sages (Makkot 24) have referred to this aspect of G'd when they told us about the first two of the Ten Commandments, namely the verses commencing with the words אנכי יהיה לך and לא יהיה לך respectively. They said: "We heard these words from the attribute of gevurah, and these lines were spoken as a single utterance." What our sages meant was that by employing this attribute G'd can utter many words simultaneously, not only the first two of the Ten Commandments. There are other sources which claim that G'd uttered the entire Ten Commandments as a single utterance. It so happened that there was a special significance for the Jewish people at that time in the first two of the Ten Commandments having been uttered in this way. I have dealt with this subject in greater detail in my commentary on פרשת יתרו. The important fact is that the Torah uses the name אלוהים exclusively in its report of the creation. There are powerful reasons why the Torah writes: "ברא אלוהים" as we have outlined.

2) Let us now approach the word בראשית from a homiletical (דרוש) point of view. According to Psalms 33,6: בדבר ה' שמים נעשו, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, by the breath of His mouth, all their hosts." We must remember that according to our tradition G'd did not create the angels until the second day (Bereshit Rabbah 3,11) in order that people should not make the mistake of believing that the angels assisted G'd in the works of creation. We are now faced with the task of reconciling the tradition that the angels were created later than the heavens in view of the fact that the psalmist ascribes the creation of the angels to the "breath" of G'd whereas he describes the heavens as having been created by the "word" of G'd. Does not the breath of the mouth precede the word that issues forth from the mouth? If so, we are forced to assume that the creation of the angels preceded the creation of the heavens

and the earth! In order to resolve this apparent contradiction the Torah wrote: בראשית ברא, i.e. that G'd reversed the usual order of breath and word by creating with the word although no breath had emanated from His mouth as yet. Thus it was possible to create the heavens first. All of this in order that people should not claim that the angels assisted G'd in His work of creation by stretching the sky over the earth. Since no creature which has been created in accordance with certain rules applying in our universe can act contrary to those rules, only G'd was able to reverse natural processes such as the word of the mouth preceding the breath which helps formulate it. No creature, not even angels, could have assisted G'd in that work. Only G'd is totally free, totally independent of the rules of nature which He has established. This is what the psalmist wishes us to appreciate when he has the Lord create the heavens though he speaks about "G'd's breath" only afterwards.

In view of the foregoing we must understand the word בראשית as giving us a clue to the two parts which form a word, דבור. We have the word itself and the breath which helps the word (formulation of a thought) to be articulated as a word. G'd employed both the word and the breath in order to create. We would not have known with which G'd created the heavens and the earth and with which He created the hosts, i.e. the angels. The Torah tells us that the act of creating heaven and earth came first and from the result you know that the word preceded the breath which emanated from G'd's mouth.

3) We must appreciate another important difference between the report of creation in Psalms 33,4, and that in the first verse of the Torah. Throughout the whole report of creation in the first chapter of the Torah the word used for G'd is only the word אלוהים. We encounter the name יהוה אלוהים only in Genesis 2,4 where the Torah suddenly writes: "it was on the day the Lord G'd put the finishing touches to earth and heaven." You note that in this latter case the Torah mentions the earth first and the heavens afterwards, in contrast to Genesis 1,1, where we were told about the creation of heaven and earth in that order. The other change is that a new attribute of G'd is introduced, the name יהוה.

I believe that the answer to the questions raised by this apparent contradiction is found when we view the one verse as providing the answer to a question raised by the other verse and vice versa. First of all, we must look at the source for the system of reward for the righteous and how our sages interpreted this. Concerning this we read in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20,5): "He performs kindness to thousands of generations." We also read (Deut. 7,9): "He keeps His covenant faithfully to the thousandth generation of those who love Him and keep His commandments." Our sages comment on the fact that in Deuteronomy the Torah limits G'd's reward to one thousand generations, whereas in Exodus the Torah speaks about at least two thousand generations; they also point to the fact that the expression "to those who keep His commandments" is not part of the continuation of the thought in the Ten Commandments in the Book of Exodus. [The tone signs on the latter words "and to those who keep His commandments" indicate that this is a separate statement. Ed.] In Sotah 31 Rabbi Shimon ben Eleazar points out that though the Torah mentions the words: "to those who love Me and perform My commandments" also in the Ten Commandments in Exodus, there is a subtle difference. The words לאפים are placed adjacent to the words "to those who love Me." In the case where the Torah promises the reward as

extending to "thousands" of generations, it refers to the righteous who keep the commandments out of their love for G'd. In the case where the Torah limits that reward to one thousand generations, the Torah speaks about people who observed G'd's laws due to fear of punishment for non-performance. The words: "to those who love Him," are not repeated in the text in Deuteronomy.

We shall adopt a similar approach in interpreting the apparently contradictory verses in Genesis 1,1 and in Genesis 2,4. As long as the Torah employs G'd's name אֱלֹהִים exclusively, this means that only the attribute of Justice was employed in the work of creation which the Torah reports. All that is reported there took place before G'd "co-opted" the attribute of Mercy. This attribute was applicable as far as the creation of the heavens were concerned because the heavens are not inhabited by anyone requiring the attribute of Mercy. This is why the Torah does not again refer to the heavens as it does to the earth in 1,2. In the second report in 2,4, the Torah deals with an earth inhabited by man, a creature composed also of physical matter who therefore cannot endure without the presence of the attribute of Mercy. The word וַשְׁמִים at the end of that verse does not belong to the preceding word אֶרֶץ as far as the presence of the attribute יְיָהוּה mentioned in the earlier part of the verse is concerned. Concerning the matter of what preceded which, we have stated earlier that G'd in His omnipotence created the entire universe simultaneously.

You, the reader, should not be troubled by Psalms 89,7 in which we read: "For who in the heavens can equal the Lord, can compare with the Lord among the divine beings." Although when looked at superficially, this verse gives the impression that the heavens are inhabited by beings justifiably described as "gods," the Talmud (Baba Metziah 85) reports that Elijah was smitten with 60 firebrands for having revealed some secrets of what goes on in heaven without being authorised to do so. Yuma 77 reports that the archangel Gabriel was similarly punished for an offence. Chagigah 15 tells about Elisha ben Nevayah (who became a heretic) having observed the angel Mattatron (in the heavens) granting permission for the merits of Israel to be recorded. Elisha assumed that the angel was an independent power, a fact which led to his becoming a heretic. As a result, the angel Mattatron was also smitten with 60 firebrands [to teach us that he too was subject to a higher authority. Ed.] These instances all prove that when the psalmist speaks about the inhabitants of the heaven he does not have in mind "gods." Although angels are not equipped with an evil urge, and we would therefore assume that they cannot sin and become subject to punishment, they still err on occasion -perhaps by not sufficiently concentrating on the task allotted to them- and are held responsible for their errors.

We have demonstrated that our sages were well aware of the nuances of the text and that the reason the word שְׁמִים sometimes appears after the word אֶרֶץ, whereas other times it appears before the word אֶרֶץ, is in order to show that heaven and earth were created simultaneously. We have also explained why G'd's name יְיָהוּה did not appear until there was a human being. Nonetheless, Bereshit Rabbah 12,15 states that originally G'd planned to create the entire universe using only His attribute אֱלֹהִים, i.e. the attribute of Justice. According to that tradition He did not co-opt the attribute of Mercy until after He saw that the universe would not endure otherwise. At that time, according to the Midrash, He gave precedence to the attribute of

Mercy over the attribute of Justice. [This appears to contradict the notion that the entire universe was created simultaneously. Ed.]

You should know therefore that G'd has granted permission to interpret the meaning of the verses by our using our intelligence in order to do research, even if, on occasion, the conclusions we arrive at seem to contradict the traditional interpretations of the mental giants of earlier generations. This is the meaning of the rule that שְׁבַעִים פְּנִים לַתּוֹרָה, that there are 70 ways to interpret the Torah. As long as our interpretations do not result in halachic rulings which run counter to our traditions we are perfectly within our rights to pursue our own path. This is the reason that the teachers of the Talmud were not at liberty to interpret the Torah in such a way that their halachic rulings would conflict with those of the teachers of the Mishnah. When it comes to the interpretations of the meaning of the written text of the Torah you find that the Amora'im frequently disagree with the Tanna'im, the teachers of the Mishnah.

After having taken another look at the verses we have discussed I have come to the conclusion that the traditional interpretation and my own conclusions are perfectly compatible. Before explaining how this is possible, we must first explain how the terms "before" i.e. what He thought first, and "after" i.e. what He thought afterwards, can be used altogether in connection with G'd. G'd's comprehension of things is not comparable to ours, after all. Whereas we need time in order to add to our previous understanding of things, the same surely cannot be said of G'd! It is quite inconceivable that G'd's "original" thought would have been incorrect so that He had to re-think His plans for the universe!

However, you should know that when the sages speak about G'd having "co-opted" the attribute of Mercy, such a statement comprises two separate aspects of mercy. One aspect of mercy is that on occasion G'd will apply the attribute of Mercy to someone without even first legally examining any accusation levelled against such a person. This is the true kind of mercy, namely to forgive and to pardon unreservedly. However, the name אֱלֹהִים, i.e. the attribute of Justice, is applicable in instances when He does not want to forgive a person. In such cases He judges him. This is what the sages meant when they asked (rhetorically): "Is there a human being who does not (legally) have to stand trial?" A second way of understanding the statement that G'd co-opted the attribute of Mercy after He had created the universe is quite different. We have a tradition that G'd never really waives, מוֹוֹתֵר, any wrong a person has committed. Everyone on earth is being judged, there is no escape from that. Our sages have made this crystal clear when they said (Baba Kama 50) that "anyone who claims that G'd is a וְוֹתֵרִין will find that his own life will be "waived." The verse quoted to support this is Deut. 32,4: "The Rock, - His deeds are perfect, Yea, all His ways are just." I have chosen to accept the second of these views.

Accordingly, the manner in which creation proceeded was that initially G'd, i.e. אֱלֹהִים, the attribute of Justice, created. It was G'd's objective that the universe should be able to endure on that basis. When He saw that this would not work, He co-opted the attribute of Mercy. This does not mean that G'd reversed Himself and retreated from His original intention. It means merely that whenever G'd would employ the attribute of Justice to judge man He would temper application of that attribute by using the attribute of Mercy also. Examples of such an applica-

tion of mercy are that when G'd would find man or mankind guilty of some punishment, the punishment would not be exacted all at once, or would not be levied against all the guilty parties simultaneously, for instance. However, ultimately, no one would escape getting what he deserves. It is this idea the sages had in mind when explaining the attribute of אֵין אֵין, that G'd exercises a great deal of patience.

As a result of these considerations we understand that had the Torah commenced by writing: בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא ה' אֱלֹהִים, we would have thought that G'd sometimes employs the attribute of Mercy and other times He employs the attribute of Justice.

Having explained the meaning of our sages that no one escapes the principle of Justice, but that the application of that principle is often tempered with the attribute of Mercy, we must remind the reader that this tempering applies only in our terrestrial world. In the heavens the application of the attribute of Justice is absolute. When an inhabitant of the Celestial Regions becomes guilty of a misdemeanour, he is not only judged immediately and the judgment is carried out in full, but there is no such thing as remorse, confession, or repentance. Neither is there a plea of having committed the wrong unintentionally. This is part of the point of the story the Talmud recounts in connection with the experiences of Elisha ben Avuya who had entered the פְּרִדָּה, i.e. "preoccupation with esoterics." The rabbis had a tradition that there are no favorites in the Celestial Regions, that no one is allowed to sit; everyone must stand, and inasmuch as there is no such thing as fatigue in those regions this is no hardship. When Elisha ben Avuya saw the angel Matatron seated he arrived at the conclusion that that angel must be a law unto himself. The angel was immediately punished for having caused Elisha to make the kind of error that turned him into a heretic. The angel's failure to rise when he saw Elisha ben Avuya was an unintentionally committed error; he had never been warned about that matter. If a human being had become guilty of such an error G'd would not have punished him in such a fashion.

4) The fact that the Torah mentions the creation of the heavens first also contains a hint that when G'd builds, He does not do so in the same manner as do human beings. A human builder first lays a foundation before he proceeds to build the upper story of a house. G'd can build the upper stories without having to lay the foundation.

5) Our sages (Pessikta Zutra) have also explained the letter ב in the word בְּרֵאשִׁית as meaning "on account of." The word רֵאשִׁית stands for the Torah which is referred to as רֵאשִׁית. According to that approach the universe was created for the sake of the Torah. This means that anyone who acquires some Torah knowledge acquires the right to enjoy what the universe has to offer, whereas anyone who fails to acquire Torah knowledge does not have the right to derive any enjoyment in this world. Our sages (Yalkut Shimoni) also said that the Torah starts with the word רֵאשִׁית, because of Israel who are called רֵאשִׁית, as we know from Jeremiah 2,3 where Israel is referred to as רֵאשִׁית תְּבוּאָתָהּ, "the first of G'd's harvest." This statement does not contradict the statement that G'd used the Torah to create the universe, seeing that it is Israel who have to observe the Torah. This is the reason that Israel is also called רֵאשִׁית. They distinguish themselves from other nations because of their attachment to Torah. For this reason we have statements that the universe was created for the sake of Abraham, or for the sake of Jacob. The Torah lauds Abraham for having obeyed G'd's voice (Genesis 26,5). Jac-

ob's name was changed to יִשְׂרָאֵל which indicated that his very being was a justification for the earth's creation. There are other Midrashic statements according to which the universe was created for the sake of יִרְאָה, fear of the Lord, seeing that David said that "the beginning of all wisdom is a measure of reverence for G'd" (Psalms 111,10). Since Torah contains the epitome of all wisdom, Israel, Torah, reverence, etc., are really all different sides of the same coin.

6) Another meaning of the word בְּרֵאשִׁית is based on Proverbs 8,30: וָאִהְיָה אֶצְלוֹ אִמּוֹן, which our sages understand as if it said: "I will be as a male nurse for him" (Zohar Terumah). This is again no contradiction to previous explanations. G'd used the Torah much as a mother uses a nurse in order to train the child correctly. This only reinforces the stature of Torah-studying individuals who have been allocated such an outstanding אִמּוֹן, trainer or tutor. It is the reason why Torah scholars are called בּוֹנִים, builders, in Berachot 64 seeing that what is in their hearts and what emanates from their mouths contributes to the building of a universe such as G'd intended it to be.

7) The letter ב in the word בְּרֵאשִׁית has also been explained by our sages as an allusion to the two kinds of יִרְאָה, reverence, or fear of punishment. Fear of G'd may be due to fear of being punished for misdeeds, or it maybe due to a feeling of awe and reverence for the grandeur of G'd, something our sages call יִרְאָה הָרוממות. This latter יִרְאָה is a morally much higher category than mere fear of punishment. Both these fears are alluded to in the latter ב. G'd had to create both these kinds of fear in order to assure the universe of continued existence. The first kind of fear is alluded to in the use of the word אֱלֹהִים, the attribute of Justice, the second by the use of the name יְיָ in the verse where שְׁמִים is mentioned last. This corresponds to the commentary on Psalms 8,4: "when I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers" (I become awe struck with יִרְאָה הָרוממות as mentioned in verse 2 in that chapter).

Alternatively, the word אֵין with its connotation of the here and now inspires fear, whereas the word שְׁמִים which makes one think of something supernatural evokes feelings of reverent admiration for its creator.

8) An allusion of a more esoteric nature may be found in the word בְּרֵאשִׁית when we understand the letter ב as an allusion to שְׁכִינָה, house. According to this, יִרְאָה הָשֵׁם is the home of the שְׁכִינָה, presence of G'd. When someone possesses the appropriate awe and reverence for the creator of Heavens he is fit to harbour the שְׁכִינָה within his person. This is the deeper meaning of Isaiah 33,6: יִרְאָה ה' הִיא אוֹצְרוֹ, "Reverence for the Lord is His treasure-chamber." This is also the meaning of Psalms 78,60: אָהַל שָׁכַן, "He set a tent amongst men."

9) The word בְּרֵאשִׁית may also be understood in the same vein as the statement in Vayikra Rabbah 35,5 that "the sword and the book (Torah) descended to earth one wound around the other." This is another way of saying that "with בְּרֵאשִׁית, i.e. the Torah, G'd created, i.e. brought the attribute of Justice into the universe."

10) In Kings I 18 39 the Jewish people exclaimed הֵשֵׁם הוּא, i.e. they understood that G'd comprises these two attributes. This meant that they were aware that the attribute of Justice is complemented by the attribute of Mercy. Not only that, but they realised that all G'd's attributes comprise also the attribute of Mercy as an integral, though minor part. [Rabbi

Isaiah Horowitz in his *לוחות הברית* elaborates on that theme. Ed.] After having given due consideration to the guilt or otherwise of a person, the judgment is administered by the attribute called *מדת הדין*. This aspect apart however, the name *אלוקים* suggests that G'd's intention when creating the universe was to bestow blessing on His creatures. When Isaac blessed Jacob (believing that Esau stood in front of him) he invoked the attribute of *אלוקים* when calling down the blessings of "the dew of the skies and the fat parts of the earth." He had been well aware of the attribute *ידידות* when he referred to it just one verse prior to the blessing we have just mentioned (Genesis 27,27-28). The difference between using these two attributes lies in the fact that the attribute *אלוקים* bestows G'd's kindness on those who deserve it, whereas the attribute of *ידידות* bestows such blessings even on those who do not deserve it.

11 ) We find a further meaning of the word *בראשית* in the aggadah (Bet Hamidrash Yalinek 3,50) which depicts the various letters of the alphabet approaching G'd, each one asking to be accorded the privilege that the Torah should begin with it. Each letter presented a cogent argument, all of which were examined by G'd. All the claims were rejected by G'd in favour of the letter *ב*. The only letter which had not made a claim was the *א*. G'd promised the *א* to become the first letter of the alphabet because it had not pressed its claim. We can deduce from this that the letter *א* possessed a valid claim to superiority, and if it had pressed its claim the Torah would indeed have commenced with that letter. It is also peculiar that in that aggadah the letters are described as having pressed their claim starting with the last letter, i.e. *ת*. Why did the aggadah not list the letters as pressing their claims in their normal order, starting with the letter *א*? If that had been the case G'd would not have accepted the claim of the letter *ב* before the letter *א* had even had a chance to present its argument. You must appreciate that when the letters in the alphabet appear in their normal order, i.e. *א-ב-ג*, this is an allusion to the attribute of Mercy, whereas when they appear in the reverse order such as *ת-ש-ר*, this is indicative of the attribute of Justice. To remind you that this is indeed so, look at the letters in the name *תשרי*, the first month of the year. The early part of that month is reserved for the attribute of Justice, hence the letters in the name of that month allude to that. It is only because G'd always complements the attribute of Justice with the attribute of Mercy, that He added the letter *י* to the name of that month. Having explained this, you will understand that the appearance of the letter *ב* in front of the letter *א* in the word *בראשית* hints at the fact that the world was created primarily by the attribute of Justice. The letter *ב* is in its appropriate place then.

12 ) Another meaning of the word *בראשית* is related to the tradition that G'd created 1000 worlds corresponding to the meaning of the letter *א*. These worlds, however, remain hidden. They are usually referred to as *עלמין דכיסופין*. These worlds are alluded to in the verse *שלמה לך* *שלמה*, "You can have your Thousand, Solomon" (Song of Songs 8,12). Since the letter *א* therefore had already been allocated its place (in those 1000 worlds), it is quite in order for the report of the creation of this visible world to commence with the second letter, i.e. the letter *ב*. Since this world consists of two parts, i.e. heaven and earth, this is alluded to in a report which commences with the letter *ב* which has a numerical value of 2. The reason the word is not *בראשונה*, is to avoid the impression that the heavens preceded the earth during the creative process.

13 ) Another meaning contained in the words commencing with *בראשית* is an allusion to the four kinds of world G'd created, i.e. the *עולם הבריאה*, *עולם האצילות*, *עולם היצירה*, and the *עולם העשיה*. The fact that there are 4 such worlds is alluded to in Isaiah 43,7: *כל הנקרא בשמי ולכבודי, בראתיו, יצרתיו, אף עשיתיו*. "Everything that has been called forth for the sake of My Name, (1) in My honour, (2) I have created it, (3) I have fashioned it, (4) and I have completed it." The world of *כבוד* is an allusion to the *עולם האצילות*, whereas the other three expressions for G'd's creative activity in that verse are self-explanatory. In our verse (Genesis 1,1) the four worlds are represented by 1) *את השמים* (4) *אלוקים* (3) *ברא*, (2) *ראשית*, (1) *ראשית*, and (4) *ואת הארץ*.

14 ) Yet another meaning of the word *בראשית* is that it alludes to the tradition (Pessachim 54) that (the concept of) Paradise and Hell, i.e. *עדן וגהנום* were created prior to the creation of the physical universe. This means that G'd had to establish the idea of reward and punishment in advance of the creative process. These two concepts are referred to in the word *בראשית*, i.e. "two beginnings." The reason for the emphasis on the "2" is that 2 places are reserved for each human being, one in Paradise and one in Hell. It depends on him which place he will ultimately occupy. In either event, if he occupies a place in either domain he will also be accorded the second place, i.e. the one left vacant by a fellow human being who has forfeited it. The reason that the *ב* is appended may also be to teach us that these two concepts came into existence simultaneously.

15 ) Another reason for the letter *ב* (meaning 2) preceded the word *ראשית* is the fact that G'd created two worlds, i.e. the *עולם הזה* and the *עולם הבא*. When man preoccupies himself with the study of Torah and the performance of good deeds (to his fellow human beings) he will attain the ultimate good, i.e. eternal life in the *עולם הבא*. The Torah therefore alludes already at its very outset to the fact that the reward for proper conduct in this world is stored up for enjoyment in the second world, the *עולם הבא*. In that world most of the reward will be paid to the *נשמה*, the soul. If man has qualified for additional reward he will receive that in this world. The reason the Torah mentions the heavens first is to teach us that G'd is concerned with assuring us of our share in the "higher" world first.

16 ) Another reason for the word *בראשית* as the opening word of the Torah may be connected with the well known dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua about whether the universe was created in Tishrey or in Nissan (Rosh Hashanah 10-11). I believe that both sages were correct. Our sages are on record that G'd first conceived of a plan to create the world, whereas He carried out His plan sometime later. We may therefore assume that G'd conceived of the plan in Nissan, whereas He executed it in Tishrey, or vice versa. The term *ברא*, He created, would be appropriate for both stages of creation, the planning stage as well as the stage of execution. When G'd conceives of a plan it is equivalent to executing it. The letter *ב* in the word *בראשית* then indicates that the process of creation had two beginnings, 1) its planning, 2) its execution. The only thing the sages debated was whether the planning stage or the executive stage occurred in Nissan or Tishrey respectively.

17 ) Our sages (Berachot 6) state that anyone who possesses *יראה*, reverence for G'd, will have his requests heard (answered) by G'd (based on an inverted reading of Kohelet 12,23). The reason is that such a person speaks from the depth of his soul when he addresses G'd. The same is not the case when prayer emanates from the body, i.e. some of the physical attributes of man

such as his lips, his tongue, etc. We have previously mentioned (8) that the word ראשית alludes to fear of the Lord. Once one has acquired this, G'd listens to one's words and teaches man understanding, i.e. how to lead the proper life on earth, i.e. ואת הארץ.

18 ) G'd has commanded man to cultivate numerous kinds of "fear," יראה. He is to fear father and mother (Leviticus 19,3). He is to fear the king as well as the Rabbinic authorities. He is to be afraid not to create the impressions amongst his peers that he is sinful. In short, there is hardly an aspect of life when man does not have to be in awe of someone or something. This makes it almost impossible not to become guilty at one point or another of slighting G'd's command by failing to properly respect the king, the parents etc.. In order to warn us to be very careful about this, the Torah starts with a word alluding to יראה. We are to first practice יראת שמים, reverence for G'd Himself, in order to train ourselves to develop the appropriate reverence for earthly creatures. When the Torah says in Numbers 32,22: "והייתם נקיים", מהו ומישראל, the meaning is that you first have to practice reverence vis-a-vis G'd in order to also practice it successfully vis-a-vis human beings where appropriate. Unless one does not transgress the commandment to relate to G'd with due reverence it is impossible to fulfil the subordinate command to relate to human beings with the proper degree of respect.

19 ) Another allusion found in the word ראשית with the prefix ב is the fact that G'd created two distinct spiritual levels in human beings by means of the Torah. Man can achieve a spiritual level approximating that of Heaven as we know from Psalms 82,6: אני יקרא אל השמים, "I said: you are divine beings," or, in the event man does not maintain his spiritual level he descends to earth. Both possibilities are alluded to in our verse.

20 ) The entire paragraph dealing with the creation of the human species alludes to the fact that man was the principal objective of the entire universe. The word בראשית then means that when G'd started to create man He began with his divine qualities, his Heavenly source השמים as well as with his physical source הארץ. Our sages understand Psalms 50,4: יקרא אל השמים as a reference to man's spirit, whereas they understand the subsequent words ואל הארץ in the same verse as a reference to the earth that man's body is made of. The message of the verse is that by means of man's deeds it is possible for him to transform the material he is made of to such a high spiritual level that it will be considered as a צורה, an idealised form, a symbol rather than mere matter.

We have a tradition that bodies of truly righteous people do not turn into dust upon their deaths since the materials their bodies are made of have already been refined to such an extent that they have become spiritualised (based on Rabbi Yitzchak Arama who explained in chapter 32 why the term מיתה is not used by the Torah in relation to Jacob). This is why our sages say that the righteous are called חיים, alive, even when they have departed this earth. This is so because even their physical parts have become spiritualised, maintaining contact with eternal life. The wicked, on the other hand, are considered as already dead even while they are still alive within their bodies. Even the spiritual part of their beings is reduced to being merely physical, i.e. mortal, inert.

Both of these possibilities are alluded to in the very first words of the Torah when the Torah speaks of G'd having created "את השמים ואת הארץ." The Torah means that man has the choice of belonging to either part of the universe.

When the Torah describes the earth as having been תהו ובוהו, this is also a description of what happens when the spiritual part of man declines and mixes with the merely physical part. When Onkelos translated these words as meaning "empty and dark," he referred to earth being devoid of any spiritual input. It is a reference to a situation where only the evil urge holds sway. Our sages describe the evil urge as "darkening the face of the open places." In that context the body is called תהום, "the deep," meaning that it swallows up everything. The body itself is also compared to the תהום, due to the evil urge consuming all that is light. The spirit of G'd, i.e. the source of spiritual input, was described as merely "hovering" above this expanse of the deep waters as it had not yet found a suitable resting place, the evil urge resisting its attempts to do so.

This state of affairs continued until G'd issued the directive: "Let there be light." When man is born a similar situation exists in the relationship between body and spirit until, at the beginning of his fourteenth year, G'd equips him with the יצר הטוב, the spiritual force that can counter his evil urge. He receives an infusion of a holy soul. Another way of understanding the simile intended by our verse is that the light that the Torah describes as having been created on the first day is the Torah itself which was added to the existing mass. It is called אור, just as Solomon has called the Torah אור (Proverbs 6,23). G'd dispatches the soul which is hewn from beneath His throne in the Heavens, and which represents some part of the Divinity to provide spiritual light for man so that he will not drown in the muck of the evil urge. Alternatively, you may view this as the Torah which provides spiritual illumination for the soul of man. Once G'd created that illumination He saw that the light He had provided for man was good because by means of that light man chose to walk the path of goodness and uprightness. [The foregoing must be understood against the author's remarks that man was the objective of the creation; hence every part of the creative process was designed to prepare the way for man's existence. Ed.]

Do not believe that the provision of such a pure and holy soul or even preoccupation with Torah is an automatic recipe for a life undisturbed by the machinations of the evil urge to tempt you to engage in sin. If this were so the whole concept of reward and punishment would be meaningless. This is why the Torah mentions that the light notwithstanding there is still (spiritual) darkness in the world. The function of the light is to assist man in his struggle against the forces of the יצר הרע, Satan. It is designed to establish lines of demarcation, to enable one to recognise when one is being seduced, to identify what precisely is sinful and wicked. This is why the Torah continues (1,4) that G'd made a division between light (the soul) and darkness (the forces of evil). This is what Solomon meant when he stated (Kohelet 10,2): "The heart of a wise man is on his right," i.e. the site illuminated by the light of the soul, whereas "the heart of the fool is on the left," the site of the evil urge. "G'd called the light 'day', whereas He called the darkness 'night';" this is why David prayed that G'd should save him from the terror of the "nights," i.e. the evil urge.

The Torah goes on to say: "it was evening, it was morning, one day," to teach us that it is impossible to distinguish the light represented by the holy soul except when contrasted with the darkness of the evil urge. Were this not so there would be no substantive difference between human beings and the ministering

angels, just as there would be no room for such concepts as reward and punishment. This is the reason the Torah speaks about *יום אחד*, "one day."

This is in line with the explanation of the sages Shabbat 30 on Song of Songs 1,3: *על כן עלמות אהבוך*, "this is why the young maidens love you." They understand the verse as a metaphor describing Torah scholars and dividing the word *עלמות* into two words *על מות*, "even unto death," forcing even the angel of death to acknowledge their purity through their martyrdom. When applied to our verse, the meaning is that even the *ערב*, the attribute of almost-darkness as much as the attribute of light itself will become part of the overall light called "day."

Another meaning of the statement "It was evening, etc," could be that it is an allusion to the power of the presence of the holy soul which enables man at the time of "evening," i.e. a time when there is confusion between the forces of light and the forces of darkness to emerge successfully to the higher world, the world identified with the word *בקר*, "morning." Our sages have said that the condition of the soul upon its return to Heaven at the end of man's life on earth should be *כיום בואה*, as on the day it entered the body. The simile is presumably based on Kohelet 12,7: *והרוח תשוב אל האלוקים*, "And the spirit returns to the Lord."

21 ) The first verse of the Torah may have yet another meaning. It is to inform us that at the beginning G'd established earth as equal to heaven in spite of the fact that the heavens are the "upper" parts of the universe. Nonetheless, the earth started out by being pure. We need no other proof for this than that man was created from earthly materials. Once he had been created the angels even mistook him for a divine being until they realised that man required sleep (Bereshit Rabbah 8,9). Not only that, G'd chose to have His residence on earth, sharing it with His creatures, preparing a house on earth for His "rest," so to speak. It is obvious that G'd's "home" must be perfect and sacred. Prior to Adam's sin G'd was as much at home on earth as He is in Heaven nowadays. All of this is part of the meaning of the words: "At the beginning G'd created heaven and earth." They shared many of the same properties as far as purity is concerned, etc. Isaiah 66,1 alluded to this when he said: "The heaven is My throne and the earth My footstool." Evidently earth was an abode fit for G'd Himself. It is only the deeds performed by people on this "lower" part of the universe that caused Tohu Vavohu to become an integral part of earth. [The author understands the word (1,2) *היתה* as a development which followed creation of heaven and earth instead of as a condition which preceded the creative process. Ed.] The earth then became something tangible and opaque, hence dark. Once G'd directed that light should come into existence, i.e. that Torah should be given to its inhabitants, earth returned to its pristine state, capable of dispensing spiritual light, a place fit for G'd to dwell in together with His people.

22 ) There is a further dimension to this first verse of the Torah. We have it on the authority of Solomon in Kings I 8,12 that G'd chooses to dwell in a thick cloud. We also have a tradition (Taanit 5) according to which G'd swore an oath that He would not make Himself at home in the celestial Jerusalem until He was able to make His home in the terrestrial Jerusalem. This is convincing evidence that G'd's love for earth is even greater than His love for heaven.

When we examine the reason for the creation of the entire universe we must conclude that our part of the universe is its very core. Israel are G'd's people and His "inheritance" (Deut. 32,9). The style of our verse then is what the sages call *אף זו קתני*, "that the less important item is mentioned first, the author proceeding towards the most important part in an ascending order." This is why the word *השמים* precedes the word *הארץ* in our verse. The heavens, so to speak, were only a necessary prerequisite for the earth. Earth, of course, attains its importance due to becoming the home of the Jewish people. The Jewish people are the key to the continued existence not only of earth but of the heavens as well. Students of kabbalah are well acquainted with this interdependence of heaven and earth.

Once we appreciate this concept we can understand the Tohu Vavohu as an allusion to the periods when Israel are in exile, and when due to that fact they prevent G'd from occupying His residence on earth. Israel's first exile was in Egypt where they spent a period of 430 years (Exodus 12,40). This number corresponds to the numerical value of the letters in the words *תהו ובהו*, Tohu Vavohu. The meaning of the word *ובהו* also contains an allusion to another exile, the Babylonian exile. The very word *בבל*, Babel, means "empty" i.e. *בוהו*. Jeremiah describes the exile in Babylonia (Jeremiah 51,34) by depicting king Nebuchadnezzar as devouring Israel and setting it down like an empty dish. When the Torah continues *על פני תהום*, this is an allusion to the present exile which is as endless as the "deep." Not only is this exile of such long duration but the word *חשך*, darkness, alludes to two dimensions. 1) Our subservience to the nations of the world, the discriminatory burden of taxation which leads one to having the feeling that one is surrounded by darkness. 2) The burden of the evil urge which has darkened the universe, and through our many sins many members of our people have become loose tongued, spreading gossip, sins which are obstacles to one's becoming a *בעל תשובה*, a truly penitent person. We must not allow ourselves to blame the "times," i.e. our circumstances and resultant despair for this deterioration in our own spiritual standards. They are not the cause of all this for G'd has said: *יהי אור*, "let there be light."

The author of Tikkuney Ha-Zohar has pointed out that the numerical value of the word *סוד*, secret, is the same as the numerical value of the word *אור*, light. The light referred to in our verse is the light of redemption. G'd decreed that this light shall remain hidden until it will be revealed by the Messiah. In the interval until then it will remain hidden like a treasure. Concerning the time when this light will be revealed G'd has said: "I have revealed it to My heart but My heart has not revealed it to My mouth." The Torah continues: "He saw the light that it was good. The light itself is good, not just the function it performs. Hail to the eye who has set eyes on that light. [the words *האור* were unnecessary, the Torah could have simply written: *וירא*, "He saw it." Ed.] The repetition of the word also confirms that G'd saw that He had done well to conceal this light for the time being. According to the Midrash the words "and the spirit of G'd hovered over the expanse of the water," refer to the spirit of the Messiah waiting until the waters i.e. Torah have performed their task. Israel will not be redeemed except through the merit of Torah study (and performance) (Pessikta Zutra Vatechanan 4 32). The Torah has been compared to water (Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1,19).

Students of the kabbalah are well aware that in this terrestrial world many sparks of holiness are drowned in the קליפות, secular, impurity infested matter. At the same time a great deal of ערב רב, opportunists masquerading as holy men, have infiltrated the circle of truly saintly people, as has been pointed out by the Tikkuney Ha-Zohar. In our times the division between the holy and the profane has become blurred. This is why G'd will have to make a clear separation of good from evil and light from darkness all of which have become mixed up with one another. It is also well known that the ability of the קליפה to remain "alive" is totally dependent on its ability to be nurtured by a holy source. The moment such a holy source dries up the קליפה has nothing to sustain it and to keep it alive. Therefore, when G'd separates the light, i.e. holiness, and evil remains totally isolated, it will have no source whence to sustain itself and will disintegrate of its own accord. This is what the prophet (Zecharyah 13,2) referred to when he said: "I will remove the spirit of impurity from the earth." The process is similar to the cutting off of a tree's trunk from the source from which it derives its sap, from its roots. It will wither and not bloom again. The only thing that will be left at that time will be the light which is good. When the Torah said: ויקרא אלקים לאור יום, we must understand the word ויקרא as if it were derived from יקר, precious. The superiority of holiness over profanity is recognisable only when that which is profane, i.e. the קליפה, otherwise known as darkness, is demolished. The prophet said that on that day, a day known only to G'd, G'd will declare the light truly precious and great. This will be the day of which it has been said (Zecharyah 14,9) that "G'd and His Name will be One."

When the Torah says: ולחשך קרא לילה, "He called the darkness night," the word קרא is reminiscent of the expression מקרה לילה, a nocturnal seminal emission (Deut. 23,11), something which confers ritual impurity both on the person himself and those in contact with him. The reason that word is not connected to what was written previously, [it would have been more appropriate for the Torah to continue לחשך לילה, "and He called the darkness night." Ed.] is to alert us to the fact that darkness no longer has any value in itself and exists only incidentally, i.e. מקרהו. Once the night, i.e. the period of exile, has passed -as alluded to in Isaiah 21,11, משא דומה, "an apparent burden"-as soon as the morning dawns there will be no more darkness and no more night. At such a time the message inherent in the words: ויהי ערב ויהי בוקר יום אחד, that the period previously known as almost-dark will have become part of the light, part of the "day," will be fulfilled. This is the allusion contained in the verse from Zecharyah we quoted earlier "on that day G'd and His name will be One." [I suspect that the reason the author divided his commentary on the Torah's report of the first day of creation into 22 separate sections is to allude to the Hebrew alphabet which contains 22 letters. It is his way of showing that all these letters had their part in the opening of the story of creation. Ed.]

1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

#### RAMBAN

**AND G-D SAID, 'LET THERE BE LIGHT.'** The word "saying" here indicates Will, as in the verse, What dost thy soul say, that I should do it for thee? which means, "What do you want and desire?" Similarly, And let her be thy master's son's wife, as the Eternal hath spoken means, "...as He hath willed, for such is the Will before Him." Or, it may be [that the word "saying" here means] "thinking," as in the verses, Thou sayest in thy heart;

And the chiefs of Judah shall say in their heart. The purport is to state that the creation was not done with toil. Our Rabbis have also called this "thought." Thus they have said: "The thought [concerning what was to be created on a particular day] was during the day; the deed itself was at sunset." This teaches that creation was thought out, that there is a reason for everything created, that creation was not a simple manifestation of mere Will alone. The word "being" [Let there 'be'] indicates a deed for the present time, just as: And thou wouldst be their king [meaning: their king from this moment on]. Therefore Scripture says that when He created the substance of the heavens, He said that from that substance there should come forth a shining matter called "light."

**AND THERE WAS LIGHT.** The verse does not say, "And it was so," as it is said on other days, because the light did not remain in this state all the time, as did the other creations. Concerning this matter, our Rabbis have an interpretation with a profound secret. Know that the term "day" as used in the story of the creation was, in the case of the creation of heaven and earth, a real day, composed of hours and seconds, and there were six days like the six days of the workweek, as is the plain meaning of the verse. In the profounder sense, the Emanations issuing from the Most High are called "days," for every Divine Saying which evoked an existence is called "day." These were six, for Unto G-d there is the greatness, and the power, etc. The Sayings, however, are ten because regarding the first three Emanations, the term "day" does not apply at all. The explanation of the order of the verses in terms of this profound interpretation is sublime and recondite. Our knowledge of it is less than that of a drop from the vast ocean.

1:4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.

#### RAMBAN

**AND G-D SAW THE LIGHT, THAT IT WAS GOOD.** Rabbi Shlomo [Rashi] wrote: "Here too we must depend on the words of the homiletic Agadah G-d saw that the wicked were unworthy of using the light, and so He set it aside for the righteous in the World to Come. But according to the plain meaning of the verse, explain it thus: He saw that the light was good, and that it was not seemly for it and the darkness to function in a confused manner. He therefore assigned the one's sphere of activity to the daytime and the one's sphere of activity to the nighttime." And Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said: "The word vayar (and He saw) has the same meaning here as in Vera'iti ani (And I saw), which refers to the thought in the heart. And He divided refers to His giving them different names." But the words of both Rashi and Ibn Ezra are incorrect for if they were, it would appear that there was on the part of G-d a change of mind and new counsel, as if to say that after G-d said, 'Let there be light' and there was light, He saw that it was good, and therefore He divided between it and darkness just as a human being who does not know the nature of something until it comes into existence! Rather, the order followed in the process of creation is that the bringing forth of things into actual existence is called amirah (saying). Thus: And G-d said, 'Let there be light;' And G-d said, 'Let there be a firmament;' And G-d said, 'Let the earth put forth grass.' And the permanence of things called forth into existence is called re'iyah (seeing), as And I saw in Ecclesiastes, and similarly, And the woman saw that the tree was good for food. In the language of the Rabbis we also find, "I see the

words of Admon.” Likewise, And the king said unto Zadok the priest, ‘Seest thou? return into the city in peace.’ The purport of the word “seeing” is thus to indicate that their continuing existence is at His Will, and if that Will should for a second depart from them, they will turn into nought. Now just as Scripture says in connection with the work of each day, And G-d saw that it was good and on the sixth day when everything was completed it says, And G-d saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good, so does it say on the first day when light came into existence, And G-d saw ... that it was good, meaning He desired its existence forever. The verse adds “the light” [And G-d saw ‘the light’ that it was good], because had it just said, “And G-d saw that it was good,” it would have referred to the creation of the heaven and the earth, and at that time He had not yet decreed for them permanence, as they did not remain as they were. Instead, from the substance created on the first day, the firmament was made on the second day, and on the third the waters and the dust were separated and the dry land — which He called “earth” — was formed. He then decreed for them permanence, and said concerning them, And G-d saw that it was good.

**AND G-D DIVIDED THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS.** This is not “the darkness” mentioned in the first verse which, as explained above, refers to the element of fire; rather, the “darkness” mentioned here means the absence of light, since G-d gave a length of time to the light and decreed that it be absent afterwards until it returns. Now some commentators have said that this light was created in front of the Holy One, blessed be He, that is to say, in the west, and He immediately caused it to disappear for the period of the night, and afterwards it gave light for the period of the day. This is the reason for the verse, And there was evening and there was morning, since the night came first and afterwards the day, and both of them came after the existence of the light. But this is not correct at all, for in this way they might add a short day to the six days of creation. It is possible, however, to say that the light was created in front of Him, blessed be He, but did not extend over the four elements mentioned [in the second verse, as explained above] and then He divided between it and the darkness by assigning to each a certain period. Light now remained before Him for the length of night, and then in the morning, He caused the light to shine upon the elements. In this way night preceded day. It is further possible that we should say that when the heavens and the earth came forth from nought into existence, as mentioned in the first verse, time came into being, for although our time consisting of minutes and hours is measured in light and darkness, yet from the moment some substance came into existence time was already part of it. If so, after the heavens and the earth were created they so remained for the length of a night without light. Then He said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light, and He decreed that it remain the same period as the first, and that after that it be absent from the elements. Thus, there was evening, and there was morning.

**1:5** And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

**RAMBAN**

**AND G-D CALLED THE LIGHT DAY.** The verse states that time was created, and G-d made the length of the day and the length of the night. The purport of the word vayikra (And He called) is [to indicate that] since Adam later gave names [to all the beasts,

the fowl, etc.], it states that those things which were made before his existence were given names by G-d. This is the opinion of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra. The correct interpretation is that the matter of calling a name here indicates the division which bounded them when they assumed their form. Thus did the Rabbis say: “[G-d said to the light,] ‘The day shall be your boundary,’ [and to darkness He said,] ‘The night shall be your boundary.’”

**AND THERE WAS EVENING AND THERE WAS MORNING.**

There was evening and there was morning of one day. The beginning of the night is called erev [which also means “mingling”] because shapes of things appear confused in it, and the beginning of the day is called boker [which also means “examining”] because then a man can distinguish between various forms. This coincides with the explanation of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra. By way of the simple explanation of Scripture, it could not have said, [And there was evening and there was morning] “the first day,” because the second had not yet been made; “the first” precedes a “second” in number or degree but both exist, whereas “one” does not connote the existence of a second. Some scholars explain that one day is a reference to the rotation of the sphere upon the face of the whole earth in twenty-four hours, as every moment thereof is morning in some different place and night in the opposite place. If so, the verse alludes to that which will take place in the firmament after the luminaries will be placed in the firmament of the heavens.

**1:6** And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide water from water.

**RAMBAN**

**LET THERE BE A FIRMAMENT.** G-d now said that the substance which had come into being first — that which He created from nought — should be a firmament, stretched as a tent in the midst of the waters, separating between waters and waters. It is possible that this is what the Rabbis intended by their saying, “Rav said, ‘The heavens were in a fluid form on the first day, and on the second day they solidified.’ Rav thus said, ‘Let there be a firmament means let the firmament become strong.’ Rabbi Yehudah the son of Rabbi Shimon said, ‘Let the firmament become like a plate, just as you say in the verse, And they did beat — [vayerak’u contains the same root as raki’a, firmament] — the gold into thin plates.’”

**IN THE MIDST OF THE WATERS.** This means in the center of the waters, between the higher waters and the lower waters. For there is the same distance between the firmament and the waters upon the earth as between the higher waters and the firmament. Thus you may infer that the upper waters are suspended in space by the command of G-d. Thus it is explained in Bereshith Rabbah and in Rashi’s commentary. This is part of the process of creation [which those who know it are obliged to conceal]; so do not expect me to write anything about it, as the subject is one of the mysteries of the Torah, and the verses in their plain meaning do not require such an interpretation since Scripture itself did not go into it at length, and to give the interpretation is forbidden even to those who know it, and so much the more to us.

**OR HACHAIM**

**G’d said: “Let there be a sky.** The רקיע referred to is one that G’d had already created on the first day, just as we have explained that everything was created on the first day with a single utterance. The universe created on that day still lacked order, and

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now G'd proceeded to assign its proper place and function to each part of the universe. The רקיע, sky, was to assume its place amidst the waters and to perform the function of separating the "upper" from the "lower" waters.

**1:7** And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

## RAMBAN

**AND G-D MADE THE FIRMAMENT.** The word asi'yah (doing) always means adjusting something to its required proportion.

**AND IT WAS SO.** On the first day, And there was light is written after And G-d said, 'Let there be light,' in order to explain that after the command of G-d, it [the light] came forth into actuality and was as He decreed it to be. But here, after the command, Let there be a firmament, it is written, And G-d made the firmament, and divided, etc.; why then has Scripture added here, And it was so? It is to tell us that it was to be ever so, for all times. But Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra explained that the expression and it was so is attached to the verse which follows, meaning when it was so, G-d called the firmament Heaven. That is not correct. In Bereshith Rabbah the Rabbis have said: "And G-d made the firmament. This is one of the verses which Ben Zoma found difficult: And G-d made, etc. But was not [the world created] by command, as it is written, By word of the Eternal were the heavens made?" Now Ben Zoma's difficulty was not only on account of the word vaya'as (And He made), since on the fourth, fifth, and sixth day, vaya'as is also written. Rather, his difficulty was, as I have said, that on the other days, immediately after G-d's command, it is written, And it was so, indicating that it came into being immediately after the command, but here on the second day, after it says, And G-d said — vaya'as (And He made) is written! This was his question. Perhaps Ben Zoma had some secret interpretation which he did not want to reveal. This is the explanation of the cause of his difficulty.

## OR HACHAIM

**G'd made the sky.** This verse should not have been needed seeing G'd had already said that the sky; should take up its position between the "upper" and the "lower" waters. The Torah should have concluded that utterance with the usual "it was so." Furthermore, it appears to me that once the Torah reported G'd as having made the sky, i.e. ויעש אלוקים, there was certainly no need for the Torah to end the verse with ויהי בן.

I believe therefore that there were three separate activities performed all of which involved the sky. First of all, the sky itself as a distinct entity had to be formed; this occurred on the first day as part of the creation of the universe by G'd's first utterance.

Secondly, the sky had to stretch itself in response to G'd's command for it to effect a separation between the "upper" and the "lower" waters. Our sages call this the וילון, curtain. G'd intructed the sky as to exactly what dimensions it was to consist of. This is the instruction given in verse six.

The third activity became necessary due to the heavens being spherical. They are shaped in such a way that they are curved downwards. While it is true that the directive to separate the "upper" from the "lower" waters included that the sky was to perform the function of a curtain, this did not specify whether that curtain was to be horizontal or otherwise. This is why the Torah reported that G'd completed the installation of that curtain in the manner familiar to us as an upside down bowl. The

Torah had to report again that G'd separated the sky because He had installed the sky in an inverted manner. If the sky was to prevent the "upper" waters from descending and joining the "lower" waters, we would have expected the shape of the sky to be the regular bowl with its edges turned upwards. The fact that our eyes perceive a (sky) horizon which turns down at the edges is so remarkable that the Torah had to allude to the fact that G'd arranged it in this way.

The miraculous part of this stage of the creation then was that it demonstrates forces at work which are the very opposite of what we perceive to be natural law. When the Torah added the words ויהי בן, this was confirmation that the plan worked, that the sky stayed in place and achieved its function of separating between the "upper" and the "lower" waters. An alternative reason for the words ויהי בן at the very end of the paragraph may simply be that the Torah wanted to wait with reporting this till the process had been completed.

After having written this commentary, I have come across an explicit verse in Isaiah 42,5 which confirms that my understanding of the creation of heaven and earth is accurate. The prophet describes the work of the Creator in these words: "He creates the heavens and stretches them out, He spreads out the earth and what it brings forth." The act of creation and the act of stretching out the heavens are described as separate activities. This corresponds to our statement that whereas on the first day G'd created the universe, He put it in place on a subsequent occasion, i.e. the second day. This "stretching out" again consisted of two separate stages.

I have come across the following statement in Bereshit Rabbah 4,6. In that statement Ben Zoma is reported as having caused a great deal of excitement in the world when he expressed his amazement at the Torah's choice of words. Why did the Torah have to report an activity, i.e. ויעש in this instance, why was a mere directive such as ויאמר not adequate for the occasion? Do we not have a verse (Psalms 33,6) which states that the heavens and all their hosts were created by an utterance of G'd? If Ben Zoma had been aware of our interpretation he could have remained perfectly calm about this problem.

There is another approach to this problem in line with my commentary about the next verse i.e. "let the waters gather together, etc." There are two kinds of waters, male and female waters. In view of the fact that these waters were in a complete state of confusion much like the confusion which existed between light and darkness, a little light here, a little darkness there, G'd had to separate the male waters from the female waters just as He had to separate light from darkness. As a result, the "upper" waters are the ones we consider the male waters, whereas the ones described as the "lower" waters are the female variety. G'd is therefore reported as having instructed the sky to make two separations. The sky's initial task was to make the waters identifiable. The second task of the sky was to ensure a permanent separation between the male "upper" waters and the female "lower" waters by interposing itself between these waters. This is evident from the words: "between the waters" in verse six. The Torah reports ויהי בן to indicate that both purposes had been achieved.

**1:8** And God called the firmament Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

**RAMBAN**

**AND G-D CALLED THE FIRMAMENT HEAVEN.** On the second day He gave them this name when He clothed them with the form of the firmament for on the first day the heavens were still in the process of creation, but the name was not attached to them until they took on this form. The meaning of this name [shamayim — heavens] is as if it had the sign of a segol under the letter shin [the prefix shin thus voweled means “that” or “for”] just as in Shalahmah (For why) should I be as one that veileth herself? It is thus as if He said that they [the heavens] are waters which have congealed and stretched like a tent in the midst of the upper and lower waters. By this name shamayim He has made known the secret of their creation. In the Gemara Tractate Chagigah, the Rabbis have said, “What is the meaning of the word shamayim? It means shem mayim.” If so, there is one mem missing here in the word shamayim on account of the adjoining of two similar letters, just as in the word yeruba’al [which stands for yareb bo ba’al — let Baal contend against him]. The word shamayim is thus as if it said shem mayim, meaning that “heaven” is the name given the waters when they took on a new form. This is the plain meaning of the verses in accordance with the way of Rashi’s writing, and it conforms with the opinion of Rav which we have mentioned. Thus the names “heaven” and “earth” mentioned in the first verse point to the names by which they would be called in the future, as it would be impossible to make them known in any other manner. It is, however, more correct in accordance with the meaning of the verses that we say that the heavens mentioned in the first verse are the upper heavens, which are not part of the lower spheres but are above the merkavah (the Divine Chariot), just as it is stated, And over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of a firmament, like the color of the transparent ice, stretched forth over their heads above. It is on account of these higher heavens that the Holy One, blessed be He, is called He Who rideth upon the heavens. Scripture, however, did not relate anything concerning their creation, just as it did not mention the creation of the angels, the chayoth of the merkavah, and all Separate Intelligences which are incorporeal. Concerning the heavens, it mentioned only in a general way that they were created, meaning that they came forth from nought. On the second day He said that there should be a firmament in the midst of the waters, meaning that from the waters, the creation of which had already been mentioned, there should come forth an extended substance separating them [into two distinct waters]. These spherical bodies He also called “heavens” by the name of the first upper heavens. This is why they are called in this chapter “the firmament of the heaven” [rather than “heavens”] — And G-d set them in the firmament of the heaven — in order to explain that they are not the heavens mentioned by that name in the first verse but merely the firmaments called “heavens.” This likewise is the opinion of our Rabbis mentioned in Bereshith Rabbah, who state, “All Rabbis say it in the name of Rabbi Chananyah the son of Rabbi Pinchas, and Rabbi Yaakov the son of Rabbi Avin says it in the name of Rabbi Shmuel the son of Rabbi Nachman: Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters — the middle drop of water congealed, and the lower heavens and the highest heaven of heavens were formed.” This saying of the Rabbis refers to the spher-

ical bodies in which there are the lower heavens and the upper ones, called “the heavens of heavens,” as it is written: Praise ye Him, sun and moon; praise Him, all ye stars of light. Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that are above the heavens. The heavens mentioned here in the first verse, in which is the Throne of the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it is written, The heaven is My throne, are the ones mentioned in the beginning of that Psalm: Praise ye the Eternal from the heavens; praise Him in the heights. Praise ye Him, all His angels. This interpretation is correct as far as the simple meaning of the verses is concerned. But there is yet a sublime and hidden secret in the name “the heaven” and in the name “the throne” for there is a heaven to the heavens, and a throne to the throne. Based on this, the Sages use the expressions, “In order that a man may first take upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven,” and “the fear of Heaven.” Scripture likewise says, That the heavens do rule. The Sages also have a remarkable Midrash on the verse, And Thou hear in heaven. The worthy one will see all this alluded to in the first verse. Thus the verses have explained that the first created things were from nought, and the rest were derived from the first created substance. See no objection to this explanation from the saying of Rabbi Eliezer the Great, who states, “Whence were the heavens created? From the light of the garment of the Holy One, blessed be He.” [This would apparently indicate that the heavens were not created from nought but from another preceding substance.] This opinion is also found in Bereshith Rabbah. Since the Sages wanted to elevate the first substance to the utmost and make it ethereal, they did not find it feasible that the heavens, which are moving corporeal bodies possessing matter and form, were created from nought. Instead, they said “the light of the garment” was created first, and from it came forth the real substance of the heavens. And to the earth He gave another substance, not as minute as the first [substance from which the heavens were formed], and that is “the snow under the Throne of Glory,” for the Throne of Glory was first created, and from it came forth “the snow” under it, and from it [the “snow”] was formed the substance of the earth, which was third in the order of creation.

**OR HACHAIM**

**G’d called the sky heaven.** Here the Torah informs us that we are talking about the same heaven which has already been referred to in the first verse as heaven. In verse one the Torah mentioned a creation which would eventually be named: “heaven.” G’d Himself (as distinct from the Torah Ed.) had not called the sky “heaven” until the second day.

According to those of our sages (Rabbi Yitzchak in Bereshith Rabbah 4,7) who consider the word שמים as a combination of שמים, “laden with water,” the verse has to be understood as follows: G’d named the sky “heaven,” saying to it: “carry waters in order that there should be air for the creatures that live between heaven and earth to breathe!” Until the sky condensed, i.e. “carried” and supported the weight of this moisture that had previously permeated the atmosphere there had not been a place in the universe for any creatures to live in. On the third day G’d told the “lower” waters to be gathered into one area in order for the dry land to become visible so that the inhabitants of earth would have where to live. This concept does not contradict those sages who claim that the “upper” waters are only held in place by a miracle, because even though the sky carries those

waters it still required a miracle to arrange and organise the heavens and everything connected with it. We explained this in connection with verse seven.

**1:9** And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together to one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

#### RAMBAN

**LET THE WATERS UNDER THE HEAVEN BE GATHERED TOGETHER.** The deep, which is water and sand, was like turbid waters, and He decreed concerning the waters that they be gathered together in one place, surrounded on all sides, and He further decreed concerning the sands that they rise up until they be seen above the waters and that they become dry, so that there be a stretch of dry land suitable for settlement thereon. And so it is written: To Him that spread forth the earth above the waters. Or perhaps G-d's decree was that the earth be spherical, partly visible and mostly submerged in the waters, as the Greeks imagine in their proofs, apparent or real. Thus there were two decrees, that is, two matters done by the Will of G-d that are contrary to their natural inclination. For in view of the heaviness of earth [which would cause it to sink] and the lightness of the waters [which would cause them to rise], it would have been natural that the pillar of the earth be in the center and that the waters should cover it, thus surrounding it from all sides. Therefore, He said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together, that is to a lower place, and then He said, And let the dry land appear. He gave them names as they assumed these forms, for at the beginning their collective name was "the deep."

#### OR HACHAIM

**G'd said: "Let the waters congregate to one area, etc.** We must first determine whether the Torah refers to the waters which had previously been described as תהום, "the deep." Once G'd said that the waters should gather into "one" place we must assume that no other area remained for these waters. This however, would contradict Exodus 20,4 where the Torah speaks about תהום, "the waters which are beneath the earth." If the waters in our verse are other waters, not the ones described previously as תהום, we must understand in which way they were separate and different from the waters of the תהום to justify the fact that G'd addressed them separately. Besides, there is no reference to G'd having addressed some specific water; G'd simply gave a general directive for the waters to gather to one place. This applied to all existing waters. Another problem is why visibility of the dry land was made dependent on the waters gathering to one place? The word ותראה, it shall become visible, is itself difficult. Why did the Torah not simply say: "and as a result there will be dry land?"

We can explain all these details by falling back on what we said at the outset, namely that G'd had already created the entire universe on the very first day and had only assigned each part of the universe its proper place and function by means of the various directives mentioned in the Torah. Accordingly, we know that "the dry land" extended within the waters all across the universe. It was covered by water above and water beneath. The sky separated those waters which had covered the dry land from above, "carrying" half on its "wings" so to speak. This is why the Torah spoke about the sky being בתוך המים, "inside" the waters. Ordinarily, the meaning of the word תוך, in the middle. G'd then addressed the other "half" of the waters which

still covered the dry land telling it to gather in one place, i.e. the oceans, in order for the dry land to become visible in the very place it had been since it had been created. It had acquired its proper place there already at the time of creation. All G'd did at this stage was to decree that it should become visible.

Perhaps the meaning of the word תראה, become visible, also contains a reference to colouration. One of the reasons the dry land had not been visible may have been that it was of the same colour as the water, making the boundaries between water and dry land difficult to discern. The word תראה may also include a connotation of suitability, i.e. ראוי, suggesting that the dry land was suitable for and indispensable to the inhabitants of the earth.

Yet another meaning of the word תראה may be that as long as the dry land was surrounded by water both above and beneath it had no assurance that it would endure as a separate entity. The waters threatened to make it disintegrate. Maimonides writes at the beginning of הלכות דעות [in our editions chapter 4 of הלכות יסודי התורה Ed.] that water is apt to make the element of dust disintegrate. In order to prevent this from happening G'd directed that the waters be contained in one place, i.e. that the power of water be limited. The purpose of the directive then was to assure the continued existence of the dry land and to enable it to perform the function intended for it. We may also deduce from the wording of the directive that not all the waters in the universe gathered to become part of the oceans. There remain areas called תהום beneath the earth.

It is possible that there is no basic difference between the waters which congregated, i.e. followed G'd's directive, and those that remain beneath the earth. The statement of our sages that G'd said יד to earth means it should not extend from one end of the universe to the other, but that the waters beneath the earth should remain in contact with the waters in the oceans.

After I had written all this I found a Midrash in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer which states: "On the third day the earth was completely flat. The waters covered the whole expanse of the earth. When G'd uttered His command that the waters should congregate in one area, hills and mountains made separate appearances all over the earth. This caused the waters to retreat and to gather in one mass. This Midrash proves again that at the time G'd gave the directive the earth, i.e. the dry land already existed as a body. The only difference, according to the comment of Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer and mine is, that according to the former the word תראה means that it was earth, i.e. the dry land, which established boundaries for the waters. It was the waters which were assigned their place. This corresponds to Jeremiah 5,22 which speaks about G'd using the sand to hem in the oceans. According to this view the word תראה is derived from ירא, to fear, and the meaning of G'd's directive was to inspire fear in the waters. The whole verse in Jeremiah reads as follows: תיראו נאום השם, אם מפני לא תחילו אשר שמתי חול גבול לים, חק עולם ולא יעברנהו. "Should you not revere Me,- says the Lord; should you not tremble before Me Who set the sand as a boundary to the sea, as a limit for all time, not to be transgressed? This interpretation is different from my own. It is homiletical, whereas my interpretation is פשוט, based on the plain meaning of the text.

Nachmanides understood the word תראה to mean that whereas previously water and earth were mixed up, i.e. the waters had been murky, G'd decreed at that time that they should separate and that the earth (dust) should rise so that it should become

## FURTHER COMMENTARY • BERESHIT

visible above the waters. His commentary is not פשט, seeing one has to presuppose that until that time the waters had been inextricably mixed with the earth, something which is not supported by the text. Besides, according to Nachmanides there would have been no need for the waters to congregate in one area, it would have sufficed for the Torah to state that the dry land should become visible. The earth should have been addressed, not the water. If the dry land would have "flooded" the water, the water would simply have remained in its place. Besides, it is quite clear from the text that all those waters under the sky which were adjoining the earth were to assemble together, something that did not occur according to the interpretation of Nachmanides. Furthermore, the use of the word ותראה would be quite inappropriate according to his approach. I therefore prefer my own interpretation.

It appears to me that all the categories of water on earth, both those that are called the "upper" waters, i.e. the ones above the sky, as well as the waters which gathered to one place in response to G'd's directive are all of the male kind. This is why you find that the waters of the oceans actively promote growth of plants as our sages have said when they defined rain as vapour rising from the oceans, forming into clouds and descending on earth to impregnate it to produce plants. According to these same sages, the subterranean waters rise up to meet the waters from above and between them "fertilisation" takes place. Our sages (Taanit 28) phrased it thus: "Every single drop of rain that descends from above is met by two drops of subterranean water which rise towards it. The whole process of water contributing to growth is equated with the mating of living creatures. This teaches that when the waters from above the earth or the waters from below the earth act alone they are unable to achieve their role of promoting growth. This is what the sages meant when they said that there are two kinds of water, the male and the female. When the Torah describes how the waters became more and more turbulent during the deluge it appears they became stronger as soon as the "male" waters from above joined the "female" waters below (compare Genesis 7,19: והמים נברו מאד מאד).

**1:10** And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas: and God saw that it was good.

## RAMBAN

**AND G-D CALLED THE DRY LAND EARTH.** The verse states that the proper name for it would be yabashah (dry land) for as the waters are separated from the sand it becomes dry. However, He called it eretz (earth) as the name which included the four elements created on the first day. The reason for this is that they were all created for the sake of the earth in order that there be a habitation for man, since among the lower creatures no one but man recognizes his Creator. And the gathering together of the waters He called 'yamim' (seas). It is as if [the word yamim, (seas) combines the two words] yam and mayim (a sea of waters), for the bottom of the ocean is called yam, as it is written, As the waters cover the sea, and likewise, And he took down the sea from off the brazen oxen. It is called "sea" because there was a large gathering of water in it.

**AND G-D SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD.** This means that their continued existence was by His Will, and the purport is that when He clothed them with this form He desired them to be so and their existence was thus established as I have explained. This

conforms to what our Rabbis have said: "Why is it not stated in reference to the work of the second day that it was good? Because the work associated with the waters was not completed until the third day. Therefore on the third day, [the words ki tov — that it was good] are repeated, once in reference to the completion of the work associated with the waters, and once in reference to [the completion of the other work of] that day."

## OR HACHAIM

**G'd called the dry land "earth."** This is again the earth which was mentioned already in the very first verse of the Torah as having been created at the outset, on the first day. The expression ויקרא can have two meanings. 1) It is the giving of a name to something or to someone; 2) it could be an outcry, such as a call to something not to expand still further. This is what the sages (Chagigah 12) referred to when they described the name of G'd שדי, as the One who said די to further development of the universe. The earth was called ארץ because it listened to G'd's directive and did not continue to expand.

Concerning the waters which G'd called "oceans," the Torah wanted to make it clear that the oceans are not what were described as תהום on the first day in the very first verse of the Torah. The expression תהום had included all the waters, including the subterranean waters. Prior to the development on the third day the waters which had now congregated had also been part of the תהום as long as "earth" had not become visible. At that time there had been no difference between those waters and the ones that are subterranean nowadays. They had all been thoroughly mixed together.

When the Torah continues that "G'd saw that it was good," this refers also to the collection of waters, because this reservoir provides a source of life and enables the earth to maintain itself seeing it is the source of beneficial rain.

**1:11** And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, herb yielding seed, and fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

## RAMBAN

**AND G-D SAID: 'LET THE EARTH PUT FORTH GRASS.'** He decreed that there be among the products of the earth a force which grows and bears seed so that the species should exist forever. It is possible that the name "earth" mentioned in the first verse already contains a hint that a force which causes things to grow should spring up from the earth, and it was from this force that the foundations of all vegetations according to their kinds emanated. From them sprang the grass and trees in the garden of Eden, and from them came those in the world. This is what the Rabbis have said: "On the third day He created three creations: trees, grass, and the garden of Eden." They have also said: "There is not a single blade of grass below [that does not have] a constellation in heaven that smites it and says to it, 'Grow.' It is this which Scripture says, Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens? Canst thou establish 'mishtaro' (the dominion thereof) in the earth? — [mishtaro being derived from the root] shoter (executive officer)." And He said that all this vegetation should be after its kind. This is the basis of the prohibition of sowing mixed kinds of seeds, since he who sows them works contrary to the power of the work of creation. I will yet explain this with the help of G-d. Now Rabbeinu Shlomo [Rashi] wrote: "Deshe eshev (grass, herb). Deshe does not mean the same as eshev and eshev does not mean the same as deshe, for by deshe is meant that which forms the covering of the ground

when it is filled with vegetation, and it is not linguistically correct to say 'this or that deshe.' Each by itself is called this or that esev." This interpretation of Rashi is not correct. For if it were so, the word deshe could have no plural, and yet we find the Sages saying, "If a person grafted together two kinds of deshaim, what should the law be?" And the Rabbi himself mentions deshaim. Rather, deshe is the young growing plant, and esev is the mature product which produces seeds. This is why Scripture says, 'tadshei ha'aretz' (let the earth put forth) 'deshe' (young plants), and it would not be correct usage to say ta'asiv [for the word esev applies to mature products which produce seeds]. And every young thing that grows from the earth is called deshe, even trees. Therefore tadshei ha'aretz in the verse extends also to the expression etz pri (the fruit-tree). [This interpretation is necessary] since He did not say, "Let the earth put forth deshe esev and let it bring forth the fruit-tree." The word deshe thus has the same meaning as tz'michah (growing). Similarly we find: For the pasture of the wilderness 'dash'u' (do spring), for the tree beareth its fruit. I wonder why Scripture did not mention the creation of fruitless trees, and how is it that He commanded only concerning fruit-trees? Perhaps this is what induced our Rabbis to say, "Even the presently barren trees at first bore fruit." If so, we must say that since the imprecation [which was visited upon Adam for his sin] — Cursed be the ground for thy sake — barren trees came into existence. But it is possible that the explanation of the verse before us is as follows: "Let the earth bring forth growing things, and herbs which yield seed and trees which bear fruit." Thus He decreed at first the creation of barren herbs and barren trees in general, and then He specified herbs which yield seed and trees which bear fruit. From what He said later on — bearing fruit... wherein is the seed thereof — we may derive that all trees were to grow from their seed although it is the custom with some trees to be propagated by planting a branch.

#### OR HACHAIM

**G'd said: "Let the earth bring forth vegetation.** Our sages (Chulin 60) said concerning the passage in Psalms 104,31: "May the glory of the Lord endure forever," that it was recited by the angel in charge of the universe; when G'd had said (Genesis 1,11) that the trees were to come forth each according to its kind, the herbs inferred an a fortiori concerning themselves, saying: "If the Holy One, praised be His name wanted a motley growth, why did He say "after its kind" with regard to the trees? Is it not an a fortiori that if concerning the trees which are not normally growing a motley growth this instruction is applicable, the same must apply even more so to us. They went ahead and came forth each according to its own kind. When the angel heard this he recited the verse in Psalm 104 quoted above. This statement in the Talmud attributed to Rabbi Chanina is difficult seeing that according to the sequence mentioned in our verse G'd gave His directives to the herbs before He gave directives to the earth concerning trees. Surely the herbs did not delay carrying out G'd's directive until the trees had grown? If one accepts our thesis that G'd created the entire universe at one and the same time on the first day, the question we just posed does not need to trouble us. We stated there that all the directives were uttered as a single utterance. The problem of a "before" and "after" therefore does not concern us.

**1:12** And the earth brought forth grass, herb yielding seed after its kind, and tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after its kind: and God saw that it was good.

#### RAMBAN

**AND G-D SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD.** This affirms the existence of the various kinds forever. There was no special day assigned for this command for vegetation alone, since it is not a unique work. The earth, whether it brings forth anything or is salt land, is one.

#### OR HACHAIM

**The earth brought forth herbs, etc.** Since the Torah had told us already at the end of the previous verse וַיְהִי כֵן, that the earth had carried out G'd's directive, what need was there for this entire verse? The Torah wanted to inform us of two new phenomena, one concerning the herbs and one concerning the trees. We already mentioned the a fortiori of the herbs, that they emerged each according to its kind without having been specifically commanded to do so. The reason the Torah considered this information important for us may be to teach us not to crossbreed different kinds of herbs in accordance with the opinion of Ravina in Chulin 60. The following is the text of the Talmud there: "What is the law concerning someone who has crossbred herbs according to the view of Rabbi Chanina? Will he not be considered guilty because G'd never instructed earth to produce the herbs according to their kinds, or, is the fact that G'd agreed with the reasoning of the herbs, evidence that such a person should be held culpable? The Talmud leaves the question open. Rashi comments on that passage that the reason the question is posed only according to the view of Rabbi Chanina is that the Rabbi held that the herbs did what they did of their own volition, not because they had been so commanded. If Rashi is correct, it follows that the sages thought that all other rabbis considered that G'd had commanded the herbs to come forth only in accordance with their respective species even if the Torah did not specifically spell this out. Those rabbis draw the conclusion that what the Torah stated in verse 12, namely that the herbs came forth according to their species is proof that already in verse 11 the intention had been for this rule to apply also to the herbs. According to Rabbi Chanina, however, verse 12 was the reason the herbs reasoned as they did, realising that G'd had indeed wanted them also to adhere to the rule of not growing in a motley fashion. If the Torah had not written verse 12, we would not have known anything about this and how the herbs arrived at their decision, even though verse 11 concluded with the statement וַיְהִי כֵן. This verse may serve us as a model for other verses in which the Torah appears at first glance to repeat what appears to have been stated previously.

Verse 12 also informs us that the earth did not carry out G'd's directive to produce fruit-bearing trees whose trunk would also be edible. Earth did not fully comply with G'd's instructions but only produced fruit-bearing trees, not edible trunks.

How could earth act contrary to the explicit instructions of its Creator? Seeing the earth does not possess an evil urge, how could it rebel? Our sages have not proven anywhere that earth has an evil urge! At best, the sages attributed such urges to animals when they are found kicking. I have dealt with that subject in its appropriate place. At any event, we have no evidence that earth possesses such an urge which would seduce it to carry out acts of rebellion against G'd.

Another matter which we need to investigate is where the ordinary trees come from. The Torah does not report instructions that earth should produce אילני סרק, non fruit-bearing trees, trees whose function is merely to provide wood. Nonetheless, we find far more such trees on earth than fruit-bearing trees. We are forced to conclude that prior to the earth being cursed all trees were of the fruit-bearing variety, and that the capacity of the earth to produce fruit-bearing trees diminished after the earth was cursed. It could no longer produce only fruit-bearing trees, but produced thorns and thistles in their place.

We know from Proverbs 3,19 that "G'd founded the earth with wisdom and the heavens with insight," that the earth is intelligent. Earth understood G'd's directive to produce fruit-bearing trees that continue to produce fruit as meaning one of two things. 1) The taste of the trunk itself should equal that of the fruit, in which case the tree itself had to be edible. 2) The absence of a connecting letter ו i.e. עץ פרי ועשה פרי in the wording could mean that G'd wanted trees that could be eaten and that these trees should in addition produce another kind of fruit. The earth reasoned that if G'd had wanted the tree itself to taste like its fruit the letter ו would have been necessary to connect the two statements. The expression עץ פרי could also mean one of two things. 1) A tree which itself is a fruit. 2) A tree which is capable of producing fruit without being a fruit itself. In its eagerness to respond to G'd's directive earth produced all the three categories that it deemed G'd could have had in mind. Firstly, it produced trees that produce fruit, but whose trunk is not edible. Secondly, it produced fruit whose taste is similar to that of their trunks. The tree of knowledge was one such tree. Our sages are on record [based on the wording of Genesis 3,6 that "the woman saw that the tree was good as food" Ed.] that the taste of that tree itself was like that of its fruit. Thirdly, the earth produced trees which resembled fruit-bearing trees. These are the ones known as אילני סרק, trees that bear no fruit. The manner in which verse 12 describes the earth's response reflects the earth's speed in complying with G'd's directive. There was no element of insubordination at all. The addition of the letter ו in front of the words עץ עשה פרי, a letter which was quite unnecessary, is a hint that in addition to the other trees the earth also produced a tree whose trunk tasted like its fruit. That letter ו may also allude to the other non fruit-bearing trees that the earth produced. According to this interpretation the curse of the earth at a later stage was not due to its having ignored part of G'd's directive at this stage. I will come back to that curse in due course.

**1:14** And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

#### RAMBAN

**LET THERE BE LIGHTS.** Now the light was created on the first day, illuminating the elements, but when on the second day the firmament was made, it intercepted the light and prevented it from illuminating the lower elements. Thus, when the earth was created on the third day there was darkness on it and not light. And now on the fourth day the Holy One, blessed be He, desired that there be in the firmament luminaries, the light of which would reach the earth. This is the meaning of the words, in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, for there already was light above the firmament which did not illuminate the earth. The meaning of the words, Let there be lights,

is as follows: He decreed on the first day that from the substance of the heavens there should come forth a light for the period of the day, and now He decreed that it become corporeal and that a luminous body come forth from it which would give light during the day with a great illumination, and that another body of lesser light [should come into existence] to illumine at night, and He suspended both in the firmament of the heavens in order that they illumine below as well. It is possible that just as He endowed the earth with the power of growth in certain places thereof, so He placed in the firmament certain areas that are prepared and ready to receive the light, and these bodies which receive the light reflect it, just as window-panes and onyx stones. This is why He called them me'oroth and not orim. [Orim would imply that they have their own light; me'oroth on the other hand implies that they reflect the light which they receive], even though they are called orim, in the Psalm.

**TO DIVIDE THE DAY FROM THE NIGHT.** Rashi wrote: "This took place after the primeval light was concealed for the righteous, but during the six days of creation the [primeval] light and darkness functioned, one by day and one by night." Now I do not see that this is the opinion of our Rabbis who mention concealment in connection with the primeval light. In their opinion, rather, the primeval light functioned for three days, and on the fourth an emanation took place from which was formed these two luminaries, just as the Rabbis have said, "The sphere of the sun is an offshoot of the upper light." For since this world was not deserving of being served by this primeval light without an intermediary, He concealed it for the righteous in the World to Come, and He made use of this offshoot of the upper light from the fourth day on. Thus the Rabbis said in Bereshith Rabbah: "It was taught: The light which was created during the six days of creation could not give light at daytime because it would then dim the sphere of the sun; at night it could not give light, since it was created to light only at daytime. So where is it? It was concealed. And where is it? It is prepared for the righteous in the hereafter, as it is said, And the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and as the light of the seven days. 'Seven?' I wonder! Were they not three? It is like a man who says thus: 'I am keeping this for the seven days of my wedding feast.'" That is to say, it is common parlance that one say: "I am keeping and guarding this meat for the seven days of my wedding festivity." It is not that this would suffice him for all seven days, only that he will use it during that time. In the same way the Rabbis explained the expression seven days, meaning as the light which functioned during some of those days. There in Bereshith Rabbah the Rabbis also said: "And He separated the light. Rabbi Yehudah the son of Rabbi Simon said, 'He separated it for Himself.' And the Rabbis say, 'He separated it for the righteous in the hereafter.'" Now if you could know the intent of the Rabbis in their saying in the Blessing of the Moon, "A crown of glory to those borne by Him from the birth," you would know the secret of the primeval light, the conserving thereof, and the matter of separation mentioned [in the words of Rabbi Yehudah the son of Rabbi Simon] — i.e., "He separated it for Himself" — as well as the secret of "the two kings making use of one crown," as will indeed be the case at the end when the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun after the light of the sun shall be sevenfold.

**AND THEY SHALL BE FOR SIGNS.** These are the changes which they will bring forth, making signs and wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. This is similar in meaning to the expression, And be not dismayed at the signs of heaven.

**AND FOR SEASONS.** This means seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter.

**AND FOR DAYS.** This means the length of day and the length of night.

**AND YEARS.** The luminaries are to complete their orbit and then traverse again the same course they followed, thus making the solar year consist of 365 days and the lunar year consist of [lunar cycles, each approximately] 30 days.

#### OR HACHAIM

**G'd said: "Let there be luminaries.** The reason that the Torah employs the singular יהי instead of יהיו when speaking about a number of luminaries is that the Torah already alludes to the fact that one of the luminaries would have a separate function, namely to "shine" by day, whereas all the others illuminate the night. Had G'd employed the plural at that stage when the sun and moon were still of equal size He could not have changed the size of the moon afterwards without reversing Himself. G'd's directives must endure forever.

The Torah speaks about the function of the luminaries being to distinguish between day and night. If the luminaries were equal in power how could that objective be achieved? The luminary by day would provide just as much brilliance by day as the luminary designed to function at night would provide. How then could we distinguish night from day? The wording of the Torah proves that the moon had to be a far weaker luminary than its counterpart by day and that this had been the plan at the outset..

Clearly, the wording is based on the fact that the luminaries along with everything else had come into existence already on the first day. The report of G'd's activities on that first day includes the mention of אור, light, five times. Our sages said that this is an allusion to five different kinds of light which G'd created on that day. He separated them for the sake of His inheritance (Jewish people) for the righteous in the future. Now, on the fourth day, He took enough from this light to illuminate the universe and suspended it in the sky of the heavens. The meaning of the words יהי מאורות ברקיע השמים then is "Let some of the luminaries be in the sky of the heavens." The letter מ is understood as "part of." G'd added the condition that these luminaries should not remain stationary but should revolve around the universe in order that by means of their movements people could distinguish day from night.. He did this in order to ensure that the Jewish people would know which days are Holy Days, i.e. לאותות ולמועדים. When G'd provided this illumination He separated two units from one another, each of which was intended to serve by day. This is the deeper meaning of the argument of the moon (reported in Chulin 60) that it is impossible for two kings to wear the same crown. The moon referred to the fact that both were to "rule" at one and the same time. Had the moon originally been intended to illuminate by night, how could the aggadah have used the simile of "two kings and one crown, i.e. simultaneously?" We must therefore understand this aggadah as assuming that each luminary was assigned a different part of the day. The Torah's wording which refers to

these luminaries as להאיר על הארץ, to illuminate the earth, without the addition of specific times when this function is to be performed supports our theory.

**1:15** and let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

#### RAMBAN

**AND THEY SHALL BE FOR LIGHTS IN THE FIRMAMENT OF THE HEAVEN TO GIVE LIGHT UPON THE EARTH.** He added here that their light should reach the earth since it is possible for the light to be seen in the heavens and perform all mentioned functions without lighting upon the earth. Hence He said that it be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, directed toward the earth and shining upon it.

#### OR HACHAIM

**They will serve as luminaries.** The plain meaning of the verse appears to be that the luminaries will a) break forth or split the heavens and that in addition to that b) they will illuminate the earth along the entire expanse of the horizon. Their light is to penetrate as far as the earth itself down below. An additional meaning of the text seems to be that the power of the light be such that it illuminate the sky and that the light which spreads along the horizon will illuminate earth. Earth itself is unable to tolerate the power of direct illumination from the luminaries. We derive this by carefully looking at the words למאורות ברקיע השמים "(they will be) as luminaries in the sky of the heavens," which describe the region where these luminaries are to function. The Torah then goes on to say: להאיר על הארץ, "to spread light on the earth." This is a reference to the bright light already provided by the above-mentioned luminaries in the heavens.

If we were to follow the sages' traditional explanation the luminaries were "hung" in the second lower heaven, the sky, their light would not break forth from the heavens, and the word השמים would mean that there are two heavens which illuminate the earth. The statement in Yuma 28 that on a cloudy day the sun (its light) is diffused throughout the universe does not contradict our words. Even though the sun may be forced to emit its rays "sideways," there is still a difference between the sun being in its regular place from which it emits more powerful rays of light than when said rays have to make a detour sideways. The part of the sun which would normally shine directly on earth and whose path is blocked by the clouds will instead be deflected heavenwards. This is the meaning of a "cloudy day is all sun" which is how the Talmud Yuma 28 phrases its conclusion.

**1:16** And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: and the stars also.

#### RAMBAN

**AND G-D MADE. 17. AND G-D SET THEM.** This teaches us that these lights were not made from the body of the firmament, rather, they were bodies set into it.

#### OR HACHAIM

**G'd made the two luminaries.** The reason the Torah was not content with the previously reported ויהי כן, that G'd's directive had been carried out, is because the action referred to in this verse is something new, namely that after the diminution of the size of the moon G'd assigned the domain of the night for the moon to shine in. By day the moon does not enjoy any rule at all in the presence of the sun's light. G'd assigned the stars to serve

as satellites to the moon. This does not represent a reversal of the previous order, as the Torah had already provided allusions concerning the ultimate scheme of things at the outset.

**1:17** And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth,

OR HACHAIM

**G'd placed them in the sky of the heavens.** It was not enough for the Torah to simply say וידי כן, because G'd wanted to inform us that He provided the illumination of earth by the luminaries as a free, unearned gift to mankind, as explained by Bereshit Rabbah 6,5. What they meant was that these luminaries do not illuminate the world because the world is entitled to their light. If that were the case, the luminaries would withdraw their light anytime people on earth do not conduct themselves as worthy of it. Our sages illustrated this point when they quoted Moses himself (in the Hereafter) after the destruction of the Temple as rebuking the sun for not withholding its light as a protest at the time the enemy entered the Holy of Holies. G'd therefore told us that ever since the luminaries were presented as a gift to the world they were no longer independent creatures, and were forced to act in accordance with the tasks allocated to them. This also explains why the Torah once again repeats the words למשול ביום, to rule by day (1,18), something that was already stated as an objective in 1,16 above. They (Bereshit Rabbah 6,9) therefore understood this verse to refer to the righteous who in the future will rule in the domain that the light has been removed to, in order to shine as effectively by day as by night. The plain meaning of the verse is that there was a need for the Torah to again state that the luminaries were to rule by day and by night to tell us that their function was to be permanent and not subject to withdrawal for any reason because they are required to give of their light.

However, when it comes to changing their functions by alternating by day and night, shorter nights or shorter days respectively, they do enjoy some control, i.e. ממשלה.

**1:18** and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

RAMBAN

**AND TO RULE OVER THE DAY AND OVER THE NIGHT.** The matter of rulership is a different matter from the function of light which He mentioned, since it includes that which He stated at first, And they shall be for signs, and seasons. Their rulership over the earth comprises the changes which they cause in it and the power of bringing about the existence and deterioration of all things in the lower world since the sun, by its rule during the day, causes the sprouting, the propagation and the growth of all the warm and dry things, while the moon by its rule increases the springs and the oceans, and all liquid and cold things. Therefore He said in a general way, And to rule over the day and over the night, because theirs is the dominion over things in the lower world. It is possible that the rulership given to them contains also a power of emanation for they are the leaders of things in the lower world, and with their power, every ruling power in nature holds sway. Thus the constellation which comes up by day rules during it, even as it is written, The sun and the moon and the stars... which the Eternal thy G-d hath allotted unto all the peoples. And this is what Scripture means when it says, He counteth the number of the stars; He giveth them all their names, likewise, He calleth them all by

name. For the calling of names signifies the differentiation in their respective powers, giving to this one the power of justice and righteousness, and to that one the power of blood and the sword, and similarly all other powers, as is known in astrology. And all is done by the power of the Most High and in accordance with His Will. Therefore it says, Great is our Lord, and mighty in power, for He is greatest of all and mightiest in power over them. And similarly it says, He calleth them all by name by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power. In accord with the secret I have hinted to you, the matter of rulership is completely true.

**AND TO DIVIDE THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS.** Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said: "By the coming forth of the sun at daytime and the light of the moon at night, they shall divide the light from the darkness." In my opinion, the light mentioned here refers to the day, and the darkness is the night for such are their names, as it says, And G-d called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. Now in connection with all the works of creation, Scripture mentions the Divine command and then tells of the deed. And here too He commanded, And they shall be for lights, and then it relates, And G-d set them. He further said, And to rule over the day and over the night, meaning that one is to rule by day and the other by night, the rulership being that which He commanded when He said, And they shall be for signs, and for seasons. And now He related that the rulership of the two is not alike but instead consists of dividing the darkness from the light. The greater luminary will rule by day and light will be everywhere, even where the sun does not reach, and the smaller luminary will rule by night, and there will be darkness except that the moon will lighten its darkness. This then is the command He gave in order to divide the day from the night, as it says, And G-d divided the light from the darkness.

**1:20** And God said, Let the waters swarm abundantly with moving creatures that have life, and let birds fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

RAMBAN

**LET THE WATERS SWARM WITH 'SHERETZ' (SWARMS) OF LIVING CREATURES.** Rashi wrote: "Every living creature that does not rise much above the ground is called sheretz, [e.g., species] of winged creatures such as flies; of abominable creatures such as ants and worms; of larger creatures such as the mole and the mouse and others of the same kind, and all fishes." But what will the Rabbi say of the verse, And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; 'shritzu' (swarm) in the earth and multiply therein, which was said to Noah and his sons? Likewise, the verse stating, which 'hamayim' (the waters) swarmed, should, according to this opinion of Rashi, read: "Which swarmed bamayim (in the waters)." Again there are many winged creatures that do not rise in height above the ground even as much as the mole and mouse, and the bat has very small legs, so why should it not be called sheretz ha'oph (a winged swarming thing)? Onkelos' opinion is that the term shritzah (swarming) has an implication of movement. Thus he says of both sheretz and remes: richasha d'rachish (moving things that move). He has explained it correctly. Shratzim are so called because of their constant movement. It is possible that it is a composite word: sheretz, shehu ratz (that which runs). Remes is so called because it creeps upon the earth and is never quiet or at rest. Know that every winged creature that has four legs is called sheretz ha'oph (a winged creeping thing) because it leans on its legs and moves like

shratzim, and a winged creature which is not so is called oph kanaph (winged fowl) because its main method of movement is flying. The meaning of the verse, 'Veshartzu' in the earth and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth is thus: that they may walk upon the entire earth, and be fruitful and multiply upon it. 'Shartzu' in the earth and multiply therein means "move about the entire earth and multiply thereon." This is the reason for the repetition of the word ur'vu (and ye multiply) in the verse. This being so, we will explain the expression, which the waters 'shartzu,' as meaning "which the waters have moved and brought forth." Similarly, the expression, 'Veshartz' the river with frogs [means that the river moved and brought forth frogs]. Also, And the children of Israel were fruitful 'vayishr'tzu,' means that they were fruitful and they multiplied and moved about because of their multitude until the land was filled with them. Onkelos, however, interpreted the verse, 'Shartzu' in the earth, as having reference to propagation. He thus translated, "Propagate in the land," since he understood the word shartzu — a verb — as being borrowed from the noun shratzim (reptiles). [The verse, according to Onkelos, thus states:] "And you, be ye fruitful and multiply, as the prolific creatures in the earth, and multiply therein." Similarly, And the children of Israel were fruitful 'vayishr'tzu' means they brought forth progeny abundantly as the prolific creatures.

**AND LET FOWL FLY ABOVE THE EARTH.** On this fifth day the command of creation was given to the waters, and on the sixth day it was given to the earth. If so, the expression, and let fowl fly above the earth, must be interpreted as being connected with [the beginning of the verse which has the following meaning]: "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures and with fowl that will fly." And the verse stating, And the Eternal G-d formed out of the ground every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, [which seems to indicate that the fowl were created from the ground, not from the water, must be understood] as if it said: "And the Eternal G-d formed out of the earth every beast of the field, and He also formed every fowl of the air out of the water." There are many verses like this. So also is the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer the Great in his Chapters, where he says: "On the fifth day he caused all winged fowl to swarm from the waters." However, in the Gemara the Sages differ on this point. Some, agreeing with the previously mentioned interpretation, say that all winged fowl were created from the waters, and some say that they were created from both — in their words, "they were created from the swamps." If so, since the fowl sprang from the waters, and the swamps are at the bottom of the ocean, this is why the command concerning their creation took place on the fifth day. Similarly He said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, since both the body and soul of fish come from the waters by word of G-d Who brought upon them a spirit from the elements, unlike man, in whom He separated the body from his soul, as it is said, And the Eternal G-d formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. On the third day of creation when the plants came into being, He mentioned nothing at all concerning a soul because the power of growth which resides in plants is not a "soul;" only in moving beings is it a "soul." And in the opinion of the Greeks, who say that just as in moving beings the power of growth is only through the soul, so also in the case of plants is the power of growth through a soul. The difference between them will be that the one [the moving being] is a nefesh chayah (a living soul), that is, a soul in which there is life, for there is a soul which has no life and that is the

soul of plants. Our Rabbis have mentioned "desire" in connection with date trees. Perhaps this is a force in growth, but it cannot be called "a soul."

#### OR HACHAIM

**G'd said: "Let the waters swarm.** This means that the waters should become full of creative activity. This was a directive that was not to be an ongoing state of affairs. The creatures produced by the waters at that time endured just like the animals which the earth produced on the sixth day. Those animals also came into existence only at the time G'd had given the directive to earth, but they endured as respective species and they subsequently became fruitful and multiplied of their own accord. The expression שרץ נפש חיה refers to the fish. The word שרץ is meant to establish that there is a difference between them and the birds, because the fish can exist only close to earth whereas the birds are able to exist far removed from earth without having to base themselves on the ground all the time. The Torah added the words רקיע השמים so as to set a limit to the range of flight of the birds, i.e. they cannot fly to heaven.

Another reason for the words רקיע השמים is to make it plain that here the Torah speaks about the רקיע called heavens. This does not pose a problem with the statements of the sages who said in answer to the question where the sun and moon reside, that they reside in the second רקיע. These sages base themselves on "He placed them in the sky of the heavens (1,17)." The members of the Great Assembly interpreted the verse (Nechemyah 9,6) אתה עשית את השמים, שמי השמים וכל צבאם, "You have made the heavens, the heavens of the heavens and all their hosts," to mean that the hosts (including sun, moon and stars) are at home in the second רקיע. If that interpretation is correct, how do we understand the words ברקיע השמים as a reference to the habitat of the birds?

It seems to me that the meaning of these terms changes with their vowel patterns. Whereas in Genesis 1,17 when the luminaries are discussed the Torah speaks about the luminaries being at home BI-RA-KIYAH HASHAMAYIM, the vowel kametz under the letter ר refers to one kind of רקיע. In verse 20 where the subject is the habitat of the birds, the vowel under the word רקיע is a sheva, i.e. a half vowel. This half-vowel is used as a sign of the possessive case, i.e. something that is attached to something else, in our case the רקיע adjoining our atmosphere. When the vowel kametz is employed it does not refer to something which the Rakiyah is part of, but "the sky which is the heaven." [I have been unable to find an edition of the Chumash in which 1,17 has a vowel kametz Ed.]

**1:21** And God created the great crocodiles, and every living creature that moves, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind: and God saw that it was good.

#### RAMBAN

**AND G-D CREATED THE GREAT SEA-MONSTERS.** Because of the great size of these creatures, some consisting of many Persian miles — the Greeks in their books even relate that they knew some of them to be 500 Persian miles long, and our Rabbi likewise spoke of them in magnifying terms — on account of that, Scripture explicitly ascribes their creation to G-d for He brought them forth from nought from the beginning, as I have explained the expression b'riyah (creation). Similarly, Scripture does so in the case of man on account of his exaltedness, thus

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informing us that man, with his mind and reason, also came forth from nought. I wonder why it does not say "and it was so" on this day? Perhaps it would not have been possible to mention And He created after saying, "and it was so," since it refers to the preceding. Our Rabbis have said that the great sea-monsters are the Leviathan and its mate which He created male and female. He then slew the female and preserved it in salt for the benefit of the righteous in the hereafter. It is possible that on account of this it would not have been appropriate to say concerning their creation, "and it was so," since they did not continue to exist [in the form in which they were created].

## OR HACHAIM

**G'd created the great monsters of the sea.** The Torah's use here of the word ויברא, "He created," indicates that G'd equipped the creatures which the waters had produced with two additional kinds of creative ability. The Torah here adds the words ואת כל נפש שרץ חיה, "and all the crawling living beings that the waters spawned," instead of just reporting that "the waters produced according to their kinds,"- as in the case of the earth producing herbs. The words למיניהם were restrictive. Neither the earth which was charged to produce vegetation, nor the waters which were charged to produce swarms of crawling living creatures and birds which could fly were able to produce anything which was not part of their own constitution, the potential they had been equipped with. Since neither the waters nor the earth contain the element רוח, wind, spirit, breath, for instance, how could they possibly bring forth a creature that possessed רוח as an essential element? Although both earth and water possess some minute life-giving ability, this would never be enough to produce living organisms such as fish and birds. This is why G'd is reported in our verse as having supplied this additional life-force. This is why the Torah here has to once again use the term ויברא אלוקים, G'd created. This involvement of G'd extended to כל נפש חיה, every living creature. Although G'd had previously directed the waters to produce swarms of crawling living creatures, the meaning of that directive was to produce a swarm of bodies which was capable of being animated through the infusion of a life-force to be supplied by G'd. This was something that was well within the capacity of the waters to produce.

When it came to the sea-monsters, the normal preparatory process that the waters were capable of providing was not adequate; this is why G'd interposed Himself and provided that extra vital force which is significantly not described merely as נפש חיה. Keeping this in mind we understand our sages who understood this sea-monster to be Leviathan. We are all aware of the descriptions of Leviathan both in the Bible, the Talmud and the liturgy. The reason the Torah did not confirm the creation of these sea-monsters with the usual ויהי כן, so it came to be, is simply that there was no need to do so. When G'd gives a directive merely by word of mouth, the Torah has to report that G'd's directive was carried out. When G'd was personally involved in the creation of something, the Torah certainly does not need to give us any confirmation of that. The very expression ויברא, He created, includes successful execution.

**1:22** And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply in the earth.

## RAMBAN

**AND G-D BLESSED THEM SAYING.** He decreed the blessing on them and said of them that they should be fruitful and multiply, meaning that they should bring forth abundantly, that one creature should bring forth many like itself. The purport of the blessing is procreation, even as it says, And I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations. In connection with plants also, the term "blessing" applies: Then I will command My blessing upon you in the sixth year. However, it does not say so on the third day [when the plants and trees were created] because all created living beings were only a single pair, male and female, according to their kind, and therefore they were in need of a blessing to bring forth abundantly; but in the case of plants, they sprang up over the face of the entire earth in great abundance, just as they exist today. Nor did He mention a blessing on the sixth day for cattle and beasts because in the decree of abundancy which He decreed for the moving souls in the waters there were included the moving souls on the earth, as all living souls that do not speak are in the same class of creation. And our Rabbis have said that they [the fish and fowl] were in need of a blessing because people hunt them and eat them.

**AND FILL THE WATERS IN THE SEA.** He blessed them that in their abundancy they would fill the seas, the streams and the pools. Or it may be that their "filling" is to be in the seas only for in the streams they are few.

**AND LET FOWL MULTIPLY IN THE EARTH.** Although the fowl were created out of the waters, their blessing — that they be fruitful and multiply — was to be on the earth for there is no fowl that lays its eggs in the waters and has them grow there. Even those fowl which abide always in the waters and derive their food from them lay their eggs on the earth, and there they are born.

## OR HACHAIM

**G'd blessed them.** Why did G'd have to bless the swarms of creatures produced by the waters, something that was not the case with the animals which the earth produced (verse 25)? Also, why did G'd allow a spirit of jealousy to develop even amongst the various creatures produced from the waters such as the flying insects which are not reported as having been blessed? I believe this was part of the very nature of the creatures that came into existence as "swarms." The command to produce "swarms" called for a one time act of creation not an ongoing process. G'd ordered these creatures to be fruitful and to multiply in order to ensure the survival of the respective species. Had G'd not blessed them they would have perished. The ability to procreate is linked to the element fire, warmth. Cold, on the other hand, is liable to destroy that reproductive ability of the species. Fish, which live in a cold environment, therefore needed an additional blessing to protect their reproductive organs against damage by the cold that is part of their habitat. We can learn about this both from the scientists as well as from what our sages have told us about Abraham's dialogue with G'd, reported in Shabbat 156. Abraham had assumed that his fortunes had been guided by the planet Jupiter, i.e. צדק. Bereshit Rabbah 43, discusses this in detail in connection with Isaiah 41,2. According to the Talmud, G'd remonstrated with Abraham when the latter said that he knew from his astrological observa-

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tions that he was not slated to have children. G'd challenged this when He told Abraham that such horoscopes do not control the destinies of Jews. He demonstrated His power over the planets by switching Jupiter from a position in the Western sky to one in the Eastern sky. This is the deeper meaning of Isaiah 41,2 asking rhetorically: "Who has enlightened him from the East, He (G'd) called Tzedek to be at his (Abraham's) feet?" This incident illustrates that sometimes G'd has to interfere- in this case by directing a blessing- in order for nature not to be counterproductive. Without this blessing the fish would have died out because they would have tried to escape the inhospitable climate they found themselves in by coming ashore where it is warmer.

Another word which poses a problem is the word בִּימִים, after the word הַיָּם. It should have sufficed for G'd to direct the fish to multiply and fill the waters, why add the word "in the seas?" The meaning of the extra word then is that the fish should swarm in the oceans, whereas the birds would multiply in the normal fashion in their respective habitats, just like the other animals on the dry land.

**1:24** And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind: and it was so.

## RAMBAN

**CATTLE.** These are the species that eat grass, whether domestic animals or those of the wilderness.

**AND BEAST OF THE EARTH.** Those which eat flesh are called chayoth (beasts), and they all seek and seize prey.

**VAREMES' (AND CREEPING THING).** Rashi wrote: "These are creeping swarms that creep low upon the earth, appearing as though they are dragged along." Now in this chapter we find: And over every animal 'haromeseth' (that creepeth) upon the earth; and it is further written, And all flesh 'haromes' (that moved) upon the earth perished, both fowl and cattle, and beasts, and every swarming thing that swarmeth upon the earth; also, Wherein all the beasts of the forest 'tirmos' (do creep forth). But the meaning of r'misah is as if it were written with the letter samech, as in The foot tirm'senah (shall tread it down), and other related expressions. He thus says of beasts and cattle, 'romes' (that tread) on the earth, and of creeping things that drag along, 'remes' (that creep) upon the ground, because they tread on the ground with their entire body.

## OR HACHAIM

**G'd said: "Let the earth bring forth living creatures.** This directive was also meant to be valid only temporarily just as we already explained in connection with the directive in 1,20. The reason is that G'd did not need to tell the warm-blooded animals to be fruitful and to multiply because it was their nature to do so owing to the fact that the environment they live in is conducive to multiplication of the species. G'd only had to command them to maintain the purity of their respective species by not mating with other species.

**1:25** And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the earth after its kind: and God saw that it was good.

## OR HACHAIM

**G'd made the free-roaming animals of the earth.** This either refers to the creation of their life-force similar to what the waters had produced in 1,21, or to what Rashi has said, i.e. that the word יָעַץ is used when something is produced in a completed state. Just as man was not created as a baby but fully grown, so, according to Rashi, were the wild beasts. Both interpretations are correct and do not conflict with one another.

**1:26** And God said, Let Us make Mankind in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

## RAMBAN

**AND G-D SAID: 'LET US MAKE MAN.'** There was a special command dedicated to the making of man because of his great superiority since his nature is unlike that of beasts and cattle which were created with the preceding command. The correct explanation of na'aseh (let us make) [which is in the plural form when it should have been in the singular] is as follows: It has been shown to you that G-d created something from nothing only on the first day, and afterwards He formed and made things from those created elements. Thus when He gave the waters the power of bringing forth a living soul, the command concerning them was Let the waters swarm. The command concerning cattle was Let the earth bring forth. But in the case of man He said, Let us make, that is, I and the aforementioned earth, let us make man, the earth to bring forth the body from its elements as it did with cattle and beasts, as it is written, And the Eternal G-d formed man of the dust of the ground, and He, blessed be He, to give the spirit from His mouth, the Supreme One, as it is written, And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And He said, In our image, and after our likeness, as man will then be similar to both. In the capacity of his body, he will be similar to the earth from which he was taken, and in spirit he will be similar to the higher beings, because it [the spirit] is not a body and will not die. In the second verse, He says, In the image of G-d He created him, in order to relate the distinction by which man is distinguished from the rest of created beings. The explanation of this verse I have found ascribed to Rabbi Joseph the Kimchite, and is the most acceptable of all interpretations that have been advanced concerning it. The meaning of tzelem is as the word to'ar (appearance), as in 'Vetzelem' (And the appearance) of his face was changed; similarly, Surely 'b'tzelem' (as a mere appearance) man walketh; When Thou arousest Thyself 'tzalmam' (their appearance) Thou wilt despise, that is, the appearance of their countenance. And the meaning of the word d'muth is similarity in form and deed, as things that are akin in a certain matter are called similar to each other. Thus man is similar both to the lower and higher beings in appearance and honor, as it is written, And Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, meaning that the goal before him is wisdom, knowledge, and skill of deed. In real likeness his body thus compares to the earth while his soul is similar to the higher beings.

**AND LET THEM HAVE DOMINION OVER THE FISH OF THE SEA.** On account of his [man's] being male and female, he said, And let 'them' have dominion over the fish of the sea, in the plural. In Bereshith Rabbah, the Rabbis have said: "Let the earth bring forth a living soul after its kind. Said Rabbi Elazar: 'A living soul — this has reference to the spirit of the first man.'" Now it is impossible that Rabbi Elazar should say that the expression, Let the earth bring forth, be explained as having reference to the soul of the first man at all. Instead, his intent is to say what I have mentioned, that the formation of man as regarding his spirit, namely, the soul which is in the blood, that was done from the earth, just as in the command of formation of the beasts and cattle. For the souls of all moving things were made at one time, and afterwards He created bodies for them. First He made the bodies of the cattle and the beasts, and then the body of man into whom He imparted this soul [which resides in the blood, and is akin to that of the cattle and beasts], and afterwards, He breathed into him a higher soul. For it is concerning this separate soul that a special command was devoted by G-d Who gave it, as it is written, And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. The way of truth in this verse [as to why Scripture begins with "man" in the singular — let us make 'man' — and then uses the plural, let 'them' have dominion] will be known to him who understands the following verse [27, where the same change appears. It begins by stating, in the image of G-d He created 'him,' and then uses the plural: male and female He created 'them'.] It is possible that Rabbi Elazar meant to explain the expression Let the earth bring forth as meaning "the earth of eternal life," that it bring forth a living soul after its kind that will exist forever. Similarly, [we explain that when Scripture] said, male and female He created them, it is because man's creation at first was male and female, and His soul was included in both of them. However, in the formation, man was formed first, and then He built the woman from the rib of man, as Scripture tells later. Therefore Scripture mentioned here the term "creation," and in the chapter below it mentioned "formation." The person learned [in the mysteries of the Torah] will understand. The meaning of let them have dominion is that they shall rule vigorously over the fish, the fowl, the cattle, and all creeping things — "the cattle" here includes the beast. And He said, And over all the earth, to indicate that they are to rule over the earth itself, to uproot and to pull down, to dig and to hew out copper and iron. The term *r'diyah* — [*v'yirdu* over the fish ... and over all the earth] — applies to the rule of the master over his servant.

## OR HACHAIM

**G'd said: "Let us make a human being.** The Torah tells us that G'd did not create man as He created the swarms of creatures in the sea or on land who came into existence through a directive to the waters or to the earth, respectively. G'd said that He, the Creator Himself, would make man.

As to the plural form נַעֲשֶׂה, "let us make," this is the first time we come across the meaning of the virtue of humility. G'd employed the term "we" in the Torah because this is the manner in which people who are modest and unassuming express themselves in civilised society. Teaching mankind this concept was so important to G'd that He did not mind that some heretics might use this wording as a pretext to claim that there were partners who helped G'd create either man or the universe. G'd's humility consisted also of the fact that He, personally, took the dust, formed it into clay, and blew the breath of life into Adam.

Another meaning of the word נַעֲשֶׂה, we shall make, is to remind us that G'd possesses many attributes, i.e. the 13 attributes of Mercy, and the attribute of Justice which we know as אֱלֹקִים. All these attributes between them participated in the creation of man (universe).

The words בצלמנו כדמותנו, "in our image, in our likeness, may mean that man too should possess the attribute of Mercy as well as the attribute of Justice, virtues which he could activate alternately whenever he was called upon to either pronounce judgment, or to extend mercy, to grant a pardon to an offender. This is the deeper meaning of the the second report of man's creation (2,7) where the Torah writes: וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם, where both G'd's attributes are mentioned when He created man. וַיִּרְדּוּ בְּדָגַת הַיָּם, "Man is to have dominion over the lesser creatures on earth and in the sea." This supports our theory that man is so qualified because he possesses both the attribute of Justice and the attribute of Mercy. Even though the Torah does not specifically mention man's dominion as extending over "the waters" [but only to the seas Ed.], this may be because it is already alluded to in the words בְּדָגַת הַיָּם, i.e. that man's dominion extends over the oceans.

The Torah's use of the term רִדָּה to describe this dominion may be an allusion to the word יִרְדָּה, descent. Our sages (based on Bereshit Rabbah 8,12) have told us that in the event man is sinful he will progressively descend from the lofty spiritual level of being man to the spiritual level of mammals, fish, birds and even crawling creatures, all depending on the severity of the sins man commits. The Torah lists the various categories of creatures man has dominion over to warn us that he would be punished by his soul eventually being reincarnated in the body of one of these lesser creatures if he were not morally fit to exercise this advantage he has been granted. At the same time, the awareness of the potential loss of such powers should act as an incentive to man to regain his former stature in the event he has sinned. The Torah begins with describing the potential descent of man's soul to being reincarnated as a fish. This is why the fish are mentioned first in the list of creatures over which man has dominion. Inasmuch as fish may be killed in any fashion and do not require ritual slaughter to make them fit for consumption by Jews, anyone who has the misfortune to be reincarnated as a fish at least does not have to undergo the pain involved when said fish is killed. A more painful loss of human dignity is to be reincarnated as a bird. Birds have to undergo partial ritual slaughter before they become fit for consumption by Jews. The next and still more serious loss of human dignity is to be reincarnated as a mammal which cannot become fit for consumption by Jews unless it has both the windpipe and the gullet severed. When the verse continues and speaks about הָאֵרֶץ, this is a reference to the vegetation on earth, or even to inert parts of nature itself. Here the Torah alludes to the path of man's return to his former stature by mentioning parts of nature which may be consumed by Jews without their having to undergo a painful experience such as violent death. There is, however, an even greater descent of man into the abyss, i.e. utter destruction beyond a chance of rehabilitation. This occurs if man is reduced to the category of שְׂקִצִּים וְרִמָּשִׁים, insects and reptiles. This category is reserved for Jews who embrace another religion, Jews who deliberately defy G'd's laws, etc.

**1:27** So God created Mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

OR HACHAIM

**G'd created man in HIS image.** This means that G'd's image is reflected in man. When one looks at man one knows he must be a creature of G'd, i.e. that G'd Himself created both man's body and his image. The Torah repeats once more בצלם אלוקים ברא אותו, "He created him in G'd's image." This is to tell us that the very image that man appears as is G'd's image. [Since G'd is not corporeal, how else could we have had even an inkling of what image He wanted to evoke in us. Ed.]

There is another meaning to this verse. G'd created man in two images. The first "image" is one that is reflected in the face of every human being, even the most boorish, the least developed mentally and spiritually. They are still distinguished by not being animals. Such a human being is described by the Torah as having been created בצלמו, in his image, the image of the individual we speak about. The second time the word refers to HIS image, i.e. G'd's image. Here the Torah speaks about the fortunate Jewish people, G'd's inheritance. Our verse tells us that amongst all the human beings one can find two "images." The second image is of a more concealed kind seeing that it is not physical but spiritual in nature.

**1:28** And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful, and multiply, replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

RAMBAN

**AND G-D BLESSED THEM.** This is an actual blessing [unlike Verse 22 where the blessing of the fish and fowl consisted of bestowing upon them the power of procreation]. Therefore, it is written here, And G-d blessed them, and G-d said unto them. But above in Verse 22 it is written, And G-d blessed them, saying, [the word saying indicating] that the blessing is the command of procreation, that He gave them the power of bringing forth offspring, and no other command with which they are to be blessed. [But in the case of man, in addition to the power of being fruitful, he was also blessed that he have dominion over the earth, hence Scripture continues, and G-d said unto them.]

**AND REPLENISH THE EARTH.** This is a blessing that they fill the earth because of their numbers. In my opinion, He blessed them that they fill the whole earth, and that the nations should disperse according to their families and should populate the far ends of the world because of their numbers and not be concentrated in one place, as was the thought of the men of the generation of the dispersion.

**AND SUBDUE IT.** He gave them power and dominion over the earth to do as they wish with the cattle, the reptiles, and all that crawl in the dust, and to build, and to pluck up that which is planted, and from its hills to dig copper, and other similar things. This is included in what He said and over all the earth.

**AND HAVE DOMINION OVER THE FISH OF THE SEA.** He said that they should also have dominion over the fish that are concealed from them, And over the fowl of the heaven which are not on the ground, and also over every wild animal. He thus mentioned them in the order of their creation: first the fish and fowl, and afterwards the animals. So likewise Scripture says, Thou hast made him have dominion over the works of Thy

hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet: sheep and oxen, all of them, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea. Our Rabbis, however, have made a distinction between kvishah (subduing) and r'diyah (having dominion).

OR HACHAIM

**He blessed them.** This means G'd made sure the human species would not become extinct. ויאמר להם פרו ורבו, He said to them: "be fruitful and multiply." He commanded them to be fruitful, etc. Although G'd's blessing had assured mankind that the species would not become extinct, He did not want them to neglect their own contribution to their procreation. I have observed that some of our people entertain wrong ideas. They believe that when there are three or four brothers in a family that only one or two of the brothers need to practice procreation in the mistaken belief that this comprises fulfilment of the commandment to be fruitful. Sometimes even when there is only one son in the family, he ceases to perform this commandment after he has fathered a number of children. In order to prevent such faulty thinking, the Torah lists the duty to procreate as the very first commandment and also adds the word רבו, multiply, to disabuse us of the idea that the commandment is limited to siring a certain number of children. G'd added the words וכבשה, "and conquer it," immediately after the command to multiply in order to indicate that successful conquest of the earth would depend on the presence of a multitude of human beings. When any part of the earth is desolate it is not considered as "conquered." In fact it is bound to become filled with environmentally negative presences. G'd therefore first blessed man's ability to procreate and then commanded how this power was to be used.

**1:29** And God said, Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, on which is the fruit yielding seed; to you it shall be for food.

RAMBAN

**BEHOLD, I HAVE GIVEN YOU EVERY HERB YIELDING SEED.**

He did not permit Adam and his wife to kill any creature and eat its meat, but all alike were to eat herbs. But when the era of "the sons of Noah" came, He permitted them to eat meat, as it is said, Every moving thing that liveth shall be for food for you; as the green herb have I given you all; even as the green herb that I permitted to the first man, so do I permit you everything. Thus is the language of Rashi. And so did the Rabbi explain it in Tractate Sanhedrin: "And to every beast of the earth — to you and to the beasts I have given the herbs and the fruits of the trees, and every green herb for food." But if so, then we must explain the expression, every green herb for food, to mean "and every green herb." But this is not so. Rather, He gave to man and his wife every herb yielding seed and all fruit of the trees [as mentioned in Verse 29], and to the beasts of the earth and the fowl of the heaven He gave all green herb [as mentioned in Verse 30] but neither the fruit of the tree nor the seeds. The food of all of them was thus not the same. However, meat was not permitted to them until the time of the "sons of Noah," as is the opinion of our Rabbis. And this is the plain meaning of the verse. The reason for this [prohibition of eating meat] was that creatures possessing a moving soul have a certain superiority as regards their soul, resembling in a way those who possess the rational soul: they have the power of choice affecting their welfare and their food, and they flee from pain and death. And

Scripture says: Who knoweth the spirit of man whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast whether it goes downward to the earth? But when they sinned, and all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth, and it was decreed that they die in the flood, and for the sake of Noah He saved some of them to preserve the species, He gave the sons of Noah permission to slaughter and eat them since their existence was for his sake. Yet with all this, He did not give them permission regarding the soul thereof, and He prohibited them from eating a limb cut off from a living animal, and in addition He gave us [the children of Israel] the commandment prohibiting the eating of all blood because it is the basis of the soul, as it is written: For the life of all flesh, the blood thereof is all one with the life thereof; therefore I said to the children of Israel: Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh; for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof. Thus He has permitted the eating of the body of dumb animals after death, but not the soul itself. This indeed is the reason for the commandment of killing [animals in the prescribed manner before eating their flesh], and for the saying of the Rabbis: "The duty of relieving the suffering of beasts is a Biblical requirement." And this is the meaning behind the benediction which we make before killing animals: "[Blessed art Thou, O Eternal our G-d, king of the universe] Who hast sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us concerning the killing [of animals]." I will yet discuss the purport of the commandment prohibiting the eating of blood when I reach thereto, if G-d will reward me. The meaning of the expression, every herb yielding seed... and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food, is that they should eat the seeds of herbs, such as the grains of wheat, barley, beans, and the like, and that they should eat all fruits of the tree; but the tree itself was not given to them for food, nor was the herb itself until man was cursed and he was told, And thou shalt eat the herb of the field.

## OR HACHAIM

**G'd said: "Here I have given you all the herbs of the field, etc.** This verse has to be understood thus: Seeing that G'd had said already that the human species should fill the earth, conquer it, and have dominion over its creatures, He had established man as master and ruler over all the creation. Now the Torah reveals the practical advantage of that gift, i.e. that man should use the earth's vegetation as his source of food. The fact that G'd specifically mentions herbs as food is an indication that the creatures which were placed under man's sovereignty were not intended to be his food.

**And every fruit-bearing tree.** This statement already denies man the fruit of the tree of knowledge as it was not part of the definition "a fruit-bearing tree." We have explained that both the trunk and the fruit of the tree of knowledge were edible. We must therefore understand the word **אֵת** in the line **וְאֵת כָּל הָעֵץ** as a restrictive clause. Another meaning could be that even the tree of knowledge was included. If man had waited till the onset of the Sabbath, he could have eaten from that tree also as he would have used its grapes to recite the benediction over the Sabbath. The prohibition to eat from that tree which the Torah mentions later was not meant to be a permanent prohibition, it meant only that use of its fruit was to be for a holy purpose only.

**1:30** And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for food: and it was so.

## OR HACHAIM

**And to all the beasts of the earth, etc.** This verse is an adjunct to the previous verse. [it has no verb. Ed.] This creates the impression that G'd gave food intended for humans also to the animals. The word **לֶאֱכֹלָה**, "as food" is repeated next to the words **כָּל יֶרֶק עֵשֶׂב**, all the green plants, which appears to indicate that the mammals and the birds were to eat only grass. Actually, the Torah means that G'd created as food for the animals and the birds only the green plants. Should you say that in the absence of grass the animals would die, the Torah says **לָכֵם יִהְיֶה לֶאֱכֹלָה**, "it will be as food for you and for all the beasts of the earth." As a result we find that man was to sustain himself from all the fruit of the earth and from the fruit of the trees, whereas the animals were to feed on the grass and the vegetables. Should there be a dearth of the latter, the animals too could feed on the food intended for man. There is an allusion to this in Deut. 11,15: "I shall give grass in your fields for your animals and you will eat and be satisfied." Unless there are exceptional circumstances, you the human being will not experience satiation from the food intended primarily for your animals; neither will the animals find your kind of food satisfying.

**1:31** And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

## RAMBAN

**AND, BEHOLD, IT WAS VERY GOOD.** This signifies their permanent existence, as I have explained. The meaning of the word **me'od** (very) is "mostly." On this sixth day He added this word because he is speaking of creation in general which contains evil in some part of it. Thus He said that it was very good, meaning its **me'od** is good [thus conveying the thought that even the small part of it which is evil is basically also good, as is explained further on]. It is this thought which is the basis of the saying of the Rabbis in Bereshith Rabbah: "And, behold, it was very good. And, behold, it was good — this refers to death." Similarly the Rabbis mentioned, "This means the evil inclination in man," and, "This means the dispensation of punishment." Onkelos also intended to convey this thought for he said here, "And, behold, it was very orderly," meaning that the order was very properly arranged since the evil is needed for the preservation of the good, just as it is said, To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. Some Rabbis explain that on account of the superiority of man, He added special praise on his formation, i.e., that he is "very good."

## OR HACHAIM

**G'd saw all that He had made, etc.** In light of the creation of man, G'd surveyed the whole of His creative activity and found that it was good. Without the presence of the human species what purpose would the whole universe have served? The goodness of all G'd's work would not have been evident to anyone. Man alone is able to evaluate that something is good and to acknowledge it as such. The Torah here adds the word **וַיִּבְרָא**, an expression which has not been used previously when G'd's review of a day's work was described as good. The reason that the Torah restricts the "good," or "very good" respectively by the addition

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of the restrictive והנה, "as of the present" is, that now that there existed a human being there also existed the chance that this human being would disturb the harmony of the universe by his actions. As far as G'd was concerned the universe was "very good." From an objective point of view everything was good. Any deterioration that might occur was not to be attributed to G'd's having created an imperfect world.

One may also interpret these words טוב מאד as expressing two different phenomena G'd beheld when He looked at His handiwork. He took a look at the righteous that would inhabit the earth and concluded that the world was indeed טוב, "good." He then looked at the wicked people that would inhabit His earth and decided to prepare a way for them to rehabilitate themselves. This is referred to by the word מאד. Our sages (Bereshit Rabbah 9,10) understand the word מאד as a reference to the angel of death. This is because man's rehabilitation is ushered in via death, i.e. the angel of death. The Torah therefore described the טוב as צדיקים, not in need of death in order to find their serenity in the hereafter. But even for those who did not fulfil their duties while on this earth the Torah foresees a kind of טוב after a process of rehabilitation commencing with death.

This verse also contains an allusion to what is expected of man over and beyond the fact that he is the principal reason the universe was created and that the creatures were created for his sake and for his benefit. We must ask ourselves that in view of man being created with a "good" i.e. perfect soul, what else was there for him to aspire to? The Torah alludes to this with the word מאד, to indicate that man's deeds were still needed to elevate the spiritual level of his soul to even greater heights.

**2:1** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their host.

## RAMBAN

**AND ALL THE HOST OF THEM.** "The host of the earth" are those which have been mentioned: beasts, creeping things, fish, and all growing things, and also man. "The host of the heavens" are the two luminaries and the stars, mentioned above, just as it is written: And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun and the moon and the stars, even all the host of heaven. It also includes the Separate Intelligences, just as it is written: I saw the Eternal sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him; also, The Eternal will punish the host of the high heaven on high. It is here [in the expression, all the host of them], that He has hinted at the formation of the angels in the work of creation. Similarly, the souls of men are included in the host of heaven.

## OR HACHAIM

**Heaven and earth were completed.** We are not sure what this verse is meant to teach us. It appears that we must understand it in the context of the saying of our sages that G'd is the מקומו של עולם, G'd is the place of His universe (and not vice versa). We also find statements to the effect that G'd fills the universe, such as Isaiah 6,3: "The whole earth is full of His glory." G'd's light surrounds the entire globe and it fills the globe itself. We need to understand why G'd has arranged things in this manner. I have heard from Torah scholars (who were my teachers) that the reason G'd made the earth spherical is to enable its various parts to endure with equal ease. The rabbis meant that of all the desires, urges and feelings of love in the universe nothing matches in intensity the urge of the spirit which has recognised the light of G'd and its desire to cleave to G'd's light. Every living

soul which has been fortunate enough to recognise even a small amount of that light longs to behold visions of the pleasantness that is G'd. Know that G'd has endowed each category of His creatures with a two-tiered intelligence. One tier is the power to perceive, the other tier is the power to analyse. Human beings, i.e. creatures who are endowed with the power of speech, as well as all lower forms of life or even the inert part of nature, all received a degree of intelligence commensurate with their status in the universe which enables them to recognise their Creator. By means of this intelligence we know that the globe continues to exist without faltering. G'd has revealed some of this secret to those who revere Him and by means of these explanations these facts became translated to our senses [as opposed to merely abstract intelligence. Ed.] The force holding up the globe is G'd's beautiful and all-embracing light which surrounds the globe in equal measure. Every section of the revolving earth derives additional strength from the power of the fiery urge that burns within it urging it to cling to the manifestations of G'd's spirit. This is why the globe remains in its position in the universe. [I have abbreviated the author's treatise on what he terms spiritual motivations for keeping "earth on track." I have no way of knowing if the author was familiar with Newton's theories about centrifugal forces, gravitation, etc. Even assuming that he had heard of them, the chances are he would have preferred to account for these movements as having been inspired at least also by spiritual considerations rather than as being merely laws of physics. According to the author the reason for the Torah telling us something at this stage which seemed obvious is to explain the fact that spherical earth which is not propped up by a visible force could remain in place throughout the millenia. We are dealing then with gravitation, etc. as a spiritual force. Ed.]

**2:2** And by the seventh day God ended His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

## OR HACHAIM

**G'd completed on the seventh day.** The plain meaning of the verse is to tell us that G'd did not engage in creational activities that the Torah has not mentioned after that date. The term כלה, completed, includes anything that had been in G'd's mind to do. It also means that G'd did not only desist from work on that Sabbath, but that He did not resume activity on the following six days.

We must pay close attention to the apparently superfluous words אשר עשה, "which He had done." We must also explore the meaning of the words ביום השביעי, "on the seventh day," which suggest that G'd did perform work on the seventh day but that "He completed it on that day." This was not so, but He had completed all His work already on the sixth day. Our sages already felt the need to correct the impression that G'd had still performed creational work on the seventh day. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, quoted by Rashi and Bereshit Rabbah 10,9, says that human beings who do not know time accurately commence their Sabbath a few minutes early in order not to desecrate it. G'd who is aware of precisely when the Sabbath starts, can afford to do His work until the last second. Even allowing for Rabbi Shimon's comment, the word ביום in that verse is not adequately explained. This word creates the impression that G'd ceased work on the seventh day. Actually, according to our sages the word ביום is justified.

They claim that until the Sabbath the world was trembling and shaking until the advent of the Sabbath. On the seventh day G'd gave the earth *מנוחה*, tranquillity (compare Rashi's second comment on our verse). On the Sabbath G'd created the "soul" of the world, and that is the deeper meaning of the words *וביום השביעי* and *וינפש*, and on the seventh day He rested and retreated to His Essence. Although our sages have interpreted the word *וינפש* as a lament about the withdrawal of the additional soul G'd grants to the Jewish people on each Sabbath (Beytzah 17) this is merely homiletics. They base that on the unusual construction *וינפש* (passive or reflexive) instead of merely, *וינפש* (ordinary intransitive). The plain meaning is undoubtedly that *שבת וינפש*, because He rested on the Sabbath and with it the soul arrived. This means that all creatures were granted an abundance of vitality, something they had lacked previously.

We find a similar idea in the Zohar-Tazria (page 13 Sullam edition) as to why the rite of circumcision cannot be performed before the eighth day, and why an animal is not fit to serve as a sacrifice until the eighth day of its life. In either case one has to wait until at least one Sabbath has passed so that each has attained a *נפש*, a soul full of vitality. Our verse then describes G'd as putting the finishing touch to His creation by bringing on the Sabbath, not by creating on the Sabbath. The reason the Torah repeats once more *עשה מכל מלאכתו אשר עשה*, from all His work which He had done, is to emphasise that this work had been done previously, i.e. before the onset of the Sabbath. The word *ויכל* therefore refers to activity carried out previously. All that had been lacking was something that would give permanence to this universe of ours. The seventh day, i.e. the Sabbath, completed the cycle that provides this permanence. We are therefore entitled to view the Sabbath as one of the seven days of creation. The proof that we are correct may be the very fact that we do not find the usual: "it was evening it was morning the seventh day," meaning there was *בריאה* on that day.

**He rested on the seventh day.** Here too we must ask for the reason the Torah wrote these lines as they seem to contain the same message as the words immediately prior to them.

Perhaps we have to explain these words in connection with Pessachim 54 according to which there were phenomena which were created at dusk on Friday afternoon but which could not be completed before the arrival of the Sabbath. According to our sages some of these phenomena became destructive agents in the universe as a result. This is an amazing statement in view of the tradition that G'd is able to create whole worlds in the time it takes to blink an eyelid! How can one suggest that the Creator ran out of time and was unable to complete His work?! We have explained already at the beginning of the *פרשה* that G'd created every part of the universe simultaneously. The words *מכל מלאכתו* suggest that G'd did not complete even such work as was already in progress.

What our sages had in mind when they told us about these phenomena and the time they were created is that G'd wanted us to know something about the importance of the Sabbath and the way it is to be observed. Halachah distinguishes between the rules of what is allowed on Friday afternoon close to the Sabbath and what is not. If work has been under way and it awaits only completion there are certain categories of work which may be completed under such circumstances, especially if they are performed in honour of the Sabbath or if financial loss is suffered if one does not complete the work before the Sabbath. If such work has not even been commenced it may not be un-

dertaken until after the Sabbath. In the example in Pessachim the sages taught us that G'd desisted from completing even work He had already begun while it was still the sixth day. This in spite of the fact that non-completion would result in grievous loss to the universe, a loss which was beyond retrieving. This is what the word *וישבות* alludes to after we had already heard *ויכל*, that G'd completed creating. Not only did G'd not undertake something new, He did not even complete something that was in the process of coming into being. The reason this word is repeated is also to tell us that it was not G'd's inability to complete an undertaking on time. One of the reasons G'd's activities on each day during the days of creation are always followed by the statement "it was evening, it was morning, etc.," is to mark the contrast with the Sabbath concerning which no such statement is recorded.

**2:3** And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because in it He rested from all his work which God had created and performed.

#### RAMBAN

#### AND G-D BLESSED THE SEVENTH DAY AND HE SANCTIFIED IT.

He blessed it through the Manna. [On all other days of the week there fell one portion per person, whereas on the sixth day — the eve of the Sabbath — a double portion fell.] And He sanctified it through the Manna [by not having it fall on the Sabbath]. And the verse is written here with reference to the future. Thus are the words of Rabbeinu Shlomo [Rashi] as quoted from Bereshith Rabbah. In the name of the Gaon Rav Saadia they have said that the blessing and sanctification refer to those who observe the Sabbath, meaning that they will be blessed and sanctified. However, from the intimation of the verse it does not appear that it refers to something which will happen in the future. And Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said that the blessing signifies additional well-being, that on the seventh day there is a renewal of procreative strength in the body, and in the soul, a greater capacity in the functioning of the reasoning power. And He sanctified it by not working on it as He did on the other days. Now Ibn Ezra's interpretation is correct to those who believe in it for this additional well-being he speaks of is not perceptible to human senses. The truth is that the blessing on the Sabbath day is the fountain of blessings and constitutes the foundation of the world. And He sanctified it that it draw its sanctity from the Sanctuary on high. If you will understand this comment of mine you will grasp what the Rabbis have said in Bereshith Rabbah concerning the Sabbath: ["Why did He bless the Sabbath? It is] because it has no partner," and that which they have further related [that G-d said to the Sabbath]: "The congregation of Israel will be thy partner." And then you will comprehend that on the Sabbath there is truly an extra soul.

**WHICH G-D IN CREATING HAD MADE.** The work which should have been done on the Sabbath, He did in the double work which He executed on the sixth day, as it is explained in Bereshith Rabbah. So says Rashi. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra, however, explained simply that His work refers to the roots of all species to which He gave the power to make [i.e., to produce] after their own kind. [Thus the verse would translate: which G-d had created in order to make it.] To me, the explanation appears to be that He rested from all His work which He created out of nothing; to make from it all the works mentioned on the six days. Thus the verse is stating that G-d rested from creating and forming — from the creation He created on the first day,

and from the formation He formed on the rest of the days. And it is possible that the word *la'asoth* (to make) is connected with the expression above in the verse, that in it He rested from all His work which He created from making, [thus making the word *la'asoth* to be understood as *mila'asoth* (from making)]. So also are the verses: Until he ceased '*lispor*' (to count), which means *milispor* (until he left off counting); And they ceased '*livnoth*' (to build) the city, which means *milivnoth*; Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount; And they departed not '*mitzvath*' (the commandment of the king, which should be understood as *mimitzvath* (from the commandment)); and thus in many other cases. Know that in the word *la'asoth* (to make, to do) is also included a hint that the six days of creation represent all the days of the world, i.e., that its existence will be six thousand years. For this reason the Rabbis have said: "A day of the Holy One, blessed be He, is a thousand years." Thus on the first two days the world was all water, and nothing was perfected during them. They allude to the first two thousand years when there was no one to call on the name of the Eternal. And so the Rabbis said: "The first two thousand years there was desolation." However, there was the creation of light on the first day corresponding to the thousand years of Adam who was the light of the world and who recognized his Creator. Perhaps Enosh did not worship idols until the death of the first man. On the second day G-d said, 'Let there be a firmament... and let it divide,' for on that "day" [i.e., the second thousand-year period] Noah and his sons — the righteous ones — were separated from the wicked, who were punished in water. On the third day, the dry land appeared; plants and trees began growing, and fruits ripened. This corresponds to the third thousand-year period which begins when Abraham was forty-eight years old, for then he began to call the name of the Eternal. A righteous shoot did then spring forth in the world for he attracted many people to know the Eternal, just as the Rabbis interpreted the verse: And the souls that they had gotten in Haran — and he commanded his household and his children after him, and they shall keep the way of the Eternal, to do righteousness and judgment. This course continued until his descendants received the Torah on Sinai and the House of G-d was also built on that "day," and then all commandments — which are "the fruits" of the world — were affirmed. Know that from the time twilight falls it is already considered as the following day. Therefore, the subject of every "day" begins somewhat before it, just as Abraham was born at the end of the second thousand years. And you will see similar examples for each and every day. On the fourth day the luminaries — the large and the small and the stars — were created. Its "day," in the fourth thousand-year period, began seventy-two years after the First Sanctuary was built and continued until one hundred seventy-two years after the destruction of the Second Sanctuary. Now on this "day," the children of Israel had light, for the glory of the Eternal filled the house of the Eternal, and the light of Israel became the fire upon the altar in the Sanctuary, resting there like a lion consuming the offerings. Afterwards their light diminished and they were exiled to Babylon just as the light of the moon disappears before the birth of the new moon. Then the moon shone for them all the days of the Second Sanctuary, and the fire upon the altar rested on it like a dog. And then the two luminaries disappeared towards eventide and the Sanctuary was destroyed. On the fifth day the waters swarmed with living creatures and fowl flying above the earth. This was a reference to the fifth thousand-year period which began one hundred seventy-two years after the

destruction of the Second Sanctuary since, during this millennium, the nations will have dominion, and man will be made as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them; they take up all of them with the angle, catch them in their net and gather in their drag, and no one seeks the Eternal. On the sixth day in the morning, G-d said: 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after its kind.' Their creation took place before sunrise, even as it is written, The sun ariseth, they withdraw, and crouch in their dens. Then man was created in the image of G-d, and this is the time of his dominion, as it is written, Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening. All this is an indication of the sixth thousand-year period in the beginning of which the "beasts," symbolizing the kingdoms that knew not the Eternal, will rule, but after a tenth thereof — in the proportion of the time from the first sparklings of the sun to the beginning of the day — the redeemer will come, as it is said concerning him, And his throne is as the sun before Me. This is the son of David, who was formed in the image of G-d, as it is written, And behold, there came with the clouds of heaven, one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the Ancient One of days, and he was brought near before Him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom. This will take place one hundred eighteen years after the completion of five thousand years, that the word of the Eternal by the mouth of Daniel might be accomplished: And from the time that the continual burnt-offering shall be taken away, and the detestable thing that causeth appalment set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. It would appear from the change of days — from the swarms of the waters and the fowl created on the fifth day to the beasts of the earth created on the sixth day — that in the beginning of the sixth thousand-year period a new ruling kingdom will arise, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly, and approaching the truth more than the preceding ones. The seventh day which is the Sabbath alludes to the World to Come, "which will be wholly a Sabbath and will bring rest for life everlasting." And may G-d guard us during all the days and set our portion with His servants, the blameless ones.

#### OR HACHAIM

**G'd blessed the seventh day.** We need to know the exact nature of this blessing which the Torah does not spell out in this instance. Our sages (Mechoila Exodus 20,3) suggested that the blessing was the fact that while the Jewish people were in the desert an extra portion of manna descended on Fridays and they did not have to pick it up on the Sabbath. Such allusions are, of course, not the plain meaning of the verse. The plain meaning of the verse has nothing to do with isolated events two and half millennia in the future.

The fact is that this present world can function only on the basis of an adequate supply of life-sustaining food and drink. All man's physical needs are attained only through toil and a great deal of effort on his part. Such activities are of a very mundane nature. Inasmuch as G'd wanted to sanctify the Sabbath, He first bestowed a blessing on that day so that it should not be devoid of anything. Although the amenities of this "lower" world are not normally attained through asceticism, withdrawal into the four walls of the Torah academy, etc., but through preoccupation with the profane and the mundane, G'd provided His blessing so that not only would there be no lack of the physical comforts but an abundance. This abundance is ex-

pressed by the halachah requiring us to have two whole loaves of bread when reciting the benediction over the Sabbath meal, to eat at least three meals on that day, and to enjoy delicacies not eaten on the days of the week. One might have expected the blessing to be of a purely spiritual nature. By not mentioning a spiritual kind of blessing, the Torah alludes to the Sabbath having been endowed by G'd with blessings of a physical nature. This is also what the Zohar meant when it speaks about the abundance of all the six days of creation being channelled into the Sabbath.

**for on it He rested, etc.** Here too we must explore exactly what the Torah had in mind. We fall back on what we wrote earlier, that the world had lacked the ingredients which assured it of permanence until the Sabbath came into existence. Assuming that this was so, we must ask what had enabled the world to continue up until the Sabbath? Since the world obviously was able to carry on without the נפש it received on the Sabbath, why would its continued existence have been endangered only then?

We find that G'd has revealed the answer to this question in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20,11) where the Torah writes: כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים עָשָׂה ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ This means that at the time G'd created the universe He invested it with only enough power to endure six days for reasons known only to Himself and some kabbalists. G'd created one day which would be able to invest the world with staying power for another six days. If G'd had not created the Sabbath, the Tohu Vavohu preceding those six days would have returned and G'd would have had to start the process of creation ex nihilo all over again. Due to the infusion of the "soul" of the Sabbath the universe was placed on a more permanent basis, enabled to renew its batteries, so to speak. The words וְבוֹ שָׁבַת, mean that by means of this special day, the Sabbath, He was able to rest from all His work. The work referred to is that which only G'd could perform namely to create ex nihilo, something out of nothing. Had it not been for the Sabbath and its נפש, G'd would have had to repeat the process of בְּרִיאָה, creation. The word עָשָׂה refers only to תִּיקון, improvement, repair. G'd rested from both aspects of creative activity.

When viewed in this light we can understand the statement of our sages that by reciting the benediction over wine on the Sabbath one becomes a partner to G'd in His creation of the universe (Shabbat 119). At first glance these words appear very forced. Who has ever heard of man becoming a retroactive partner in G'd's handiwork, something that He had long since completed? Besides, the act of reciting this paragraph from the Torah does not appear to be such a world-shaking effort that it would qualify us to become G'd's "partners!" What is the source of the statement in the Talmud? If the sages meant that the reward for reciting Kiddush is so great, should it not be awarded in public such as longevity, wealth, and physical prowess being granted to Sabbath-observers?

When we keep in mind my explanation thus far, it will be seen that the Talmud's statement is indeed most appropriate. In view of the fact that the Sabbath provides a secure existence for the six days following it after which another Sabbath repeats the same function, it follows that the very existence of the Sabbath equates with the existence of the universe. Unless there are people who observe the Sabbath there is no Sabbath, i.e. its existence has lost its meaning. Our rabbis have legislated that when one's life is in danger unless one desecrates a law of the Sabbath, one should desecrate a single Sabbath in order to re-

main alive and observe many subsequent Sabbaths. Assuming that there were no other Sabbath-observers at the time, what good would it do for the person whose life was in to skip the one Sabbath? The world would disintegrate before he would have a chance to observe another Sabbath! It follows that only Sabbath-observers keep the universe going. Therefore the Sabbath-observers have become G'd's "partners" by ensuring that G'd's universe survives for another six days. Observing the Sabbath means to preserve its holiness according to all its laws and customs. Ever since the creation of man the world did not lack at least one person who observed the Sabbath. Adam did so, his son Sheth, and many righteous people after him. Whenever one righteous person died, G'd had already arranged for another righteous person to be born. This chain of individual Sabbath-observers continued through Methuselah, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc., until the Jewish people introduced collective Sabbath-observance. According to our sages, The Israelites observed the Sabbath even while in exile in Egypt (Shemot Rabbah 1,32). The word בְּהִבְרָאָם, when they were created, is the reminder that whatever the earth or the waters produced was possible only due to the act of creation G'd performed on the day they were created themselves.

When we wrote earlier (2,1) that the spherical world is kept in balance and thus in existence due to the desire of the respective creatures to cleave to the light which surrounds this sphere provided by the Creator, this does not contradict what we have written. Were it not for the Sabbath, no creature would have had sufficient intelligence and desire to want to cleave to the Creator. On that day they were provided with the potential to produce what they produced subsequently.

## שני SECOND ALIYAH

**2:4** *These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.*

### RAMBAN

**THESE ARE THE GENERATIONS OF THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH WHEN THEY WERE CREATED.** Scripture now relates the account of the heaven and the earth as regards rain and growth after they had been created and put in proper order, that the heavens shall give their dew and rain, and the ground shall give her increase, these making possible the existence of all living beings. And in the word b'hibaram (when they were created) — [which could be read as if it were two words: b'hei baram] — Scripture alludes to what the Rabbis have said: "He created them with the letter hei" [which is the last of the four letters of the Tetragrammaton]. It is for this reason that Scripture until this point mentioned only the word Elokim. This is explained in the verse: For all these things hath My hand made; and so did Job say, Who knoweth not among all these, that the hand of the Eternal hath wrought this? This being so, the expression, in the day that the Eternal G-d made, refers covertly to the word bereshith (in the beginning).

### OR HACHAIM

**2.4.** אלה תולדות השמים והארץ. *These are the developments of the heavens and the earth.* Our sages have already explained this verse homiletically. However, the plain meaning of the verse is not known.

It appears to me that the key lies in the fact that G'd had previously instructed the creatures i.e. heaven and earth respectively to also produce "offspring." The waters had been told to divide, to produce fish, etc, whereas the earth had been instructed to produce vegetation, mammals, etc. The Torah reiterates that what earth and heaven produce daily are only derivatives, תולדות, that there is nothing original about these phenomena so that we should not err and believe that both the waters and the earth possessed independent creative powers. Such an error would lead to heretic thoughts.

The reason that the Torah mentions only heaven and earth in this connection and not the waters is simply because the waters are part of שמים.

The word בהבראם may also be understood as בהם בראם, G'd created all these תולדות by employing heaven and earth as His agents.

**2:5** And no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet grown: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

#### RAMBAN

**AND EVERY SHRUB OF THE FIELD.** In the opinion of our Rabbis in Bereshith Rabbah, [every herb of the field created] on the third day [did not come forth above the ground but] they remained just below the surface of the earth, and on the sixth day they grew after He caused rain to fall on them. In my opinion, in accordance with the plain meaning of Scripture, on the third day the earth did bring forth the grass and the fruit trees in their full-grown stature and quality as He commanded concerning them. And now Scripture tells that there was no one to plant and sow them for future purposes, and the earth would not produce until a mist would come up from it and water it, and man was formed who would work it — to seed, to plant, and to guard. This is the meaning of the shrub of the field... had not yet grown. It does not say "the shrub of the ground" for only a place which is cultivated is called "field," as in Which thou hast sown in the field and We will not pass through field or through vineyard. This is the course of the world that was to be following the six days of creation and forever after, that due to the mist the heavens will bring down rain, and due to the rains the earth will make the seeds that are sown in it to spring up.

#### OR HACHAIM

**None of the plants of the fields existed as yet.** This stresses again that until the Creator irrigated the earth by bringing on rain, none of the vegetation produced by earth was able to function, to grow. The verse also tells us that the living creatures on earth were G'd's creation as indicated by 2,19, that "G'd formed all the beasts of the field." Earth's contribution was to provide the golem-like body pending G'd's infusing these bodies with a breath of life. The same applied to the swarms of "living" creatures produced by the waters as well as the birds. Our sages have already stated that the birds are the result of co-operation by water and earth, i.e. swamps (Eyravin 28). This is why the Torah described the birds as עוף השמים, birds of the heavens, in 2,19, although the directive had been issued to the waters in 1,20.

Why did the Torah mention here that there was as yet no human being on earth who would work the land, and why is there a second report about the creation of man in the next verse, i.e. וייצר השם אלוקים את האדם? If the Torah only wanted to inform us

that the raw material man is made of was the dust of the earth, it could have done so in 1,27 where man's creation by G'd is reported instead of repeating the whole story about man being created.

I believe the answer lies in what our sages alluded to when they described אדם הראשון, original man, as the חלת העולם, earth's gift to G'd, i.e. a concept parallel to the priest's share of the dough (Eyravin 18). Our sages therefore believed that just as the principle of donating the first of the dough to the priest in his capacity of G'd's representative on earth is a duty, creation itself is morally bound to "donate" to its Creator something similar. We find the following passage in the tractate 2,5 חלה: "If someone sets aside the quantity of חלה that he is obliged to set aside in the form of flour (instead of as part of the dough), it (this quantity of flour) is not considered sacred." In 3,1 of the same tractate we are told that until the dough (of wheat) has developed so that the meal and the water form one body, a non-priest may still eat of it on an ad hoc basis, even if חלה has not yet been set aside from it. If one eats from such dough subsequently (knowingly) one is guilty of the death penalty. The descent of rain on the vegetation of the earth is akin to the mixing (kneading) of a dough from which to make bread. This is why consumption of the proceeds of grain i.e. bread or cake, is prohibited until חלה has been set aside. It is equivalent to what the Mishnah Challah 3,1 called גלוגל העיסה. Earth was unable to produce viable vegetation without G'd contributing the rain. It follows that it is prohibited to eat or otherwise enjoy any of earth's fruit until an appropriate gift to G'd has been set aside. The creation of man [from raw material made of all parts of the earth Ed.] was that gift, i.e. חלה. Prior to man's creation the earth was טבל, untithed produce, forbidden, out of bounds to man. This is what our verse wanted to convey. Although earth produced the plants on the third day, G'd had not provided the rain at that time, not until immediately before He formed the human being. Creation of man, i.e. the חלה of the universe, enabled all the creatures to enjoy it henceforth. The Torah mentions that the entire surface of the earth was irrigated because if G'd had irrigated only parts of the earth, such an incomplete "dough" would not have freed the remainder from the requirement to contribute further amounts of חלה.

It is important to realise that G'd took "dust from the earth" to create man, as opposed to soil from גן עדן. This point is repeated again in 3,24 when Adam is expelled from גן עדן "to till the soil he had been taken from." There was no need to give חלה from any of the trees of גן עדן seeing it was totally holy already. This is why the Torah says (2,8) "G'd had planted a garden in Eden already previously (מקדם)," i.e. prior to the creation of man. He had prepared this holy region for Adam who was holy, being the חלה of the universe.

**2:7** And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

#### RAMBAN

**AND HE BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE.** This alludes to the superiority of the soul, its foundation and secret, since it mentions in connection with it the full Divine Name. And the verse says that He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life in order to inform us that the soul did not come to man from the elements, as He intimated concerning the soul of moving things, nor was it an evolvement from the

Separate Intelligences. Rather, it was the spirit of the Great G-d: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and discernment. For he who breathes into the nostrils of another person gives into him something from his own soul. It is this which Scripture says, And the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding, since the soul is from the foundation of binah (understanding) by way of truth and faith. This corresponds to the saying of the Rabbis in the Sifre: "Vows are like swearing 'by the life of the King;' oaths are like swearing 'by the King Himself.' Although there is no proof for it in Scripture, there is an allusion to it: By the living G-d, and by the life of your soul." And in the Midrash of Rabbi Nechunya ben Hakanah we find: "What is the meaning of the word vayinafash (and He rested)? It teaches us that the day of the Sabbath preserves all souls, for it is vayinafash" [i.e., from the word nefesh, soul]. It is from here that you will understand the expression, speaking the oath of G-d. The person learned in the mysteries of the Torah will understand. Know that those who engage in research have differed concerning man. Some say that man has three souls. One is the soul of growth, like that in a plant; or you may call this "the force of growth." Then there is also a soul of movement in him, which Scripture mentioned concerning fish, animals, and everything that creeps upon the earth. The third is the rational soul. And there are some philosophers who say that this soul in man which comes from the Most High comprises these three forces while the soul is but one. This verse in its plain meaning so indicates for it states that G-d formed man of the dust of the ground, but he lay there lifeless like a dumb stone, and the Holy One, blessed be He, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and then man became a living soul, able to move about by virtue of this soul, just like the animals and the fish, concerning which He said: 'Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures,' and 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature.' This is the meaning of the expression here, 'lenefesh chayah' (into a living soul) man was made, meaning man turned into a soul in which there is life, after having been as a potsherd with the potsherds of the earth. For the letter lamed in the word lenefesh indicates the opposite, [namely, that from being a potsherd he became a living soul]. And so it is in the verses, And the water shall turn 'ledam' (into blood) upon the dry land; And it turned 'lenachash' (into a snake); And He made the sea 'lecharavah' (into dry land). Onkelos, however, said: "And it became a speaking soul in man." From this it would appear that his opinion coincides with those who say that man has various souls and that this rational soul which G-d breathed into his nostrils became a speaking soul. It appears to me that this also is the opinion of our Rabbis, as we may deduce from what they said: "Rava created a man. He sent him to Rabbi Zeira who spoke to him but he did not answer. Said Rabbi Zeira to him: 'You are created by one of the colleagues; return to your dust.'" And in Midrash Vayikra Rabbah we find written: "Said Rabbi Avin: When a man sleeps, the body tells the neshamah (the moving spirit), and the neshamah tells the nefesh (the rational soul), and the nefesh tells the angel." So also the verse, He gathers unto Himself his spirit and his breath, indicates, according to its plain meaning, that his spirit and breath are two distinct things. That being so, the verse, And the Eternal G-d formed man, states the formation of movement, that man was formed into a creature capable of movement since "formation" denotes life and perception by virtue of which he is a man and not a kneaded mass of dust, just as it is said, And the Eternal G-d formed out of the ground every beast of the field, and He

brought them unto the man. And after He formed him with the power of perception, He breathed into his nostrils a living soul from the Most High, this soul being in addition to the formation mentioned, and the whole man became a living soul since by virtue of this soul he understands and speaks and does all his deeds and all other souls and their powers in man are subject to it. The letter lamed in the word lenefesh is thus the lamed indicating possession, just as in the following verses: My lord, O king, 'lecha ani' (I am thine), and all that I have; 'lakoneh' (to him that bought) it, throughout his generations; 'lecha ani' (I am thine), save me. Or, it may be that the verse is stating that man wholly became a living soul and was transformed into another man, as all His formations were, from now on, directed towards this soul.

**2:8** And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in 'Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed.

**RAMBAN**

**AND THE ETERNAL G-D PLANTED A GARDEN 'MIKEDEM' (EASTWARD) IN EDEN.** Rashi explained that "in the east of Eden He planted the garden." But Onkelos translated mikedem to mean "previously," [that is, before man was created]. And so have the Rabbis said in Bereshith Rabbah, and this is the correct explanation. The meaning of vayita (and He planted) is not that He brought the trees from another place and planted them here for it was from that place that He caused them to grow, just as it is said, And out of the ground the Eternal G-d caused to grow every tree. But the purport of the expression, and the Eternal G-d planted, is to state that it was the planting of the Eternal, for before He decreed upon the earth, Let the earth put forth grass, He had already decreed that in that place there be a garden, and He further said: "Here shall be this tree, and here that tree," like the rows of planters. It was unlike the rest of the places on the earth concerning which He said, Let the earth put forth grass... and fruit-tree, and it then grew without order. Now concerning the trees of the garden of Eden He decreed that they grow branches and bear fruit forever, the root thereof was never to wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof was never to die in the ground. These trees were not to need any one to tend and prune them. For if they were in need of cultivation, who tended them after man was driven therefrom? This also is the meaning of the expression, And the Eternal G-d planted, that they were His plantings, the work of His hands, and existing forever, even as it is said, Its leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail ... because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary. If so, what then is the meaning of the verse: And He put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it? He put him [man] there so that he should sow for himself wheat and all kinds of produce, and every herb bearing seed, and rows of spices, reaping and plucking and eating at his will. This also is the meaning of to cultivate it and to keep it — to cultivate the ground of the garden by the rows he [man] would make there, for the part of the garden where the trees were was not to be cultivated. It is possible that [in the words le'ovdah uleshomrah — literally, to cultivate her and to keep her,] He refers to the garden in the feminine gender, just as in the verses: And as the garden causeth the things that are sown in her to spring forth; And plant gardens. Our Rabbis noted this use of the feminine gender, saying in Bereshith Rabbah: "Le'ovdah uleshomrah (to cultivate her and to keep her) — these words refer to the sacrifices, as it is said, 'Ta'avdun' (Ye shall serve) G-d upon this

mountain. It is this which Scripture says, ‘Tishm’ru’ (Ye shall keep) to offer unto Me in its appointed season.” The intent of the Rabbis in this interpretation is that plants and all living beings are in need of primary forces from which they derive the power of growth and that through the sacrifices there is an extension of the blessing to the higher powers. From them it flows to the plants of the garden of Eden, and from them it comes and exists in the world in the form of “rain of goodwill and blessing,” through which they will grow. This conforms to what the Rabbis have said: “The trees of the Eternal have their fill, the cedars of Lebanon, which He hath planted. Rabbi Chanina said: Their life shall have its fill; their waters shall have their fill; their plantings shall have their fill.” “Their life” refers to their higher foundations; “their waters” refer to His good treasure which brings down the rain; and “their plantings” refer to their force in heaven, just as the Rabbis have said: “There is not a single blade of grass below that does not have a constellation in heaven that smites it and says to it, ‘Grow.’ It is this which Scripture says, Knowest thou the ordinances of the heavens? Canst thou establish ‘mishtara’ (the dominion thereof) in the earth — [mishtara being derived from the root] shoter (executive officer).”

## OR HACHAIM

**The Lord G'd planted.** The reason the Torah interrupts the sequence of G'd's planting all kinds of trees in that garden (verses 8 and 9 respectively) by mentioning that G'd placed Adam in גן עדן, is to make it clear that גן עדן had been created specifically in Adam's honour, in order to place him there. After having given us this information the Torah continues and tells us that G'd made all kinds of trees grow from the soil, that these trees looked attractive and were good as food, that G'd made rivers and the function of those rivers which emanated from גן עדן. The Torah then resumes its narrative about man in verse 15, telling us that G'd placed Adam there and assigned a function to him. The Torah repeats that G'd placed man in גן עדן only to confirm that the first time this was mentioned it was only to tell us that G'd had planted גן עדן in man's honour. Had this fact been mentioned only once we would have thought that G'd intended this garden also for other creatures, such as His angels, and that man was placed there temporarily. We would have thought that after man's expulsion, the garden would have remained as be a home for other creatures and for holy spirits. The Torah therefore is at pains to make us understand that the garden was planted exclusively for man's sake and awaits man's return at a suitable time in the future and that no other creature inhabits it in the meantime.

**2:9** And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

## RAMBAN

**AND THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE MIDST OF THE GARDEN AND THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL.** Since Scripture says, And the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and does not say “in the garden,” and, moreover, since it says, But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, G-d hath said: ‘Ye shall not eat of it,’ and does not mention it or refer to it by another name, we must say, according to the simple meaning of Scripture, that it was a known place in the garden which was “in the midst” thereof. This is why Onkelos

translated: “in the middle of the garden.” Thus according to Onkelos the tree of life and the tree of knowledge were both in the middle of the garden. And if so, we must say that in the middle of the garden there was the likeness of an enclosed garden-bed made which contained these two trees. This “middle” means near its middle for with respect to the exact middle, they have already said that no one knows the true central point except G-d alone. And the tree of life. This was a tree the fruit of which gave those who ate it long life. And the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The commentators have said that the fruit thereof caused those who ate it to have a desire for sexual intercourse, and therefore Adam and Eve covered their nakedness after they ate of it [the fruit]. They quote a similar expression [where “good and evil” refers to such desire], the saying of Barzilai the Gileadite: Can I distinguish between good and bad? — meaning that this sexual desire was already removed from him. But in my opinion this interpretation is not correct since the serpent said, And ye shall be as ‘Elohim,’ knowing good and evil. And if you will say that the serpent lied to her, now [Scripture itself attests to the truth of his statement in the verse], And the Eternal G-d said, ‘Behold man has become like one of us knowing good and evil.’ And the Rabbis have already said: “Three stated the truth and perished from the world, and these are: the serpent, the spies, and Doeg the Edomite. The proper interpretation appears to me to be that man's original nature was such that he did whatever was proper for him to do naturally, just as the heavens and all their hosts do, “faithful workers whose work is truth, and who do not change from their prescribed course,” and in whose deeds there is no love or hatred. Now it was the fruit of this tree that gave rise to will and desire, that those who ate it should choose a thing or its opposite, for good or for evil. This is why it was called ‘etz hada'ath’ (the tree of the knowledge) of good and evil, for da'ath in our language is used to express will. Thus in the language of the Rabbis: “They have taught this only with regards to one sheda'ato (whose will) is to return;” and “his will is to clear” [the produce in the store-room in his house before Passover]. And in the language of Scripture, Eternal, what is man ‘vateida'ehu,’ meaning that “Thou shouldst desire and want him;” yedaticha beshem, meaning “I have chosen thee of all people.” Similarly, Barzilai's expression, Ha'eda (Can I distinguish) between good and bad, means that he lost the power of thought, no longer choosing a thing or loathing it, and he would eat without feeling taste and hear singing without enjoying it. Now at that time sexual intercourse between Adam and his wife was not a matter of desire; instead, at the time of begetting offspring they came together and propagated. Therefore all the limbs were, in their eyes, as the face and hands, and they were not ashamed of them. But after he ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, he possessed the power of choice; he could now willingly do evil or good to himself or to others. This, on the one hand, is a godlike attribute; but as far as man is concerned, it is bad because through it, he has a will and desire. It is possible that Scripture intended to allude to this matter when it said, That G-d made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions. The “uprightness” is that man should keep to one right path, and the “seeking out of many inventions” is man's search for deeds which change according to his choice. Now when the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded Adam concerning the tree, that he should not eat of its fruit, He did not inform him that it has this quality. He told him without any qualification, But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of

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the garden, that is to say, the one that is known by its central position, thou shalt not eat thereof. And this was what the woman said to the serpent. And the verse which states, But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, mentions it to us by its true name.

**2:11** *The name of the first is Pishon: that it is which compasses the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold;*

## RAMBAN

**THE LAND OF HAVILAH, WHERE THERE IS GOLD.** This is to explain that it is not the Havilah of Egypt, concerning which it is said, And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, for this one [referred to here] is in the extreme east. The verse mentions also, There is the bdellium, in praise of the river, that in the sand that is in it and on its bank there is found that good gold, the bdellium and the onyx stone. For these things are found in rivers; in some, silver can be found. Similarly, the bdellium and precious stones are found mostly in rivers. In the opinion of former scholars, Pishon is the Nile of Egypt; it compasses this entire land of Havilah, and comes from there and passes the whole land of Egypt until it falls into the great sea at Alexandria in Egypt.

**2:15** *And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of 'Eden to till it and to keep it.*

## OR HACHAIM

.... לעבדה ולשמרה. **G'd took man...to work it and to guard it.** The plain meaning of the verse appears to be that the garden was in need of someone to work it and to guard it, whereas the truth is that this was not the case. Why would it need a guard? Who was there to steal from it? Also, if the garden needed someone to work it, who has done this chore during the almost 6000 years that the garden has been unattended? What exactly was the nature of the work which had to be performed?

Know therefore that the entire description of the גן עדן is to serve as an example of a spiritual environment. The Torah wanted to illustrate that just as a physical environment such as earth requires a) toil, planting, irrigation, etc. in order to produce man's food supply, and b) protection against harmful substances that damage the plants, the same applies to an environment described as גן עדן. Nowadays גן עדן is the "soil," i.e. the environment for disembodied souls, seeing the bodies have been expelled. Even as such it requires both work and protection against negative influences. The specific work required in גן עדן consists of Torah study. The Torah demonstrates the validity of such illustrative figures of speech when Moses described his speech in Deut. 32,2 in these words: "May my discourse come down as the rain, my speech distil as the dew, like showers on young growth and like droplets on the grass." The "young growth" is a simile for the positive commandments. The author cites a number of examples where G'd is described as "planting" man's good deeds. The protective activity the Torah describes as לשמרה, refers to the observance of the negative commandments. Non-observance of the negative commandments of the Torah is apt to destroy the fabric of the spiritual environment represented by גן עדן. Our sages in Sotah 2 already tell us that sin, i.e. transgression of a negative commandment, extinguishes מצות though it does not extinguish the Torah. This latter statement does not mean that it is not within the power of

such a sin to harm Torah at all, it only means that a single עבירה cannot accomplish that. Sustained sinful activity could certainly undermine the Torah absolutely.

At any rate the use of such terms as "to work it and to protect it" in connection with גן עדן is perfectly justified. At the time when G'd placed Adam in גן עדן, Adam was able to see how his positive actions contributed to the well-being of the garden. Once he had been expelled he was denied the ability to see the results of his activities. His spiritual part, however, was not denied the chance to accumulate good deeds and to eventually "see" the results in the Hereafter.

**2:16** *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat:*

## OR HACHAIM

**The Lord G'd commanded Adam.** The Torah added the word אכול, to say, and repeated the word for "to eat," by saying תאכל. The Torah also repeated that violating the command would result in death by saying: i.e. מות תמות, instead of merely תמות. The reason is 1) that Adam should command Eve not to eat from the tree of knowledge either; b) that the penalty would apply to her just as much as to Adam himself (who had heard the commandment from G'd directly). The repetition of these words also constitutes both a warning and a spelling out of the penalty, something that halachah demands when capital punishment is involved.

Another meaning of the repetition of the words מות תמות may be simply to give notice to Adam that should he eat from that tree he would cause his own mortality as well as the mortality of all those who would be descended from him in the future. This is, of course, what happened, and as a result we are all mortal until the day in the future when the pollution of the original serpent will have dissipated completely and G'd will banish death from earth (Isaiah 25,8).

**2:17** *but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for on the day that thou eatest of it thou shalt surely die.*

## RAMBAN

**THOU SHALT NOT EAT OF IT.** He admonishes him against eating the fruit, for the tree itself is not edible. And so it says further on: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden. Similarly, And eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig tree [means "of the fruit of his vine and of the fruit of his fig-tree."] Likewise, In toil shalt thou eat it means "eat its fruit."

**IN THE DAY THOU EATEST THEREOF THOU SHALT SURELY DIE.** At the time you eat of it, you will be condemned to die. Similarly, we find: On the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, thou shalt surely die. This does not mean that he [Shimi] is to die immediately on that day; nor does it refer to his mere knowledge thereof, namely that he is to know that he will die eventually for all the living know that they shall die. But it does mean that at the time he [Shimi] goes forth from Jerusalem, he is liable to death at the hand of the king, and he will slay him when he pleases. [Similarly, in the verses:] But they shall not go in to see the holy things as they are being covered, lest they die; And they shall not bear sin for it, and die thereby. Their intent is [not that those who transgress against these prohibitions will die immediately], but only that they will

be liable to death and will die on account of this sin of theirs. Now in the opinion of men versed in the sciences of nature, man was destined to die from the beginning of his formation, on account of his being a composite [of the four elements, and everything that is composite must revert to its original components]. But now He decreed that if he will sin he will die on account of his sin, like those who are liable to death at the hands of Heaven for such sins as a non-priest eating the Heave-offering, or a priest who has drunk wine or who does not wear the [required number of priestly] garments when performing the Service in the Sanctuary, and other cases. There the intent is that they will die prematurely on account of their sin. This is why in stating the punishment [after Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge] He said, Till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return, by your nature. In the beginning before he sinned, Adam also ate of the fruit of the tree and of the seeds of the earth; and if so, there was bound to be depletion in his body, and he was subject to the cause of existence and destruction. [Thus the opinion of the men of science.] But in the opinion of our Rabbis, if Adam had not sinned he would have never died, since the higher soul bestows life forever, and the Will of G-d which is in him at the time of his formation would always cleave to him and he would exist forever, as I have explained in the verse, And G-d saw that it was good. Know that composition indicates destruction only in the opinion of those wanting in faith, who hold that creation came by necessity. But in the opinion of men of faith who say that the world was created by the simple Will of G-d, its existence will also continue forever as long as it is His desire. This is clear truth. That being so, In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die means that then you will be condemned to die since you will no longer exist forever by My Will. And the matter of eating [from the other trees] was to Adam at first only a source of enjoyment. And it is possible that the fruits of the garden of Eden were absorbed in his limbs as the Manna, and they sustain those that eat them. But when He decreed upon him, And thou shalt eat the herb of the field and with the sweat of his face he shall eat bread of the earth, this [the food] became a cause for decomposition since he is dust, and dust he eats, and unto dust he shall return.

**2:18** And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help to match him.

**RAMBAN**

**IT IS NOT GOOD THAT THE MAN SHOULD BE ALONE.** It does not appear likely that man was created to be alone in the world and not beget children since all created beings — male and female of all flesh — were created to raise seed. The herb and trees also have their seed in them. But it is possible to say that it was in accordance with the opinion of the Rabbi who says: “Adam was created with two faces [i.e., male and female persons combined],” and they were so made that there should be in them an impulse causing the organs of generation to produce a generative force from male to female, or you may say “seed,” in accordance with the known controversy concerning pregnancy, and the second face was a help to the first in the procreative process. And the Holy One, blessed be He, saw that it is good that “the help” stand facing him, and that he should see and be separated from it or joined to it at his will. This is the meaning of what He said in the verse, I will make him a helper opposite him. The meaning of the expression, it is not good, is

that it cannot be said of man that “it is good” when he is alone for he will not be able to so exist. In the work of creation, “the good” means existence, as I have explained on the text, And G-d saw that it was good.

**OR HACHAIM**

**The Lord G'd said: "It is not good for man to be alone, etc.** This is difficult since G'd had mentioned already on the day He created man that the species had been created male and female (1,27). Another problem in the text is the expression אעשה, "I shall make for him a helpmate." The Torah then immediately proceeds to describe that the mammals and the birds were formed, i.e. (2,19) ויצר השם אלוקים. This gives the impression that G'd intended one of these animals to be man's helpmate. Such a thought is not only extremely strange, but if true it would also result in one of those animals being deprived of its own mate! Besides, why did G'd have to put Adam to sleep and to remove part of his body? Could He not have formed woman as dust from the earth as He had formed man himself, especially since He formed Eve on the very same day He formed Adam (5,2) זכר ונקבה בראם. Our sages have given many homiletical explanations in answer to these questions, but they have not provided us with פשט, straightforward answers that justify the text as it stands.

We may have to fall back on the opinions expressed in Berachot 61 that originally man was created with two faces in one body. The Talmud there offers two opinions as to what was removed from Adam, a tail or a face, respectively. This is a reasonable explanation because it justifies G'd's blessing or command to Adam to be fruitful and to multiply (1,28) at a time when woman had not yet been reported as a separate entity.

It is in keeping with G'd's propensity for preparing everything good ahead of time, and providing many more opportunities for man to do good than evil. However, we must ask why He separated the two bodies enabling Eve to fall victim to the temptation by the serpent? This leads us to examine the cause of Adam's (Eve) sin, what happened to him and all of mankind as a result. We have found that woman became the cause of all that the world lost because the serpent prevailed over her in a match of wits. This occurred because Adam was not at her side at the time of Eve's encounter with the serpent. He was asleep as a result of having had marital relations with his wife (Bereshit Rabbah 19,3). Another version in the Midrash there suggests that G'd had taken him on a tour of the earth. As a result the serpent encountered Eve on her own and succeeded in seducing her. If the Torah had reported man's creation and the subsequent separation of Eve's body sequentially, without interposing Adam's experiences on earth in the interval, many people would have argued that what happened was all G'd's fault. They would have said that if G'd had not separated her body from that of her husband, thereby making a drastic change in what He had created originally, the serpent would never have had a chance to seduce Eve. In order to forestall such an argument the Torah tells us first the reason that G'd separated Eve's body from Adam's, i.e. in answer to Adam's own request. His observations of how the animals lived, male and female as separate bodies, had made him desirous of a similar arrangement. G'd had only the best of intentions, as usual. This is also the reason the Torah told us already at the outset that man was equipped to procreate from the moment he was created. Being one and the same body obviously had some of the same disadvantages as being a Siamese twin. G'd therefore decided it would be better for man's help-

mate to be כנגדו, an appropriate complement, rather than the other half of his body. In this way she could be a help to him at all times instead of being a hindrance on occasion. Eve's being a separate body was not dictated by Adam's need to procreate. Seeing that the separation of her body served only to please Adam we must ask why none of the other creatures could have been trained to perform that task for Adam while leaving Eve in the state she had been created. The Torah therefore describes in verses 19 and 20 that Adam did indeed search for a suitable helpmate amongst all the other creatures but did not find one that was acceptable to him. Naming the animals, i.e. identifying their essence, was part of that search for a suitable helpmate. Eve's existence as a separate body from Adam had therefore become mandatory from Adam's point of view. It is totally incorrect to blame G'd for subsequent developments, such as Eve finding herself temporarily alone, facing an evil influence whose existence she had been quite unaware of. The Torah's report about both Adam's and Eve's innocence, i.e. their lack of shame at being nude, are all facts the Torah supplies to enable us to better understand the causes that led to the sin. Human relationships are based on people facing each other, i.e. כנגדו. The Torah describes Adam's profound joy when he finally beheld the partner who up until then had been hidden from him, i.e. had faced backwards. From G'd's point of view the original arrangement was perfectly acceptable, He had not created an imperfect human species. Any change was entirely in response to Adam's frame of mind, to accommodate him. Our sages have supplied us with numerous reasons why G'd did not create an entirely new human being to serve as Adam's helpmate. When Solomon told us in Kohelet (4,9) טובים השנים מן האחד, that two are better than one, that they can help each other, this has nothing to do with G'd having created man's form in such a way that he could have impregnated the wife which was part of him but facing backwards.

Perhaps the objective reason G'd had created the human species as a pair in a single body was to distinguish between the functions of the bodies of the animals and the functions of the human body. Animals mate indiscriminately, i.e. a male will mate with any female available to him, the act of mating being merely a response to biological urges. The fact that the Torah on occasion stresses the זכר ונקבה element when mentioning animals as pairs such as when they entered Noah's ark, does not mean that they have exclusive partners. The average animal does not recognise a female of its species as specifically "his" female. This is not the way G'd wanted man to relate to the subject of mating. It would have been impossible for Adam to describe his wife as בשר מבשרי, flesh of my own, were it not for the fact that Eve had been part of his own body previously. The whole idea that man's זיווג is arranged in heaven would have been impossible to understand but for the fact that the female of the species is considered man's "other half." This consideration may also be the reason that when the Torah legislated forbidden sexual relations (Leviticus 18) the subject is always the male. It is forbidden to engage in sexual intercourse with certain women as they could not possibly be your missing "half."

**2:19** And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the air; and brought them to the man to see what he would call them: and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.

**RAMBAN**

**AND WHATSOEVER 'YIKRA LO HA'ADAM NEFESH CHAYAH'** (THE MAN WOULD CALL EVERY LIVING CREATURE). Rashi comments: "Invert [the phrasing of the sentence] and explain it thus: and every living creature to which Adam would give a name, that should remain its name forever." And Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said that the letter lamed of the phrase, that the man called 'lo' (it), is carried forward [to the word nefesh, making it lenefesh (to the creature), thus]: and whatever the man called to every living creature, that was to be its name. It is possible that the phrase be explained in connection with the matter of "the help" that G-d gave to Adam, and the meaning is that ha'adam nefesh chayah (man is a living soul), as it is said, And man became a living soul, and it is as I have explained it there. And He brought before him all species so that every one of them unto which Adam would give a name and say that it is a living soul like himself, that would remain its name and be a help to him. So Adam gave names to all, but as for himself he found no help which he would be able to call "a living soul" like his own name.

### שלישי THIRD ALIYAH

**2:20** And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a help to match him.

**RAMBAN**

**BUT FOR ADAM THERE WAS NOT FOUND A HELP MEET FOR HIM.** Rashi comments: "When He brought them, He brought them before him as male and female. Thereupon Adam said, 'All of them have a mate, and I have no mate!' Immediately, the Eternal G-d caused a deep sleep to fall upon him." Rashi explained it well for by Scripture's bringing the verses concerning "the calling of names" into the matter of "the help" that G-d gave Adam, it proves that this interpretation mentioned above is correct. "The calling of names," in the opinion of the commentators, is to be understood in its plain sense, namely, that everyone should have a name for himself so that they be known and recognized in their progeny by the names Adam would call them, names which would be valid forever. Now when the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to make "the help" for Adam He brought all species before him since He had to bring them before him in pairs so that he should also give a name to the females of the species; for in some [species, both male and female] are called by one name, and in others they differ, such as bull and cow, tayish (he-goat) and eiz (she-goat), sheep and ewe, and others. When Adam saw them mating with each other, he had a desire for them, but as he found among them no help for himself, he was saddened and fell asleep. G-d then caused a deep sleep to fall upon him so that he should not feel the removal of a rib from his body. In my opinion, however, "the calling of the names" is identical with "the help" [as I explained in the above verse], and the purport thereof is as follows: the Holy One, blessed be He, brought before Adam all the

beasts of the field and all the fowl of the heavens, and he, recognizing their nature, called them names, that is, names appropriate to them. By the names it was made clear who is fit to be the help for another, meaning, fit to procreate with one another. Even if we are to believe that names are merely a matter of consensus and not of nature, [i.e., that they do not reflect the essence of the object bearing the name], we can say that “the calling of the names” means the division of the species as — male and female — they passed before Adam and he contemplated their nature as to which of them would be a help to each other in procreation so that they should beget offspring. Thus he called the large creatures by one name and the beasts by another so they would not beget offspring from one another, and so on for all species. And among them all he did not find a natural help for himself so that it could be called by his name for “the calling of the names” signifies the division of the species and the separation of their powers from each other, as I have explained above. Now it does not mean that it was in Adam’s power to find a help for himself among them since they were all created with natures [different from that of man]. But it means that if Adam was to find satisfaction with one of the species and he would choose it for his help, the Holy One, blessed be He, would adapt its nature to him, as He did with the rib, and He would not have found it necessary to build “a new structure.” This is the meaning of the verse, And whatsoever the man would call every living creature, that was its name; that is to say, that was to be its name, for the Holy One, blessed be He, would so preserve it along the lines which I have explained. In my opinion it is correct to say that it was His will, blessed be He, not to take Adam’s rib from him to make him a wife until he himself would know that among the created beings there is no help suitable for him and until he would crave to have a help suitable for him like her. This was why it was necessary to take one of his ribs from him. This is the meaning of the verse, But for Adam there was not found a help meet for him; that is to say, but for the name Adam (man), he found no help suited to be opposite him and to be called by his name so that he should beget children from that “help”. We need not resort here, therefore, to the words of the commentators who say that the name “Adam” comes here in place of the reflexive pronoun [“himself.”] The verse would thus read: “But for himself] he found no help meet for him,” just as, Ye wives of Lemech, [which should read, “my wives”]; And Jephthah, and Samuel, [which should read, “and Jephthah and myself”]. This is the meaning of Adam’s saying: This is now bone of my bones; that is to say, “This time I have found a help for me which I did not find till now among the other species, for she is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh, and is fit to be actually called by my name for we shall propagate together.” In the word zoth (this, this time) there is a secret; it will be made known from our words in the section Vezoth habrachah, if my Rock will bless me, enabling me reach thereto. This is why Adam repeats, because ‘zoth’ (this) was taken out of man. [Delve into it] and understand.

**2:24** That is why a man leaves his father and his mother, and cleaves to his wife: and they become one flesh.

**RAMBAN**

**THEREFORE SHALL A MAN LEAVE HIS FATHER AND HIS MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE.** The Divine Spirit says this, thus prohibiting immoral relationships to “the sons of Noah.”

**AND THEY SHALL BE ONE FLESH.** The child is created by both parents, and there in the child, their flesh is united into one. Thus the words of Rashi. But there is no point to this since in beast and cattle too, their flesh is united into one in their offspring. The correct interpretation appears to me to be that in cattle and beast the males have no attachment to their females. Rather, the male mates with any female he finds, and then they go their separate ways. It is for this reason that Scripture states that because the female of man was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, he therefore cleaves to her and she nestles in his bosom as his own flesh, and he desires to be with her always. And just as it was with Adam, so was his nature transmitted to his offspring, that the males among them should cleave to their women, leaving their fathers and their mothers, and considering their wives as if they are one flesh with them. A similar sense is found in the verses: For he is our brother, our flesh; to any that is near of his flesh. Those who are close members of the family are called sh’eir basar (near of flesh). Thus man will leave “the flesh” of his father and his mother and their kin and will see that his wife is nearer to him than they.

**2:25** And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they felt no shame.

**OR HACHAIM**

**Man and his wife were both nude and did not experience a feeling of shame.** Before the sin the upper “face” and the lower “face” were equally holy. The element of evil which attached itself to man after the sin concentrates on the lower part of his body. This is the reason that the holy covenant between man and G’d, i.e. circumcision, has to be performed on his sexual organ. The foreskin, ערלה, is the symbol of what kabbalists call the קליפה, the shell or peel which makes penetration to the holy essence difficult. This is why G’d commanded its removal. Inasmuch as all adulterers are victims of the sexual urges burning within them, G’d ordered that this part of man, the source of these abominations, be hidden from view, be covered. Our sages have added the prohibition not to touch that part of one’s body (unnecessarily). א, ב, אורח חיים even tells us to avoid having to look at these parts of our body when we get up and get dressed. The Talmud Shabbat 108 coined the phrase יד לאמה תיקצץ, that the hand which touches the male organ deserves to be cut off. This is because the touch of the hand on the male organ causes sexual arousal, or אש זרה in the language of our sages, something that was not the case before the sin. Henceforth man would expose himself to the danger of that alien fire consuming him if he touched those parts. Let us look for a moment at what Abraham commanded Eliezer before he sent him on the mission to find a wife for Isaac (Genesis 24,2). He instructed his servant: שים נא ירך תחת ירכי, “place your hand under my thigh.” At first glance the instruction for Eliezer to place his hand on Abraham’s male organ seems incompatible with what we have just explained. Our sages explain that Abraham was not comparable to his peers in this respect. The touch of a hand on this part of his body did not cause arousal. The act of circumcision he had performed on himself on that organ at an advanced age had made him far more resistant to the evil urge than others. His whole body could be considered as almost pure. The same applies to our verse, that prior to the sin the body was not subject to this אש זרה, the burning passion of sexual arousal. Another meaning is based on the use of the future tense by the Torah. We would have expected וישיש, “they

were not ashamed," instead of "they will not be ashamed." The Torah teaches us then that notwithstanding the fact that Adam and Eve were both nude they had no reason to become ashamed as a result. The Torah mentioned this so that we would know who caused the subsequent division between man's upper and lower body respectively.

**3:1** Now the serpent was craftier than all the beasts of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Has God said, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?

#### OR HACHAIM

**The serpent was sly.** First we must understand why the Torah told us that the serpent was so sly.

I have also tried to find what precise slyness the serpent demonstrated in this episode and have only been able to find elements of רשעות, wickedness.

The matter becomes clearer, however, when one examines what the serpent intended to achieve with the words אף כי אמר אלוקים, "even though G'd said not to eat from any of the trees of the garden." Since we know that these words were totally untrue, we would have considered the serpent as feeble-minded. The Torah therefore has to preface the account by pointing out that these words were carefully calculated, that the serpent was exceedingly sly. Any creature which is not exceedingly sly would most certainly not have succeeded in seducing a G'd-fearing woman such as Eve.

The serpent concentrated on three subjects and by combining them achieved its purpose.

1) The serpent told Eve that by not eating from the tree of knowledge she would remain for all intents and purposes as if she had not eaten either from any of the other trees. The serpent indicated that the fruits of the other trees were totally inferior when compared to the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The word אף was to indicate that Eve was to view the situation as if G'd had also forbidden all the other trees. The serpent's intent was to heighten Eve's desire to taste the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The more its virtues were extolled, the more intense the curiosity to test that statement. At the same time the serpent hoped to diminish Eve's interest in the other trees. It is characteristic of the workings of the evil urge to exaggerate one's expectations of the forbidden and to denigrate the value of that which is permitted.

2) The serpent pretended to teach Eve a halachah, thus creating the impression that it was very knowledgeable and on G'd's wavelength. It told Eve that G'd had first planted the tree of knowledge and had then used its shoots to plant all the other trees in the garden. This was part of the seduction. Once the original tree is out of bounds the other trees are automatically forbidden inasmuch as they are "earthed" branches of the original tree (compare Orlah chapter 1,5 where it is taught that such a branch is considered as a new plant for the purpose of calculating the three years of the ערלה prohibition). The serpent's argument therefore was that though G'd had specifically prohibited only the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the fruit of the other trees were out of bounds by reason of the laws governing "earthed" branches. [The author supplies additional halachic sources, which I do not feel are relevant. Ed.] At any rate the meaning of אף כי אמר אלוקים would have to be translated as though G'd said: "if you accept that commandment" you must automatically also accept its extension as far as the other trees

are concerned because the three years required until the new trees are considered as no longer drawing on the original tree have not yet expired.

3) The word אף referred to the fact that G'd had not commanded Eve anything directly, He had only commanded her husband. The serpent said that it was a witness to the fact that G'd had indeed forbidden the eating of the fruit of any of the trees. The serpent had two things in mind by making that statement. A) If Eve were to believe it, the serpent could then point to the illogical nature of such a prohibition which would deny man everything to be found in the garden. The way for rebellion against G'd would then have been paved. B) To provoke a confrontation with Adam who had told Eve that G'd had only forbidden the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The serpent wanted that Adam's testimony be considered as having been refuted. We find an interesting statement by the school of Shammai in Ediyot 4,11. When two pairs of witnesses testify against an individual, the first pair claiming he had made a vow comprising two periods of abstention from wine, etc., whereas the other pair testified that the vow involved five such periods, the school of Shammai considers this as an example of conflicting testimony. As a result the individual would not be held liable for anything on the basis of this testimony. The school of Hillel holds that inasmuch as both pairs of witnesses are agreed concerning at least two periods of נזירות, abstention from wine, etc., the person testified against is guilty if he failed to honour that part of his vow. A similar disagreement is discussed in the Talmud Sanhedrin except that there only one pair of witnesses testified, one of them testifying to a vow concerning two periods, the other claiming that the vow comprised five periods. The serpent reasoned that since there were only two witnesses, i.e. Adam and the serpent, Adam having testified to a single tree being forbidden whereas the serpent testified that all trees were forbidden the halachah should be based on the school of Shammai, i.e. the testimony was void, and as a result Eve could not be held culpable for eating from the tree of knowledge. After having written this down, I found that the author of Tikkuney HaZohar section 59 agrees with me. The author states that the serpent violated the commandment not to testify falsely by saying that G'd had forbidden all the fruit of all the trees in the garden. It is characteristic of Satan to plant lies in the minds of people, thus creating false images and beliefs in their hearts. Sometimes Satan convinces man that the sin he is planning is inevitable so that he might as well not feel badly about committing it. This is the slyest way of all to seduce people into committing a sin.

The reason that G'd created such a seducer in this world seeing He has our best interests at heart is to increase the reward we will qualify for if we made a successful effort to resist all forms of temptation.

**he said to Eve, etc.** The serpent spoke in the kind of hissing that is characteristic of its species. The Torah does not mean to give the impression that the serpent was able to speak like humans do. Prior to the sin, man was able to comprehend the language of the animals, even the conversation carried on by the inert parts of nature. Every creature G'd created was equipped with a means of expressing itself to enable it to praise its Creator. Our sages base this on Proverbs 16,6: כל פעל השם למענהו, "G'd has made everything for His sake." Some of our sages have composed books in which they translate the songs of the animals and birds. Some of our greatest scholars were able to to under-

stand the various sounds made by the animals, especially a man such as Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. If the latter was able to understand the parables of the foxes (compare Sukkah 25), Adam, who was a direct creation of G'd, was certainly able to.

**3:2** And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

OR HACHAIM

**Eve said, etc.** Eve answered the serpent very intelligently, addressing all the three points which we described the serpent as having made. Concerning the first argument that all the trees were forbidden, Eve said that this was not so, that only the tree in the centre of the garden was prohibited. Concerning the argument that all the other trees were really earthed branches of the tree of knowledge she argued that this was quite irrelevant. It might have been relevant if G'd had not specifically permitted the fruit of all the other trees. There was therefore absolutely no sense in denying oneself something G'd had specifically permitted. She refused to accept the testimony of the serpent because it contradicted the testimony of her own husband. She argued along the lines of the school of Hillel, i.e. the common denominator between what the serpent had declared as out of bounds and what her husband had declared as out of bounds was only the tree of knowledge. Therefore, that tree and its fruit was forbidden; the other trees were permitted since no valid testimony existed that would deny them to her.

As to the argument that the tree was so far superior to all the other trees etc., Eve said she thought differently. The tree was inferior; G'd had forbidden it because eating from it would bring on death, the clearest proof that it was inferior to the other trees. Eve told the serpent that all of G'd's commandments were intended for man's benefit, not in order to cause him harm or damage. All the many fruit trees in the garden were proof that G'd had laboured to present man with a beautiful and enjoyable universe. As far as the forbidden tree of knowledge was concerned, G'd had only forbidden its harmful part, i.e. its fruit. Eve argued correctly. This is the meaning of her words: "from the trees of the garden we may eat. She claimed that this was proof that G'd has our best interests at heart. She reasoned that this in turn proved that G'd was concerned to protect man against harmful influences. Eve added that G'd said: "do not touch it," although G'd is not on record as having said this. She considered the prohibition to touch the tree a logical extension of G'd's concern that His creatures should not come to any harm. It is also possible that at the time Adam had told her not to eat from that tree he had added the warning not to touch it as an additional safeguard because he realised that its fruit contained a deadly poison.

She told the serpent further that even if it were true that the tree of knowledge was the most superior of all the trees, the fact remained that G'd had said not to eat from it on pain of death. How could one ignore such a warning?! Perhaps she added that the tree was not to be touched for fear that some oil on the outside of the fruit would serve as nutrient for her skin if it came into contact with it. Such bodily contact might be just as forbidden as oiling one's skin is prohibited on the Day of Atonement as part of denying oneself food and drink (based on Pessachim 21). Eve tried to point out that the advantages the tree seemed to offer were outweighed by its disadvantages. As a result the tree was actually the most inferior of all the trees in the garden.

At this point Eve completely rejected the serpent's attempt to convince her to eat from the fruit of that tree. She decided that it was her and her husband's duty to keep their distance from that tree.

**3:4** And the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die: OR HACHAIM

...לא מות תמותן. **The serpent said:** "You will most certainly not die. The reason the serpent repeated the reference to death was to counter Eve's fears that the tree itself was lethal, or that even if it were not harmful at all, G'd would punish them with death for disobeying Him. The serpent claimed that neither natural nor judicial death would result from contact with the tree or its fruit. Assuming that the serpent was right, this in turn raises the question of why G'd had forbidden the fruit of that tree? The serpent had to make such a prohibition sound plausible. This is why it continued that G'd was aware that as soon as man ate from that tree he would become a real competitor to G'd, i.e. knowing what is good and what is harmful. This argument was pure blasphemy. The only reason that the wicked serpent was able to employ such an argument was that its creation had preceded that of man. The serpent was able to use its senior status in the history of creation to claim that it was privy to matters that Adam and Eve could not have been privy to. He also argued that the reason he (the serpent) had been denied entry to גן עדן was that entry had been permitted only to those who were not privy to the secret of the tree of knowledge and what it represented. It claimed that by preventing the serpent from entering the garden G'd had wanted to preserve the secret of the power that tree would impart to those who ate from it. According to the serpent, once Eve would eat from that tree she would no longer be afraid of G'd, and G'd would no longer exercise any control over her. The use of such an argument was idolatrous. According to our halachah idolatry is punishable even when it is merely an intellectual conviction (Berachot 12).

According to Bereshit Rabbah 19,3 there is another reason that the serpent used the expression מות תמות. The serpent pushed Eve against the tree and "proved" that touching the tree was not lethal- as Eve had claimed. It argued that just as touching the tree had not resulted in death, neither would eating from its fruit. We must examine this so-called "proof." If we accept that Eve had convinced herself that contact with the tree would have fatal consequences because of its very nature, the fact that her contact with the tree had proved harmless should have convinced her of the tree's harmlessness. There was therefore no reason to be afraid to eat from it. Alternatively, if Eve's fear of touching the tree were based on her belief that G'd had outlawed both eating from the tree and touching it, she now had "proof" that this was not so because nothing had happened to her after she had touched the tree. We do not consider this in the nature of any "proof," seeing that G'd's punishment did not have to be meted out immediately. We therefore prefer the explanation we offered previously that the serpent wanted to "prove" to Eve that the tree itself was quite harmless.

If you were to ask why G'd would have created a tree that was poisonous at all, the answer is -as in many such instances- that the greater the physical and spiritual effort to overcome such potential impediments to our faith, the greater the reward which is stored up in heaven for such acts of faith, a reward to be consumed by us in the Hereafter. This concept is phrased in Avot 5,26: לפום צערא אנרא, as "the reward is commensurate with

## FURTHER COMMENTARY · BERESHIT

the effort expended." Had G'd imposed strict limits on the power of the seducer to entice us, overcoming him would not have amounted to much. The Zohar illustrates this principle by the example of a father who wanted to test his son's moral fibre and who instructed a beautiful harlot to use all her wiles to seduce him. At the same time he had instructed the son to keep his distance from the harlot in question.

**3:6** And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her; and he did eat.

## RAMBAN

**THAT THE TREE WAS GOOD FOR FOOD.** She [Eve] had thought that the fruit of the tree was bitter and poisonous and this was why He admonished them against eating thereof, but now she saw that it was good and sweet food.

**AND THAT IT WAS A DELIGHT TO THE EYES**, i.e., that by means of its fruit, one attains desire and goes about after his own eyes.

**AND THAT THE TREE WAS TO BE DESIRED TO MAKE ONE WISE** for by means of its fruit, one becomes wise to desire. Now she ascribed "delight" to the eyes and "desire" to the mind. The principle is that [by eating the fruit of the tree], one can will and desire a thing or its opposite.

## OR HACHAIM

**Eve saw that the tree was good.** The first problem is how could one judge what is good to eat by merely looking at it? Another question is why the Torah describes a feeling of the mouth before describing the effect on the eye? The verse should have read: "she saw that the tree was a beautiful sight and that it was good as food," in that order. Furthermore, whence did Eve know that the tree was apt to add to her perceptive powers, i.e. להשכיל? If the Torah merely intended to tell us that the serpent's description of the tree had been accurate, why describe the woman as seeing something that she did not see? Also why did the Torah add two superfluous words הוּא, and העץ, a second time? If the repetition of the word is justified, why did the Torah not also write the word העץ after the word תאווה?

The verse describes the way in which Eve was snared, and how she eventually became willing to listen to her seducer. When you examine Eve's earlier words, you will find that she said: "and from the fruit of the tree in the center of the garden, G'd said 'do not eat.'" She had expressed her conviction that only the fruit of the tree was forbidden, that the trunk, the branches, etc., were permitted. She may have arrived at that conviction for one of two reasons. 1) Adam had commanded her in those very words. 2) Though Adam had mentioned only the tree without specifying its fruit, etc., she reasoned that there would have been no point in forbidding something that anyways was not food, such as the trunk, the branches, and the leaves. We have pointed out earlier that whereas the other trees did not taste similar to their fruit, the tree of knowledge was the exception, its trunk, etc. being just as edible as its fruit. We must therefore assume that Eve had already tasted the tree itself, not having considered it as forbidden. She also applied the prohibition to touch it as applicable only to its fruit, not to the trunk, etc. At any rate, Eve had already experienced the taste of the tree's trunk and nothing had happened. Alternatively, she may

have discounted the prohibition to touch the tree knowing that this was not a direct command from G'd Himself and would not lead to death.

Having tasted from the tree itself, and having experienced that its nature was different from all the other trees, she decided to take a closer look at the fruit of that tree. It was then that she discovered that the fruit exerted a powerful visual attraction; the word הוּא refers back to the word פרי, fruit. It could not refer to the word העץ, the tree, as this would be unnecessary. It would have sufficed to say וכי תאווה לעינים, if it were merely a reference to the tree. The word העץ is needed in the sequence ונחמד העץ לעינים because the subject matter had changed from the fruit to the tree. The knowledge of the nature of the tree had been based on her sense of taste, whereas her perception of the nature of the fruit was based only on her sense of sight. The Torah explains that Eve's purpose in eating of the fruit was to broaden her powers of perception. At this point Eve believed that the serpent had spoken truthfully when it claimed that as a result of eating from the fruit of that tree she would gain greater insights, and that G'd had forbidden the fruit only in order to prevent her from gaining the insight which would make her equal to G'd. The Torah emphasises that "she took from its fruit," as she had already tasted the trunk. We have now completed answering the various questions we raised about this verse. Eve gave to her husband from this fruit out of her love for him; she wanted him to share her new insights so that he too would become G'd-like.

I have seen it said in defence of Eve that her sin was not so serious as she could not imagine that G'd had created a being whose sole purpose it was to test man's love for G'd by having Satan masquerade within it to try and mislead man. If such a thought had even occurred to Eve she would never have engaged in a dialogue with the serpent. She would have acted just like the righteous nowadays who do not listen to or engage in disputes with tempters however slick-tongued they may be in making something sinful look desirable. The righteous of our time are not so naive; this is why they can withstand the wiles of Satan. Poor innocent Eve did not have their advantage and that is why she fell victim to the seductive tactics of the serpent (Satan). She had furthermore been misled by the taste of the tree itself, something she thought of as permitted. She also did not possess as analytical a mind as that of a man, else she would have been able to resist the lure to eat from the fruit of that tree. Had she not first erred in believing that the tree itself was permitted to eat from, she never would have considered eating from the fruit as well.

Another reason that may have accounted for Eve falling an easy victim to Satan's lure was that she considered it to have been a mistake to accept the prohibition not to eat from the tree. When she accepted the commandment she had not thought that it would be so difficult to observe. Originally the tree had not appeared to her as sufficiently desirable to pose a threat to her obedience to G'd's command. We find a parallel to such considerations when we consider how many covenants G'd concluded with the Jewish people to ensure that they would not go back on their commitment to observe the Torah. G'd did not consider it sufficient to just give the commandments to the Jewish people without creating a legal device to make the commitment irrevocable. Our sages (Shabbat 85 based on Exodus 19,17) tell us that at Mount Sinai G'd had threatened to kill the Jewish people unless they embraced the Torah. He subsequently rein-

forced the validity of their acceptance by making them swear an oath. Our rabbis go so far as to describe the renewed acceptance by the Jewish people of the Torah at the time of Mordechai as the only free acceptance of G'd's laws, describing the original acceptance as having occurred under conditions of duress and therefore legally not valid (Shabbat 88). Inasmuch as Eve had not been sworn to observe the commandment not to eat from the tree she was not really obligated to do so. Even though she had orally accepted the commandment and such acceptance is comparable to the uttering of a vow, it is in the category of a vow erroneously entered into, something that can be annulled retroactively (compare Nedarim 66). The exact text in the Talmud is as follows: If someone undertakes not to drink wine because the wine is bad for his digestion, and he is informed that aged wine is good for his digestion, his vow is annulled and he may drink any kind of wine. We face a similar situation here. When Eve had accepted G'd's commandment prior to having become conscious of the powerful attraction exerted on her by this tree she had been quite sincere. However, once she noticed the powerful pull which the fruit of that tree exerted on her she regretted having undertaken to honour the commandment not to eat from it.

We therefore have two causes that helped to mislead Eve. The reason she may have thought that only the fruit of the tree was forbidden was because her husband had not given her precise instructions. Had her husband told her that G'd had said: "You may eat from all the trees of the garden, but from the tree of knowledge in the centre of the garden you must not eat," she would never have considered the trunk as permissible, and the fact that neither eating from it nor touching it had resulted in any harm to her would not have served as a verification of the serpent's argument. Eve's not having been aware of the attractive nature of the tree was also Adam's fault. He had not told her that G'd had described the tree as the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He had only told her not to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden, without a reference to its special nature. Had Eve been aware that the tree was of such special significance the serpent could not have tricked her, and she herself would have been unable to invoke her lack of knowledge as a reason to revoke her acceptance of G'd's command not to eat from it.

None of the causes of the sin can be attributed to G'd, all were due to man's inadequacy, i.e. both Adam's and Eve's.

For all we know, Adam may not have been aware that the trunk of the tree of knowledge was edible. He had only tasted the other trees and found invariably that their trunks were not edible. He did not realise that the earth had conformed with G'd's instructions to the letter when it produced the tree of knowledge. The manner in which the Torah describes Eve's realisation of the tree's properties suggests that she did not have an inkling previously that this tree had such special features.

**3:7** *And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves loincloths.*

#### RAMBAN

**AND THE EYES OF THEM BOTH WERE OPENED.** Scripture speaks here with reference to intelligence, and not with reference to actual seeing. The end of the verse proves this: and they knew they were naked. [Even a blind person knows when he is

naked! It must therefore refer to intelligence], as [explained in] the words of Rashi. In a similar sense is the verse, Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.

#### OR HACHAIM

**The eyes of both of them were opened.** We have explained on 2,25 that sin caused man to become aware of his nudity, and that the awareness in turn results in a feeling of shame. This is what this verse is all about. Each of them was ashamed, one of the other. The use of the words ונתפקחנה עיני reflects the teaching of our sages that "one does not commit a sin unless one's mental eyes had first been blinded." Isaiah 42, 18 speaks about והעורים והביוטו לראות, "blind ones, look up and see!" Surely the prophet must have referred to the wicked whose mental eyes had been blinded. Once the temporary mental blindness caused by the decision to sin had passed and the seducer had departed, they became aware of their nudity. Satan is also referred to as personifying darkness, someone who blinds people's eyes. The nudity referred to here is not merely lack of ordinary clothing, but the removal of an aura of holiness which had served them thus far in lieu of clothing in the accepted sense of the word. It is characteristic of a wicked person that after he has committed an abominable act he becomes aware that what he did was an abomination.

**3:8** *And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the breeze of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.*

#### RAMBAN

**AND THEY HEARD THE VOICE OF THE ETERNAL G-D WALKING IN THE GARDEN.** The Rabbis have said in Bereshith Rabbah: "Rabbi Chilfi said that from here we may learn that a voice 'walks,' for it is said, And they heard the voice of the Eternal G-d walking." And so did the Rabbi [Moshe ben Maimon] write in Moreh Nebuchim. And so is the opinion of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra that "walking" refers to "the voice," just as in the verse: The sound thereof shall go like the serpent's. And Ibn Ezra further says that the meaning of toward the cool of the day is that they heard the voice towards evening. And he mentioned in the name of Rabbi Jonah ibn Ganach that the meaning of the verse is: "and man was walking in the garden toward the cool of the day," [the sense of the verse thus being that while man was walking in the garden, he heard the voice of G-d]. In my opinion, the sense of walking in the garden of Eden is similar to that of the verses: And I will walk among you; And the Eternal went as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; I will go and return to My place. All these verses indicate a revelation of the Divine Presence in that place or the departure from the place wherein He was revealed. The sense of the expression, toward the cool of the day, is that with the revelation of the Divine Presence comes a great and strong wind, even as it says, And, behold, the Eternal passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Eternal. Similarly we find: Yea, He did swoop down upon the wings of the wind; and in the book of Job it is written, Then the Eternal answered Job out of the whirlwind. Therefore Scripture says here that they heard the voice of G-d as the Divine Presence was revealed in the garden approaching them in the wind of the day, because the breath of the Eternal blew upon it, that is, in the garden, like the wind of ordinary days, not a great and strong wind as in the vision of other prophecies, in order that they

should not be frightened or terrified. Yet Scripture says that in spite of this they hid themselves on account of their nakedness. In Bereshith Rabbah we find that the Rabbis also said: "Said Rabbi Aba the son of Kahana: 'Mehalech (walking) is not written here but mith'halech (meaning "it leaped and ascended")." Rabbi Aba thus interpreted the word mith'halech similarly to that of And the Eternal went, as we have explained the term "walking," except that he explained the verse before us as referring to the withdrawal of the Divine Presence that dwelt in the garden of Eden and its retiring therefrom on account of the sin of Adam, even as it says, I will go and return to My place. We interpret it to mean the revelation of the Divine Presence in that place, which is the correct and fitting explanation of the verse.

## OR HACHAIM

**They heard the voice of G'd.** The reason the Torah describes the direction G'd's voice took, i.e. לרוח היום, was to enable them to find a place to "hide" from G'd. In this instance G'd's voice travelled westwards, parallel to the sun, whereas Adam and Eve were in the centre of the garden.

**3:9** And the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, Where art thou?

## OR HACHAIM

**? He said to him:** "Where are you? The meaning is: Why do you hide yourself and do not appear before Me? Adam replied that he was afraid because he considered himself naked, and as it is forbidden to stand naked in front of a Torah scroll it certainly is unseemly to appear before G'd in such a state. According to our exegesis, he meant they had become aware of their reduced stature. Their sin had made them aware of the loss of their aura of holiness, hence their nakedness. They could not have referred to actual nudity as the Torah already reported that they sewed together fig-leaves to serve as clothing.

**3:11** And He said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?

## OR HACHAIM

**He said:** "Who has told you that you are naked? G'd meant: "what is different now? You stood before Me previously without feeling naked?" The new knowledge you display cannot have originated within you. It must have been provided by an external source. G'd therefore wanted to know: "Who has told you?" According to our exegesis that the feeling was generated internally, i.e. a result of the sin and the loss of the aura of holiness, we must understand the question as merely rhetorical. G'd did not want to shame man too much, therefore He Himself supplied the answer that Adam might have eaten from the forbidden tree, and the act of eating revealed this knowledge to him.

By the reference to the tree as opposed to the fruit, the verse once more stresses that the trunk too was forbidden.

**3:12** And the man said, The woman whom Thou didst give to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

## RAMBAN

**THE WOMAN WHOM THOU GAVEST TO BE WITH ME.** The sense of it is to say: "The woman whom Thy Honor Himself gave me for a help, she gave me of the tree, and I thought that whatever she says to me is a help and benefit to me." This is why He said when meting out his punishment, Because thou hast

hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, meaning "You should not have transgressed My commandment on account of her advice." Our Rabbis have called Adam "ungrateful" for this remark. By this they mean to explain that the sense of his answer was: "Thou caused me this stumbling for Thou gavest me a woman as a help, and she counselled me to do evil."

## OR HACHAIM

**Adam said:** "The woman You put with me. The manner of Adam's reply was so unseemly that one would not expect him to use it vis-a-vis the least important human being, certainly not when addressing the King of Kings. Besides, when Adam said: "she gave me from the tree, and I ate," why did he add the unnecessary words "from the tree?" We would all have understood that he referred to said tree without his repeating this. Eve did not bother to say that it was the tree she ate from.

Apparently Adam did not know exactly what happened except that Eve had placed something before him and he had eaten without examining it. He had not felt the need to ask her what it was she had placed before him seeing that the whole earth was his to enjoy. He added "which You put with me" in justification for not having enquired where the fruit had come from. It was as if he had said to G'd that since G'd had supplied the woman, he, Adam, had no reason to be suspicious about her motives. After all, nothing evil originates in Heaven! Our sages have said: אין בודקין מן המזבח ולמעלה, "once something (a slaughtered animal) has arrived on the altar (having passed several stages of inspection on the way) there is no need to again check its suitability as a sacrifice." Adam argued that if the חזקה, the presumption of fitness of such an animal, is acceptable, then surely a woman supplied by G'd Himself need not be examined for blemishes.

When Adam said: "from the tree," he referred to a tree planted within the garden seeing all those trees had been planted by G'd Himself (2,8-9). When Adam spoke of "the tree," he did not refer to the tree of knowledge which G'd had referred to. He described his situation before he had eaten from the fruit Eve gave him. At that time he thought the fruit was from any of a number of trees. It was only after he had tasted the fruit that he became aware that this fruit must have been from the tree of knowledge. Adam's argument then was not nearly as outrageous as it appears at first glance. Although one might even argue that Adam said he ate merely from the tree and not from its fruit, and that eating from the tree had not been forbidden, such an argument is not tenable for a number of reasons.

As a result, Adam was merely a שוגג, an unintentional sinner. One might go further and claim that he was an innocent victim and thus not guilty at all. This would explain why G'd did not curse Adam but only the earth. The truth is, however, that Adam acted carelessly in not accurately repeating G'd's command to Eve. He had mentioned only the fruit of the tree to Eve, not the prohibition of the tree itself. This inaccuracy paved the way for all the subsequent events.

**3:13** And the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

## RAMBAN

**WHAT IS THIS THOU HAST DONE** to transgress My commandment? For the woman was included in the admonition given to Adam since at that time she was yet bone of his bones, and similarly she was included in his punishment. The reason

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why G-d did not say to the woman, "and thou hast eaten of the tree," is that she was punished for both her eating and her advice, just as the serpent was punished for the advice. This is why she said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat, as the punishment for the beguiling was greater than that for the eating. [Hence as soon as she mentioned that the serpent beguiled her, G-d meted out his punishment immediately, as is stated in the following two verses.] Thus we may derive from here the principle of punishment for those that cause people to sin in any matter, just as our Rabbis have derived it from the verse, Thou shalt not put a stumbling-block before the blind.

## OR HACHAIM

**The Lord G'd said to the woman.** The only reason G'd asked Eve what she had done was to give her an opportunity to confess her sin against G'd. The confession would act as the cure for her newly contracted sickness. When she said that the serpent had seduced her this was both a confession and an explanation that her sin had not been intentional. I have explained earlier that Eve had been under the impression that it was permitted to eat from the trunk of the tree. She had also not realised that the serpent was a seducer. She confessed her error to her Creator.

**3:14** And the Lord God said to the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

## RAMBAN

**FROM AMONG ALL CATTLE, AND FROM AMONG ALL BEASTS OF THE FIELD.** From a study of this verse, Rabbi Yehoshua the son of Chananya derived the fact that a serpent gives birth once in seven years; this they investigated and found to be so. For the Midrashic interpretations of Scripture and their allusions are all traditional, and they found in them profound secrets on procreation and all matters, as I mentioned in my introduction.

## OR HACHAIM

**The Lord G'd said to the serpent.** The serpent had caused three kinds of harm by its words. 1) It caused the withdrawal of the glory of G'd's light which had hovered over Adam and Eve as we explained previously. This is the real meaning of the *כתנות אור*, the garments of light. [this spelling is reported to have been found in the Torah scroll of Rabbi Meir. Ed.]. 2) It resulted in Adam and Eve both becoming mortal, losing their immortality in this world. This was the punishment G'd had threatened would result from eating of the tree of knowledge. 3) The serpent caused even man's limited life on this earth to be of an inferior quality, outside the confines of *עדן*.

G'd therefore punished the serpent separately concerning each one of these losses it had caused man. 1) G'd cursed the serpent because it deprived man of his blessing, i.e. the presence of G'd's glorious light. 2) G'd deprived the serpent of the legs it used to walk on because the serpent had deprived man of eternal life on earth. Prior to the sin the serpent possessed the kind of stature that enabled it to share all the advantages of the world with Adam. It would have been an honoured houseguest at Adam's all its life. As a result of its sin, co-existence of man and the serpent in this world became almost impossible. 3) The serpent was condemned to eat dust for having deprived Adam and Eve of the enjoyment of life in *עדן*. Our sages explain this to mean that the serpent does not enjoy any of its food, just as one does not

enjoy eating dust (Yuma 75). G'd's words: *כי עשית זאת*, "because you have done this," which introduces the serpent's punishment, are a reminder that the serpent's words were considered its deeds.

**3:15** and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

## RAMBAN

**AND THOU SHALT BRUISE THEIR HEEL.** This means man will have an advantage over you [the serpent] in the enmity between him and you for he will bruise your head but you will bruise him only in his heel, with which he will crush your brain.

## OR HACHAIM

**And I shall place hatred between you and the woman.** G'd applied the principle of *גואל הדם*, a relative avenging a killing who is permitted to kill the slayer without trial. This is so because the serpent's deed brought death to all of Eve's descendants. The nature of the revenge matches what the serpent had done. Humans will strike at the head of the serpents, seeing that the original serpent had initiated man's downfall and the head is the beginning of life, it is the area which is smitten by the angel of death. Whenever it attacks man, the serpent will aim at the heel because man in the end trailed, i.e. followed the advice of the serpent when sinning. The word "heel" may also simply be an allusion to the serpent's having lost its legs, being forced to move on its belly.

You may well ask how could the Torah in the same breath as allowing man to avenge himself on the serpent permit it to attack man's heel? What kind of penalty is it for the serpent to be allowed to continue harassing man? The answer is simply that the serpent could have retorted that no one forced Eve to listen to its advice. Our sages (Kidushin 42) have formulated this by asking rhetorically: "When the instructions of the teacher conflict with those of the disciple, whose instructions is one to follow?" If Eve had followed this simple piece of logic there would not have been any unfortunate developments as a result of the serpent's argument. The serpent therefore felt aggrieved that Eve's lack of logic had caused it permanent harm. There is an allusion as to how long this condition of enmity between man and the serpent will continue. As long as man, i.e. Israel, is *ראש*, deserving of the title "head" by performing G'd's commandments, it will prevail over the tempter called serpent and smash it. On the other hand, when Israel ignores G'd's commandments, the serpent will bite it because Israel has itself become like a heel instead of like a head.

**3:16** Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply the pain of thy childbearing; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and yet thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

## RAMBAN

**'T'SHUKATHECH' (AND THY DESIRE) SHALL BE TO THY HUSBAND,** meaning for cohabitation. Yet you will not have the boldness to demand it by word, rather he shall rule over thee. It will all be from him and not from you. Thus are the words of Rashi. But this is not correct, for modesty is praiseworthy in a woman, just as the Rabbis have said: "This is a good quality in women." Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said: "And thy desire shall be

to thy husband, meaning your obedience." This means you will obey whatever he commands you for you are under his authority to do his desire. However, I have found the expression t'shukah used only in connection with desire and lust. The correct interpretation appears to me to be that He punished her that her desire for her husband be exceedingly great and that she should not be deterred by the pain of pregnancy and birth or that he keeps her as a maid-servant. Now it is not customary for a servant to desire to acquire a master over himself, rather his desire is to flee from him. Thus her punishment is measure for measure; she gave [the fruit of the tree of knowledge] also to her husband and he ate at her command, and He punished her that she should no longer command him, but instead he should command her entirely at his will.

## OR HACHAIM

**He (G'd) had said to the woman.** G'd intended to make it clear that Eve would suffer three curses as retribution for the three features of the tree of knowledge she had wanted to enjoy. She had seen that the tree a) was good as food; b) a temptation for the eyes; and c) desirable to make one perceptive. G'd decreed that instead of enjoying the fruit of the tree she would suffer pains when producing her own fruit, i.e. her children. Regarding the temptation for her eyes Eve wanted to enjoy, G'd decreed that she would henceforth pine for her husband as a passive partner, her husband deciding if and when to indulge her desire. Her husband would always derive satisfaction from the mating process without a guarantee that her desire would be satisfied during union with her husband. Finally, instead of satisfying her desire to be G'd-like, she would be dominated not only by G'd but also by her husband.

**3:17** And to the man He said, Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

## OR HACHAIM

**And G'd had said to Adam.** We need to understand why G'd mentioned Adam's "listening to the voice of his wife;" It would have sufficed to say: "because you ate from the tree, etc.;" Besides, why did the Torah add the word "to the voice?" Could the Torah not simply have said "because you listened to your wife, etc.?" Having in mind that we explained that Adam had not been aware at the time he ate that the fruit he ate was from the tree of knowledge, it would not have been appropriate for the Torah to simply say: "because you ate from the tree, etc." since in fact he did not eat from the tree knowingly but inadvertently. The Torah therefore had to spell out that Adam's sin was accepting the words of his wife without checking them. As a result of his failure to investigate his wife's words more closely, he "ate from the tree." The reason the Torah refers to the "voice" of Adam's wife is to alert us to the fact that Adam was satisfied that it was his wife talking; he did not bother to analyse what she was saying. When she told him: "take and eat," this is what he did. He did not ask where the fruit came from. The Torah alludes once more to Adam's error in not giving Eve precise instructions when it says: "from the tree which I told you not to eat from." Adam had only told Eve not to eat from the fruit of the tree. The lack of adequate information at the time Adam relayed G'd's command to Eve was a major cause of the tragedy.

The reason G'd cursed both the earth and Eve but not Adam is due to the earth's failure on the third day of creation to produce trees exactly as G'd had commanded. Had the earth produced only trees whose trunk were edible, or only trees whose trunks were not edible, Eve could not have made the error she made. It was only because the tree of knowledge was different in this respect that made Adam's failure to warn her not to eat from this tree result in tragic consequences. G'd therefore cursed the earth as the cause of all that had happened. Since G'd expelled Adam from the garden and made him toil the unresponsive earth, Adam was punished for having accepted his wife's urgings without checking. He had greedily indulged his desire, and as a result he would forever more remain in a state of sadness that he could not earn his livelihood without hard work. He would now eat grass of the field in lieu of the fruit of the trees of the garden for which he did not have to toil. In future when he would have to labour to secure his food supply he would know exactly where it came from.

**3:19** in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return.

## OR HACHAIM

**Until you will return to the soil, etc.** The Torah gives two reasons why man would have to die. It would not have sufficed to explain the need for man to die, i.e. return to the folds of the earth merely because that had been his origin. After all, he had originated from earth before the sin and was not bound to return to it. Since man is made of dust, i.e. earth, he is part of it, or rather, he has made himself part of it through his sin. Had he not sinned, the holiness acquired by triumphing over temptation would have guaranteed that he did not have to return to his lowly origin. His body would have become so refined that it no longer would have been considered as part of the earth. Now, even the part of Adam that was spiritual had been severely tainted through his sin. G'd explained to Adam that although it is normal for things to return to their origin; he, Adam, had forfeited his opportunity to defy that norm through non-observance of G'd's commandment.

**3:20** And the man called his wife's name Hava; because she was the mother of all living (Hav).

## OR HACHAIM

**Adam called the name of his wife** Chavah. We must understand why Adam had not named his wife immediately after he met her, before any of the happenings described by the Torah.

Know therefore that G'd had already given the woman a name reflecting her distinction when He named both the man and the woman ADAM. We know from Ezekiel 34,31 that the name ADAM is a great distinction. The prophet proclaims: אדם אתם, "you are Adam" (referring to Israel). Our sages (Yevamot 61) have stated about Israel: "you have been called ADAM, whereas the Gentiles have not been called ADAM." There was therefore no reason for Adam to have named Eve previously. Now that his wife had been seduced by the serpent she had suffered a spiritual decline and no longer qualified for the name ADAM. In fact it is generally accepted that when a person violates G'd's law knowingly he forfeits his original name. This is what Solomon (Proverbs 10,7) meant when he said: ושם רשעים ירקב, that the "name" i.e. the original name of the wicked, will rot. Adam now had to give his wife a name which reflected her function in life,

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namely that she became the "mother" of all human beings. True, Adam had sinned too, but his sin had been unintentional as already pointed out. He did not forfeit his name on that account.

As a matter of fact Adam too experienced a diminution of status as expressed by his name. The Torah here calls him suddenly האדם, three or four times instead of אדם as previously. You must appreciate that the category of person called האדם is inferior to the one called אדם without the letter ה. Sifri 143 quotes Rabbi Yirmiyah on Leviticus 18,5: אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם, that האדם should perform these commandments in order to live by them, as including Gentiles. This is so because whenever the letter ה before the word אדם does not signify a definite article it refers to the human species as such. [I have condensed the proof presented by the author. Ed.] Although Adam declined in spiritual stature and forfeited the full extent of his name, this was a temporary phenomenon. The Torah again accords him his full name when it describes that he became the father of Sheth (4,25). He regained his stature having only sinned inadvertently.

There is another reason for the name חווה. First we must understand why "life" is attributed to Eve and not to Adam. After all, Adam was the "father" of all human beings! Besides, if the reason we have given for Adam calling חווה is that she is the "mother" of all human beings, he should have called her חיה, not חווה! Her name was to reflect two new developments. 1) She had listened to the urgings of the seducer. Adam called her by the name of the seducer, the word חווה being the same as חויה the aramaic for serpent. This is the reason given in the Zohar. The second new development was that she was condemned to bear children in pain. She alone deserved to be called "mother" of all human beings because it was only she who had to endure pain in connection with procreation. The Torah did not want to spell out the other reason, seeing that it is already alluded to in the name חווה.

## רביעי FOURTH ALIYAH

**3:22** And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become like one of Us, knowing good and evil: and now, what if he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eating, live for ever:

RAMBAN

**AND NOW, LEST HE PUT FORTH HIS HAND.** The Holy One, blessed be He, wanted His decree concerning the death of Adam to be fulfilled, and if he were to eat of the tree of life which was created to give everlasting life to those who ate of its fruit, the decree would be nullified; for either he would not die at all or his day of death would not come at the time it was decreed for him and his descendants to die. And now that Adam had the power of choice, He therefore guarded this tree from him for at first Adam did only what he was commanded and he did not eat thereof as he did not need it. Know and believe that the garden of Eden is on this earth as are also the tree of life and the tree of knowledge, and from there the river comes forth and is divided into four heads which are visible to us. For the Euphrates is in our land and within our border, and Pishon, according to the words of the former scholars, is the Nile of Egypt. But as these are on earth so are there also in the heavens things similarly named, and those in the heavens are the foundations of these on earth, just as the Rabbis have said: "The king hath brought me into his chambers — this teaches us that the Holy One,

blessed be He, is destined to show Israel the treasures on high that are chambered in the heavens. Another interpretation of The king hath brought me into his chambers is that these are the chambers of the garden of Eden. It is on the basis of this that they have said: "The work of the garden of Eden is like the work of the firmament." The rivers correspond to the four camps of angels on high, and it is from there that the power of the kingdoms on earth is derived, just as it is written, The host of the high heaven on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. Thus the Rabbis said in Bereshith Rabbah, "Into four heads — these are the four kingdoms. The name of the first is Pishon — this is Babylon, etc." And the things called the tree of life and the tree of knowledge on high — their secret is high and lofty. Adam sinned with the fruit of the tree of knowledge below and on high, in deed and thought. Now if the fruit of the tree were good for food and he desired it to become wise, why did He withhold it from him? Indeed, G-d is kind and dealeth kindly; He will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly! The serpent, moreover, has today no speaking faculty, and if it did have it at first, He would surely have mentioned in His curse that its mouth become dumb, as this would have been the most grievous curse of all. But all these things are twofold in meaning, the overt and the concealed in them both being true. In Bereshith Rabbah the Rabbis say: "Another interpretation of Le'ovdah uleshomrah (to cultivate her and to keep her) is that these words refer to the sacrifices, as it is said, 'Ta'avdun' (Ye shall serve) G-d upon this mountain. It is this which Scripture says, 'Tishm'ru' (Ye shall keep) to offer unto Me in its appointed season." By this Midrash, the Rabbis hinted that the sacrifices will cause growth and expansion in the tree of life and the tree of knowledge and all other trees in the garden of Eden. It is this which constitutes their cultivation and care. Now Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra denies what the scholars have said, namely, that Pishon is the Nile, because they found that the Nile comes from the Mountain of Frankincense [far south of the equator], and therefore it swells during the days of summer. But it is already known that many rivers come from their source and flow for a great distance and enter the bowels of the earth for a journey of many days, and then break forth again, and flow from under one of the mountains in a distant place. [This being the case, it is possible that Pishon is the Nile.]

OR HACHAIM

**The Lord G'd said: "Here man has become like one of Us, etc.** We need to understand why G'd had not commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of life before He forbade them to eat from the tree of knowledge. Had they eaten from it first they would have lived forever!

Another peculiarity in our verse is the word הוה. G'd was afraid that Adam might live forever, not that he had already achieved that status. The word therefore should have been הוה לא הוה, or something to that effect. Furthermore, why would the ability to distinguish between good and evil elevate man to the status of G'd? How can we justify the expression כמנו, "like one of Us?" This would give the impression that there are physical beings in the heavens!

In view of the fact that G'd had warned man not to eat from the tree of knowledge He was not worried about his eating from the tree of life. He did not think man would be motivated to do so either of his own volition or as a result of seduction by the serpent. The seducer only urges man to taste what is forbidden; Satan never urges you to do what is perfectly permissible. Man

on his own had no desire to eat from that tree in order to secure permanent life, something that was his birthright anyways. It was only after he had forfeited his birthright that he would seek to find an alternative for what he had lost. If G'd had forbidden the tree of life immediately, the serpent might have succeeded to entice even Adam himself into eating from it. Therefore G'd was wise in not including the tree of life in the prohibition immediately. After having eaten from the tree of knowledge with its fateful consequences, Adam's priorities had changed, and G'd now had to be concerned lest man eat from that tree in order to neutralize the mortality that had been decreed on him.

The meaning of the word *היה* then is: "up until now man was alone unto himself," i.e. he was immortal," however, now that he has lost his immortality, he might want to eat from the tree of life. The word *ממנו*, would refer to the uniqueness of man on earth. He alone of all the creatures on earth was immortal. The knowledge man acquired due to having eaten from the tree of knowledge might prompt him to want to eat from the tree of life to recapture the uniqueness of his former stature of ruling over the creatures of earth. I have found a proof for my interpretation of the word *ממנו* in Onkelos. Onkelos translates the word as *מניה*, "from him," i.e. *כאחד ממנו*, "like the only one of its kind"

There is another way to solve the problems we have raised. On the day G'd commanded Adam not to eat from the tree of knowledge He gave two commandments. G'd actually allowed for the possibility that Adam would violate His command by saying: "should you eat from it, your only way to rehabilitate yourself will be through death, through mortality of the body." In halachah we would consider the second commandment, i.e. the need to die as a *לעשה*, a negative commandment tied to a positive commandment. The positive commandment is viewed as the *תיקון*, reparation of the negative commandment that has been violated. We have mentioned earlier that had it not been for the sin, Adam would have become so refined that he would have been considered as at home in the world of the permanent beings, just as the prophet Elijah who departed this world, body intact. It was only due to the sin that Adam's body forfeited the chance to rise with him to such lofty heights. Once deprived of the opportunity to refine his body in the manner described, the very act of separation of the soul from the body becomes the symbol of the inability to achieve the elevation of the body to eternal life. Under such circumstances man would not eat from the tree of life of his own accord. He would be afraid that as a result of eating from it he would forever forfeit potential rehabilitation should he violate the command not to eat from the tree of knowledge. Only death could afford him that chance, and once he had eaten from the tree of life he would not die. The matter was different, however, once he had eaten from the tree of knowledge without having eaten as yet from the tree of life. If he had eaten deliberately from the tree of knowledge, man would certainly be careful not to eat from the tree of life as that would condemn him eternally to a physical existence only. However, as we explained, man's sin had been inadvertent, meaning that he thought he was not bound to die in order to rehabilitate himself. If so, there was no powerful incentive for him to stay clear of the tree of life. Actually, Adam erred; even though his sin was inadvertent it could only be completely atoned for through death of his body at some stage. The principal reason that G'd had commanded man not to eat from the tree of knowledge was to prevent knowledge of evil becoming an in-

tegral part of his perceptions. His perceptions were meant to concentrate only on what is good. This is what Solomon meant (Kohelet 7,29) when he said that *אשר עשה האלוקים את האדם*, that "G'd made man perfectly upright." Evil did not figure as part of man's imagination and fantasies. All of this changed after he ate from the tree of knowledge. The fact that man felt naked and ashamed is proof that his fantasies now included things that were evil. Once man had undergone such a drastic change and the purpose of the prohibition to eat from the tree of knowledge had been irreversibly thwarted, he would no longer consider not eating from the tree of life as his insurance should he need to recapture his original status. He had already lost that status irretrievably. With the incentive not to eat from the tree of life gone, G'd had to forbid man to eat from that tree. In view of the fact that man had ignored a previous command, G'd deemed it safer to place the tree of life out of Adam's reach by expelling him from the garden.

Having said all this we can now understand a difficult passage in Bereshit Rabbah 21,6. Commenting on the words: "and now, lest he reach out and take also from the tree of life and eat thereof and live forever," Rabbi Aba bar Kahane says that the word *ועתה*, "and now" in this verse teaches that G'd encouraged Adam to repent. This word is used by the Torah to introduce the process of repentance. For instance, we have Deut. 10 where Moses described the sin of the golden calf and his endeavours to obtain forgiveness for the Jewish people. Verse 12 there commences with the words: *ועתה ישראל*, and goes on to describe what it is that G'd asks of the Jewish people so that they can rehabilitate themselves. The expression *פן*, always means "not or no." G'd said: "lest he stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat of it and live forever." Thus far Rabbi Aba bar Kahane. This Midrash is extremely puzzling. How could G'd justify encouraging man to do repentance by saying to him "NO?" Why did G'd only start to worry that Adam would eat from the tree of life after He had said to him "No?" It appears as if G'd would not have been concerned about Adam living forever if he had done *תשובה*! This cannot be since man had already become mortal on the day he ate from the tree of knowledge!

Actually, keeping in mind our exegesis, the words of Rabbi Aba bar Kahane make sense. G'd wanted Adam to realise that he had sinned by eating from the tree of knowledge. He did this by telling him to repent. Adam answered this invitation to do *תשובה* by saying that he had not sinned in a manner that required him to repent. He argued that he had been unaware of committing a sin when he ate from the tree. When G'd heard that Adam thought that an inadvertently committed sin does not require repentance, He began to worry that now there was no impediment to Adam eating from the tree of life. This is why G'd had to expel him from the garden to prevent this from happening. Later on Adam did repent and spent 130 years immersing himself in the waters of the river *גידון* to atone for his sin [compare Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 20. Ed.].

Although G'd had said that Adam would die "on the day" he would eat from the tree of knowledge, the word "day" could have one of two connotations. It could mean a period of 24 hours, i.e. a day in human terms, or it could refer to a day in G'd's terms, i.e. 1000 years. If it is the latter, the meaning of the warning was that Adam would die before he reached the age of 1000 years. The respective connotation of the word depends on the severity of the sin and the feeling the sinner had at the time he committed the sin. If the sinner intended to anger G'd at the

time he sinned, the meaning of the word "day" would be the minimum. The sinner would have to die before that period of 24 hours expired. If, however, the sin was not committed intentionally and the sinner had made it plain that he had not intended to sin, he would be given the maximum period possible, i.e. he would live up to but not including 1000 years.

**4:1** And the man knew *Havva* his wife; and she conceived, and bore *Qayin* saying, I have acquired a manchild from the Lord.

#### RAMBAN

**AND SHE CONCEIVED AND BORE CAIN.** The sense of it is that she gave birth to a son, and she called his name Cain [from the word *kanah*, acquisition], because she said, I have gotten a man with [the help of] the Eternal. In a similar sense is the verse, And she conceived and bore Enoch, and many similar verses in this chapter and in other places. "Eth Hashem (with the Eternal). When He created me and my husband He created us by Himself, but in the case of this one, we are co-partners with him." Thus the words of Rashi. The correct interpretation appears to me to be that she said: "This son will be for me an acquisition for the Eternal, for when we shall die he will exist in our stead to worship his Creator." This is also the opinion of Onkelos who translated *eth hashem* to mean "before the Eternal." [The word *eth* in the following verses is translated] in a similar sense: And it shall be shown '*eth hakohen*' (the priest), meaning to the priest; And David came near '*eth ha'am*' (the people), meaning to the people. Or it may be that *eth hashem* has the same interpretation as in the verses: And Enoch walked '*eth ha'elokim*' (with G-d); Noah walked '*eth ha'elokim*' (with G-d). Now she [Eve] called one son by a name indicating "acquisition," and the second one she called Abel, denoting "vanity" because man's acquisition is likened to vanity. But she did not wish to say so explicitly. Therefore, no reason is written for the name of the second son. The secret received by tradition concerning Abel is very profound.

#### OR HACHAIM

**She gave birth to Cain.** According to our sages Cain represented the spirit of impurity and evil whereas Abel represented good. Abel's soul is supposed to have been reincarnated in the body of Moses (compare Zohar 1,54 on this passage). Abel suffered multiple injuries at the hands of Cain because Cain did not know where to inflict a lethal injury. The pains suffered by Abel in the process removed any vestige of evil that may have been in him so that when Moses was born he was totally good. This is what Eve hinted at when she said: קניתי איש את השם. She meant that the perfection of a man such as Moses who could commune freely with G'd, was due only to the sufferings undergone by his ancestor Abel.

**4:2** And she again bore, his brother Hevel. And Hevel was a keeper of sheep, but *Qayin* was a tiller of the ground.

#### OR HACHAIM

**She continued to give birth to his brother.** The reason the Torah adds the words "his brother," something quite unnecessary, as well as the repeated use of the word *אח*, has been explained by our sages. They said that in the struggle between Cain and Abel, the latter was first victorious, Cain lying on the ground. Abel then pitied him and moved away. Cain exploited this pity of his brother Abel to attack him and kill him (Tan-chuma Bereshit 9). The words *אחיו* are a hint that Abel acted in a brotherly fashion towards Cain. By placing the word *אח* in

front of the word *הבל*, the Torah alluded to the lack of brotherliness with which Cain related to Abel. Another reason for the word *אח* both times before the name Cain and the name Abel is to indicate that twin sisters were born together with these brothers (Yevamot 62).

**4:3** And in process of time it came to pass, that *Qayin* brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord.

#### RAMBAN

**AND CAIN BROUGHT OF THE FRUIT OF THE GROUND AN OFFERING UNTO THE ETERNAL.** 4. AND ABEL, HE ALSO BROUGHT. These men [Cain and Abel] understood the great secret of the sacrifices and the meal-offerings. So also did Noah, [who likewise offered sacrifices]. Our Rabbis have said that the first man also sacrificed a bullock. This should close the mouth of those who speak foolishness concerning the reason of the sacrifices. I will yet intimate a great principle concerning this matter with the will of the Holy One, blessed be He.

**4:4** And Hevel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat parts thereof. And the Lord had respect to Hevel and to his offering:

#### OR HACHAIM

**G'd turned to Abel.** The reason the Torah does not first report that G'd did not turn to Cain and his offering, seeing he is reported as having been the first one to bring an offering, is to underline the gulf that existed already between G'd and Cain. Abel's offering caused G'd pleasure and still G'd did not turn to Cain's offering as a result of being in a favourable frame of mind.

The reason the Torah repeats the word *אל* twice in the sequence *אל הבל ואל מנחתו* is, to make it clear that G'd displayed favour to the person bringing the offering and to the offering itself. The reverse was true of Cain and his offering.

**4:5** but to *Qayin* and to his offering He had not respect. And *Qayin* was very angry, and his face fell.

#### OR HACHAIM

**Cain was very angry.** The emotion *חרון אף* indicates that a person feels superior, whereas the expression *נפילת אפים* indicates that one feels inferior. Cain felt angry at the superiority achieved by his younger brother. He felt inferior towards his brother thinking that the superior quality of his brother's offering was the cause that his own offering had not been accepted. He believed that this was the reason he had suffered a loss of image in the eyes of G'd.

Alternatively, when Cain saw that G'd did not accept his own offering he felt angry at the Creator's disdain for His creatures, His not taking any interest in them. This is a very negative character trait. We find an example of such emotions in Isaiah 8,21 where anger is described as leading to blasphemy when someone feels that G'd does not look after him. After Cain found that he had been wrong, that G'd did accept his brother's offering, his anger against G'd turned to anger against G'd's favourite, against his brother Abel.

The author quotes a saying by our sages that when someone allows his anger to possess him his soul withdraws. He interprets this statement as referring to the divine image, *צלם*, that is reflected on man's face. [I have not been able to find such a state-

ment. Ed.] Although Cain's specific acts of wickedness prior to his murdering his brother have not been spelled out by the Torah it is clear from his subsequent actions that he was evil.

**4:6** And the Lord said to Qayin, Why art thou angry? and why art thou crestfallen?

OR HACHAIM

**WHY DID HASHEM SAY TO KAYIN...** It is difficult to understand why He said "Why are you angry," etc. Would it not be fitting that he should be angry, over the extreme lowliness he suffered relative to his younger brother, so that his face fell? And by what means does He remove his shame, in saying "If you improve"? This is a remedy for the future, not for what has already passed. Further, it is necessary to understand the statement "sin crouches at the door" — it has no clear meaning, and everything stated in this matter requires explanation.

**WHY ARE YOU ANGRY, AND WHY HAS YOUR FACE FALLEN?** Indeed, the intent of Hashem's word is found at the very beginning of His statement. He informed Kayin that Hashem had taken note of the two feelings that had come over him, and concerning each one He says "why" — in accordance with all the explanations we gave regarding his burning anger and his fallen face. And He gave him the reason for the matter and its foundation, so that he might know the higher knowledge (da'at elyon) and its secret. This is what He meant by saying, "Is it not so, that if you do well" — meaning: if you are rooted in the aspect of good, then all your deeds will have the aspect of good rest upon them, and they will of themselves be raised up, for kedushah (holiness) has no need of outside help. Go and learn this from the incident (Bava Metzia 85b) of the chair of Rabbi Chiyya, which would rise upward by itself. This is the meaning of "se'et" (uplifting) — namely, that it happens of itself. "Se'et" may be understood as referring both to the minchah (offering) and to Kayin himself — that his face, which is the image of beauty, should not fall, but rather that his stature should be lifted up. This is the aspect of good, which is the aspect of loftiness and greatness. These correspond to the two aspects mentioned in the matter, "And Hashem turned to Hevel and to his offering" — which are two distinct things. "And if you do not do well" — meaning, when you negate within your own mind the aspect of good — "at the door," meaning, at your very beginning, evil is already accounted for; behold, the aspect of evil, called "sin," crouches upon you, and also upon all your deeds, and it strips you of elevation and rules over your actions. Now then, what cause is there for your burning anger, since you yourself are the cause of the matter?

**AND TO YOU IS ITS DESIRE** — here He hinted that the yetzer hara (evil inclination) has, by its very nature, an aspect of desire to cause man to sin, similar to the nature that exists in man to crave desire and to desire gold. **AND YOU SHALL RULE OVER IT** — here He made known that although it is set up in this manner, it is within his power to rule over it; and now why should your countenance fall, seeing that the matter is in your hand to rule over it and to remove the stumbling block, which is sin (hachatat).

**AND IF YOU DO NOT DO WELL, SIN CROUCHES AT THE DOOR** — He also intends to say in this manner: "And if you do not do well at the opening" — meaning the gate of receiving offerings and tributes — there the sin crouches, so that there be no room for the tribute to ascend, and needless to say it has no power to be accepted at all. And if you should say, "You are the

Master, the Ruler; accept the offering, and let sin not be a hindrance" — to this He said: True, if you were to do teshuvah (repentance), there would be room for this claim; but since you are not thinking of teshuvah — as is alluded to in the word "lo teitiv" (you do not do well), that you still desire and lust after the aspect of evil — this is what is meant by "and to you is its longing," and you wish to rule over it and drive it away so that it not crouch at your door. And although Hashem wishes to separate it from you, you yourself must distance it from your desire, for as long as a person lusts after the aspect of evil, he causes it to rule over him, as it is said (Psalms 81:10): "There shall be no strange god within you." And when a person spurns its words and its counsel — this is its humbling, as it is said (Proverbs 16:32): "And he who rules his spirit is better than one who conquers a city." And accordingly Hashem speaks to him in a manner of wonderment, in the way He began to speak to him: "Why... and why..." — for his complaint is against himself and not against his King, for how can he wish to rule over it, when he himself causes it to rule over him? And understand this.

**4:7** If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin crouches at the door, and to thee shall be his desire. Yet thou mayst rule over him.

RAMBAN

**IS IT NOT THUS, IF THOU MENDEST 'SE'EITH'.** In the opinion of the commentators, this means there is a "lifting" or forgiveness of your sin. And in the opinion of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra it means a "lifting" of your face in contrast to [the question G-d asked of Cain]: Why is thy face fallen? For he who is ashamed presses his face downward. Similarly, it is said, And the light of my countenance they cast not down, whereas one who honors him is as if he raises his face upward. This is the sense of the verses: Perhaps he will lift my face; Do not lift the face of the poor. In my opinion the verse means: "If you will mend your ways you will have your rightful superiority in se'eith (dignity) over your brother since you are the firstborn." And this is the meaning of [G-d's question to him]: Why art thou wroth? For by virtue of his feeling ashamed before his brother, his face fell, and because of his jealousy of him he killed him, and now the Eternal told him: Why art thou wroth regarding your brother, and why is thy face fallen on account of him? Is it not thus! If thou mendest, you will have superiority in dignity over your brother, and if thou dost not mend, evil will come upon you not only because of him [your brother], for at the door of your house your sin lurks causing you to stumble in all your endeavors.

**AND UNTO THEE IS ITS LONGING,** for your sin longs to cleave to you at all times. Nevertheless thou mayest rule over it if you so desire, for you may mend your ways and remove it from upon you. Thus He taught him [Cain] concerning repentance, that it lies within his power to return anytime he desires and He will forgive him.

**4:8** And Qayin talked with Hevel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Qayin rose up against Hevel his brother, and slew him.

RAMBAN

**AND CAIN SPOKE TO ABEL HIS BROTHER.** He began a conversation of argument and contention with him in order to seek a pretext against him and so kill him. This is the language of

Rashi. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said that the interpretation that appears most likely to him is that Cain related to Abel all the chastisements with which G-d had reprimanded him [and Cain accused Abel of having brought them upon him]. But in my opinion it is connected with the following words of Scripture: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, meaning that Cain said to Abel, "Let us go forth into the field," and there he secretly killed him. It is possible that his intention in killing Abel was that the world be built up from himself for he thought that his father would not have any more children. He also feared that the main building up of the world might be from his brother, [which seemed likely since it was he] whose offering had been favorably accepted.

## OR HACHAIM

**14. ויאמר קין אל הבל אחיו. Cain spoke softly to his brother Abel.**

The addition of the word "his brother" indicates that Cain spoke in a friendly manner. Cain had made it plain previously that he was jealous of Abel. He did not want Abel to think that he also hated him on account of that. Therefore he stressed the brotherhood they had in common so as not to put Abel on guard against him. He deceived his brother into thinking that he did not harbour hatred in his heart. Verse 8 should really have been two verses, the first half concluding after the word אחיו. The Torah wrote it as one in order to make us understand why Abel was not on his guard.

**It was when they were both in the field.** We need to know why the Torah wanted us to know that what follows occurred in the field. Besides, why did the Torah have to mention that "Cain arose?" It would have sufficed to simply state that Cain killed Abel! Furthermore, why did G'd have to ask Cain where his brother Abel was? Why was Cain foolish enough to tell the One who knows everything that he did not know where his brother was? After all, who would be aware of G'd's supervising everything that occurs on earth if not the people with whom G'd had communicated directly such as Adam, Eve, Cain, etc.? Why did Cain add the gratuitous and provocative remark: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Why did G'd have to mention (verse 10) that Abel's blood cried out to Him "from the earth?" Besides, what was the nature of that outcry? Why did G'd curse the earth in addition to the murderer? What harm did it do for the earth to have swallowed Abel's blood? The alternative would have been for the dogs to lick it up. Did earth not act very properly by covering up the blood of the dead? G'd's words almost defy our understanding.

Cain was jealous of Abel because he thought that Abel's existence was the cause that he himself had been degraded. He thought that his own shortcomings had come to light only by comparing him to his brother. Once his brother would be out of the way G'd would have to turn to him seeing there was no one else to turn to. This is why he planned to kill Abel. He realised that the stench of Abel's decaying body would rise heavenwards. Inasmuch as man had been forbidden to murder, Cain sought a way of killing Abel without laying a hand on him. We have heard that Cain was a man of the earth; he was familiar with how the earth functioned. Our sages (compare Nedarim 39) say that earth has limbs just like a human being, i.e. the equivalent of hands, feet, etc. Cain knew which part of the earth served as its mouth, its eyes, etc. As a result of this familiarity with the earth he found a way to kill Abel with guile without actually laying a hand on him. The Torah describes that while Cain and Abel walked in the field Cain found a suitable

spot to carry out his evil plan. The word ויקם is not part of the act of murder. It means he simply stood over him in a spot where the earth would swallow him. The earth actually did the killing. While the Torah does not spell out the exact nature of Abel's death in our verse, it does so in verse 11.

When G'd asked Cain where his brother was, He did so to find out if Cain was aware of his sin. When Cain answered that he did not know Abel's whereabouts, G'd told him that he should have made it his business to know. To this Cain replied: "Have You made me his keeper?" He did not confess his evil deed. He either thought that G'd would not punish him for an indirect act, a cause, or he thought that G'd did not exercise this kind of supervision over man. When G'd persisted by asking: "What did you do?" He informed Cain that his wicked deed was the cause that the earth had swallowed Abel. The words: "the voice of your brother Abel's blood cries out to me from the earth," mean that Abel thought it was the earth that killed him, not Cain. This is why he complained to G'd. G'd cursed Cain even more severely than the earth because he was the cause of what the earth had done. Henceforth the earth was no longer permitted to open its mouth (Sanhedrin 37). Isaiah 24,16 describes the songs of the earth as originating in its "wings," i.e. its periphery. Had the earth not been forbidden to open its mouth, no doubt its songs would have originated from its mouth. When the earth was to swallow all the Egyptians who had drowned, it was worried about opening its mouth until G'd gave it special permission as alluded to in Exodus 15,12: "You inclined Your right hand and the earth swallowed them." Perhaps this is the problem the sages referred to when they claimed that Cain killed Abel with a stone. As a result Abel suffered many injuries which would account for the Torah writing דמי אחיו צועקים instead of דם אחיו, i.e. the plural for the word blood. Death would not have been due to any single injury as in the case of someone who is slain by the sword. We already explained that the fact that Abel suffered multiple injuries cleansed him of any sins he might have committed prior to his death.

**4:11** And now cursed art thou from the earth, which has opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

## RAMBAN

**CURSED ART THOU FROM THE GROUND** — more than it has already been cursed on account of its sin. In this, too, it has further sinned in that it hath opened its mouth to take thy brother's blood. Therefore, I impose upon it an additional curse: it shall not continue to give unto thee her strength. Thus the words of Rashi. But this is not correct since here He did not curse the ground because of him as He did in the case of his father, rather He said that he be cursed through the ground. The explanation of the curse is that the earth shall not continue to give him its strength, and that he be a fugitive and a wanderer in it, and He further stated, "When thou tillest the ground with all your efforts to cultivate it properly by plowing and hoeing, and in all manner of service in the field and by properly sowing it, it shall not continue to give unto thee her strength. Instead, you will sow much and harvest little." This then was the curse, in the same sense as in the verse: And I will curse your blessings. Thus He uttered the curse in connection with his occupation for he was a tiller of the ground, and so He cursed his work. This then is the sense of the expression, it shall not continue to give unto thee her strength, meaning, "It will no longer yield to you its full produce as it had done till now

when you cultivated it.” And so did Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra explain it. It is possible that He also cursed him though the ground in that it should no longer yield its strength to him of its own accord; the fig-tree and the vine would not yield their strength in his estate, and the trees of the field would not yield him their fruit. Then He added, “Even when you work the ground by plowing and sowing, it will not continue to give you its strength as before.” Thus there were two curses relating to his occupation, and a third one — that he be a fugitive and a wanderer in the world. This means that his heart will not be at rest, and he will lack the tranquility to remain in one place on the earth; he will wander forever for the punishment of murderers is exile. The expression in that it hath opened its mouth to take thy brother’s blood means: “You have killed your brother and covered his blood with the earth, and I will decree upon it that it uncover its blood, and she shall no more cover her slain for it will be punished together with all that is covered up in it, such as seed and plant.” This is the punishment for all blood-letting on the earth, even as it is written, For blood, it polluteth the land. The pollution of the land consists of a curse upon its produce, as it is written: When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the wine vat to draw out fifty press-measures, there were but twenty.

**4:13** And Qayin said to the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

#### RAMBAN

**MY SIN IS GREATER THAN I CAN BEAR.** This is in the form of a question: “You bear the worlds above and below, and is it impossible for You to bear my sin?” Thus the words of Rashi quoting Bereshith Rabbah. The correct plain interpretation is that it is a confession. Cain said: “It is true that my sin is too great to be forgiven, and Thou art righteous, O Eternal, and upright are Thy judgments even though You have punished me exceedingly. And now behold, Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the land for in being a fugitive and a wanderer unable to stay in one place, behold, I am driven from the land and there is no place where I can find rest. And from Thy face shall I be hid whereas I will not be able to stand before You to pray or bring a sacrifice and meal-offering for I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. But what shall I do? Whosoever findeth me shall slay me, and You in Your manifold loving-kindness did not decree death upon me.” The sense of this is that Cain said before G-d: “Behold, my sin is great, and You have punished me exceedingly, but guard me that I should not be punished more than You have decreed upon me for by being a fugitive and wanderer and unable to build myself a house and fences at any place, the beasts will kill me for your shadow has departed from me.” Thus Cain confessed that man is impotent to save himself by his own strength but only by the watchfulness of the Supreme One upon him.

**4:15** And the Lord said to him, Therefore whoever slays Qayin, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Qayin, lest any finding him should smite him.

#### RAMBAN

Now because Scripture says, And the Eternal appointed a sign for Cain, and it does not say, “and G-d gave him a sign,” or “made him a sign,” it indicates that He appointed for him a steady sign which would always be with him. Perhaps it indicates that as he wandered from place to place he had a sign from

G-d indicating the way in which he should walk, and by that he knew that no misfortune would overtake him on that road. In Bereshith Rabbah the Rabbis similarly stated, “Rabbi Aba said: ‘He gave him a dog.’” Since he feared the beasts, He gave him one of them to walk before him, and wherever the dog turned to go, Cain knew that G-d commanded him to go there and that he would not be killed by any living creature. Now the Sages singled out a contemptible sign [a dog] as was befitting him, but the intent is that there was with him a perpetual sign showing him the way to go for such is indicated in the word *vayasem* (and He appointed).

#### OR HACHAIM

**This is why he who murders Cain will be avenged sevenfold** (or after seven generations). The reason the Torah wrote לכן, therefore, is to show that Cain knew full well that if G-d would not protect him, anyone who encountered him (Cain the murderer) would kill him. G-d placed a sign on Cain’s forehead as a sign of pity because Cain had finally shown awareness of G-d’s השגחה, supervision of the fate of every individual. This “sign” was the same as the tradition that by merely looking at a צדיק one can tell that he is a G-d-fearing person (compare Exodus 12,13: “this blood will be a sign for you.” This means that the מצוה you have performed in preparing the paschal lamb will be accounted as a sign.) Such “signs” act as protection for the righteous against a variety of dangers.

**4:16** And Qayin went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, to the east of ‘Eden.

#### RAMBAN

**AND CAIN WENT OUT FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE ETERNAL.** The sense thereof is that he never stood before Him any more, as he meant when he said, and from Thy face shall I be hid, [as explained above]. And he dwelt in the land of Nod. The sense thereof is that Cain did not traverse the entire world, but he dwelt in that land, perpetually wandering therein and not resting at all in any one place thereof, and so it was forever called “the land of Nod (wandering)” after him.

**4:17** And Qayin knew his wife; and she conceived, and bore Ḥanokh: and he built a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Ḥanokh.

#### RAMBAN

**AND HE BUILT A CITY, AND CALLED THE NAME OF THE CITY AFTER THE NAME OF HIS SON ENOCH.** For at first Cain thought that he would be childless on account of his sin, but after a child was born to him he began to build a city for his son to dwell therein. But because he himself was cursed and his works would not prosper, he called the city “Enoch,” thus proclaiming that he did not build it for himself since he has no city or dwelling place in the land because he was a fugitive and wanderer; rather, the building would be for Enoch, and it is as if Enoch had built it for himself. Now since it does not say *vayiven* ir (and he built a city) — [but rather, *vayehi boneh ir*, which literally means “and he was building a city,”] as it says elsewhere, *vayiven* (and he build) Nineveh; And the children of Gad built Dibon — it indicates that he was building the city all his days because his works were cursed. Thus he would build a little with effort and toil, and then move and wander off from that place and return there and build a little more, but he would not prosper in his ways. The descendants of Cain and his works were recorded in Scripture in order to make known that G-d is

long-suffering and that He prolonged the time of his punishment, for he begot children and children's children, and then it relates how He visited the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and his descendants perished. Our Rabbis say that Cain lived many years and that he died in the flood. Thus his hoary head did not go down to the grave in peace, rather he saw his destruction and all his seed with him. It would appear that Cain's descendants consisted of only six generations until the flood, while among the descendants of Seth [the third son of Adam] there were an additional two generations before the flood. [It may be that Cain's descendants consisted of more than six generations before the flood, but Scripture] had no need to relate anything concerning them. It recorded only the names of those who began the building of cities, the grazing of sheep, the art of music, and the skill of working with metals. Scripture also recorded Lamech's chastisement of his wives in order to tell us that he did beget children but his sons perished before they begot offspring.

## חמישי FIFTH ALIYAH

**4:22** And Zilla, she also bore Tuval-qayin, forger of every sharp instrument in brass and iron: and the sister of Tuval-qayin was Na'ama.

### RAMBAN

**FORGER OF EVERY CUTTING INSTRUMENT OF BRASS AND IRON.** He was a forger and cutter of all brass and iron. Scripture thus states that he was a forger and cutter in all works of brass and iron. A similar [usage in transposing a word is found in the verse]: Forgive all iniquity, and accept that which is good. In the opinion of Onkelos, however, this is connected with the first verses, meaning he was the father of every forger and cutter in brass and iron.

**AND THE SISTER OF TUBAL-CAIN WAS NAAMAH.** This is as if Scripture would say: "and a sister was born to him and her name was Naamah." A similar sense is found in the verses: And Lotan's sister was Timnah; And Miriam their sister; His sister's name was Maacah. In Bereshith Rabbah there are some Rabbis who say that Naamah was Noah's wife. "And why did they call her Naamah [which means lovely]? Because her deeds were lovely and pleasant." By this the Rabbis meant to say that she was famous in those generations because she was a righteous woman and she gave birth to righteous children. This was why Scripture mentioned her. If so, a small remembrance of Cain was left in the world. However, if we say that she was not the woman from whom Noah begot his three sons, there is no reason for Scripture mentioning her. However, our Rabbis have another Midrash concerning her which states that she was the very beautiful woman in whom the bnei ha'elohim erred. This is hinted in the verse, And the 'bnei ha'elohim' saw the daughters of men, as mentioned in Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer. But other sources have it that Naamah was the wife of Shamdon, the mother of Ashmedai, and it is from her that the demons were born for her name is indeed found in the writings of "the use of the demons." Scripture hints and deals briefly with such hidden matters.

## שישי SIXTH ALIYAH

**4:23** And Lemekh said to his wives, 'Ada and Zilla, Hear my voice; wives of Lemekh, hearken to my speech: for I have slain a man for wounding me, and a young man for my hurt.

### RAMBAN

**AND LAMECH SAID UNTO HIS WIVES.** For the sense of this verse, the commentators have depended on the opinion of Onkelos who explained therefore whosoever slayeth Cain vengeance shall be taken on him 'shivatha'im' as meaning that at the end of seven generations, vengeance shall be taken on him [Cain], but not now because G-d would be long-suffering with him. Now Lamech's wives feared to bear children because they would be the seventh generation to Cain, but he comforted his wives by saying that G-d would be forbearing with him for yet seventy-seven generations because he would pray before Him, for He is long-suffering and would have mercy upon him. Or it may be that Lamech's words were an absurd a fortiori argument, in accordance with the Midrash that Rashi mentioned, [namely: "For if so, the Holy One, blessed be He, could never exact His debt nor fulfill His word."] If so, Scripture is stating: "Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken of the seventh generation" and not in his days. And this is the translation of Onkelos: "All who would slay Cain! In seven generations, punishment will be exacted of him [Cain]." But if so, it would have been proper that the verse, And Lamech said unto his wives, appear before [Verse 20: And Adah — Lamech's wife — bore Jabal]. In my opinion, the word shivatha'im does not mean "seven generations" because this word is not used for seven separate units but rather for the multiplying of one thing seven times, such as: refined 'shivatha'im' (sevenfold); restore 'shivatha'im' (sevenfold); and the light of the sun shall be 'shivatha'im', meaning doubled and redoubled seven times. But the meaning of therefore, whosoever slayeth Cain is, according to its real sense, that G-d said: "Therefore, whosoever slayeth Cain will have vengeance taken on him sevenfold, for I will punish his slayer seven times for his sin, since I have promised Cain that he will not be slain in view of his fear of Me and his confession before Me." However, the matter of Lamech and his wives is not mentioned clearly in Scripture. We could also say that they feared lest Lamech be killed as a punishment for his ancestor's sin since G-d did not tell Cain, "I have forgiven you." Instead, He promised him only that he will not be slain, but He would collect His debt from his children, and they did not know when. And so indeed the matter happened. Lamech, however, comforted them by saying that G-d would have mercy on him even as He had mercy on Cain, for he had cleaner hands than Cain, and he also would pray before Him and He would hear his prayer. However, it appears to me that Lamech was a very wise man in every craft, and he taught his eldest son [Jabal] the business of pasturing according to the nature of the cattle. To the second son [Jubal] he taught the art of music, and he taught the third one [Tubal-Cain] to forge metals and to make swords, spears, javelins, and all instruments of war. His wives were then afraid that he might be punished because he brought the sword and murder into the world, and he thus retained in his hand the evil deed of his ancestor [Cain] since he was a descendant of the first murderer and he created the waster to destroy. But he [Lamech] told them: "I did not slay a man by wounds, nor a

child by bruises, as did Cain, and G-d will not punish me. Instead, He will guard me from being killed moreso than Cain" He [Lamech] mentioned this in order to say that man cannot kill only with the sword and javelin; death caused by wounds and bruises is a worse death than by the sword. Therefore, the sword is not the cause of murder, and there is no sin upon him who made it.

**5:1** This is the book of the generations of Adam (Man). In the day that God created mankind, in the likeness of God He made him;

#### RAMBAN

**THIS IS THE BOOK OF THE GENERATIONS OF ADAM.** These are the children He will mention in the chapter. In my opinion, this alludes to the entire Torah, for the entire Torah is the book of the generations of Adam. Therefore, He says here "book" and does not say, "And these are the generations of Adam," as He says in other places, e.g. And these are the generations of Ishmael; And these are the generations of Isaac, and so in all such cases.

#### OR HACHAIM

**This is the book** (record) of Adam's descendants. The Torah uses the word ספר to allude to a story, סיפור. Which story is meant? Why does the Torah give the impression that the דמות אלוקים, the likeness of G'd that man was created in, existed only on the day he was created? Besides, seeing that the Torah had already mentioned this distinction of man when it first reported his creation, why did the Torah repeat it here once more? Why did the Torah repeat once more that man was created male and female? Why did the Torah repeat the words ביום הבראם, "on the day they were created," at the end of the verse?

The Torah wished to demonstrate that all of G'd's ways are designed to ensure that life continues. When the Torah recorded some history for both obvious and hidden reasons, it became necessary to mention the death of Adam and his descendants. G'd began the report by stressing that as far as He was concerned none of this tragedy needed to have happened. People should not accuse G'd as having toyed with creating living beings only in order to destroy them whenever He felt like it. After all, why would G'd bother to create at all if not for the benefit of His creatures? This being the case, why would He destroy the very finest of His products? G'd therefore wanted to go on record that if the descendants of Adam were mostly doomed it was because of their תולדות their own developments, i.e. their own inadequacies, not G'd's. The word תולדות then predominantly refers to man's deeds. Rashi has already told us in connection with Genesis 6,9: נח, אלה תולדות נח, that the principal descendants of the righteous are their good deeds. In our verse the Torah stresses the reverse. When G'd created man He created him in G'd's likeness. His תולדות, developments, however, all tended to run counter to G'd's will. Ever since the day he was created man developed away from G'd's likeness. David expressed this more eloquently when he paraphrased G'd as saying (Psalms 82,6-7) "I had taken you for divine beings...but you shall die as humans."

The reason the Torah repeats that man was created both male and female is to make it clear that though Eve became a separate person only subsequently, the דמות אלוקים, the likeness of G'd, applied to her just as much as it did to Adam. At the same time the Torah wanted to stress an essential difference between G'd and man. Whereas G'd does not procreate, man and woman,

though G'd-like in some respects, were meant to procreate. The Torah continues to repeat that G'd had blessed mankind and called their combined name ADAM, to show that He had equipped man with all the advantages possible. Having repeated all this information, the Torah then reports the lifespan of Adam and subsequent generations. Their deaths were due to their own actions.

**5:2** male and female He created them; and blessed them, and called their name Man, in the day when they were created.

#### RAMBAN

**AND HE BLESSED THEM.** This means that He gave them the power of procreation, to be blessed forever with very many sons and daughters. The intent is to state that begetting offspring comes as a blessing of G-d, for Adam and Eve were not born but were created from nothing and they were blessed to do so [to beget offspring].

**AND HE CALLED THEIR NAME ADAM.** Since the name Adam (man) is a generic name for the whole human species, Scripture mentions that G-d called the first pair by that name because all generations were potentially in him. It is with reference to them that Scripture says, This is the book of the generations of Adam. Rabbeinu Sherira Gaon wrote that the Sages transmitted to one another [the principles of knowledge concerning] "the recognition of faces" and the arrangements of the lines in the face. Some of these principles are stated in the order of the words of the verse, This is the book of the generations of Adam, and some in the order of the following verse, Male and female He created them. But the secrets and mysteries of the Torah are transmitted only to those in whom we see signs indicating that he is worthy of it. These are the words of the Gaon, but we have not merited to understand them.

**5:3** And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Shet:

#### RAMBAN

**AND HE BEGOT A SON IN HIS OWN LIKENESS, AFTER HIS IMAGE.** It is known that all who are born from the living are in the likeness and in the image of those who give birth to them, [so why was this verse necessary?] However, because Adam was elevated in his likeness and image in that Scripture said of him, In the likeness of G-d He made him, Scripture explains that his offspring were also in this ennobled likeness. Scripture did not state this concerning Cain and Abel for it did not want to prolong the discussion of them. It explains it, however, in the case of Seth because the world was founded from him, [Noah being his direct descendant]. Or it may be that because Adam was created with absolutely perfect form, Scripture relates concerning Seth that he was like him [Adam] in strength and beauty.

#### OR HACHAIM

**He reproduced in his likeness and in his form.** The Torah stressed this positive development, seeing that neither Cain nor Abel represented ideal offspring, both of them dying either almost immediately or their offspring during the deluge. During the 130 years between the birth of Cain and Abel and that of Sheth most of the pollutant Eve absorbed from the serpent had been expelled making it easier for a promising human being to

## FURTHER COMMENTARY · BERESHIT

emerge from her womb. We have a tradition that the third son is the most saintly, a tradition that proved itself with both Levi and Moses. It probably originated with the birth of Sheth.

**5:4** and the days of Adam after he had begotten Shet were eight hundred years: and he begot sons and daughters:

## RAMBAN

**AND THE DAYS OF ADAM AFTER HE BEGOT SETH WERE EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS.** Because of the long lives of these first men, Scripture states their ages before they begot children and also afterwards, and then sums them all up in the end until the generations which followed the flood. The reason for their longevity is that the first man, the handiwork of the Holy One, blessed be He, was made in absolute perfection as regards beauty, strength, and height. Even after it was decreed upon him that he be mortal, it was in his nature to live a long time. But when the flood came upon the earth, the atmosphere became tainted, and as a result their days kept on decreasing. Until the flood, their days were about the length of Adam's; some even lived longer than Adam. And Shem [Noah's son], who was born before the flood, lived six hundred years; he benefitted from his innate strength, but the tainted air after the flood caused him harm, [hence he died at a younger age than that attained by the preceding generations]. The days of his sons who were born after the flood were still more shortened until they came down to four hundred years. You can see that this degree of longevity remained with them until the generation of the Dispersion, when the change of climates caused by the Dispersion affected them, and their days were again shortened. Thus you find that the life of Peleg, in whose days the earth was divided, came down to half their days, i.e., two hundred years. It would appear that in the generations of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, people lived seventy and eighty years, just as Moses, our teacher, mentioned in his prayer. But as for the righteous ones in their generations, The fear of the Eternal prolongeth days for them. For Pharaoh wondered about Jacob's old age, and Jacob in turn spoke to him about the long days of his fathers, even as he said, And they have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their sojournings. Now what the Rabbi has written in the Moreh Nebuchim 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 that this exception was due to the mode of living and food of such people or by way of a miracle. But these are words without substance. Why should this miracle have happened 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 also 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?

**5:5** and all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.

## OR HACHAIM

**The total lifespan of Adam comprised, etc.** There is a reason why the Torah describes the lifespan of Adam in general as well as in specific terms i.e. כל ימי אשר חי. We have to remember that the lifespan of every human being is determined prior to his birth. This rule did not apply to Adam when he was created as he would have lived forever had he not sinned.. The line ויהיו כל ימי אדם אשר חי tells us that his lifespan was determined only while he was already alive. When the Torah does employ the words ויהיו כל ימי פלוני this means that all the people mentioned lived out the full lifespan allocated to them at birth. The Torah did not intend to teach us arithmetic by giving us totals when it had already given us the number of years the respective person lived before fathering a son and the years he lived subsequently.

## שביעי SEVENTH ALIYAH

**6:1** And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them,

## RAMBAN

**AND IT CAME TO PASS, WHEN MEN BEGAN TO MULTIPLY ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH.** When Scripture mentioned Noah and his sons and wanted to begin the account of the flood, it said that as soon as men began to multiply they began to sin, and they continued their sinful ways for many years until Noah was four hundred and eighty years of age. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, decreed against them that "His spirit will not abide in them forever," but that He will prolong their years until their measure of sin is full, for such is the way of G-d's judgment.

**6:2** that the distinguished men saw that the daughters of men were fair; and they took them wives of all whom they chose.

## RAMBAN

**BNEI HA'ELOHIM.** The sons of princes and rulers. This is the language of Rashi, and so it is in Bereshith Rabbah. If so, Scripture relates that the judges whose duty it was to administer justice among them committed open violence without anyone interfering.

'KI' (WHEN) THEY WERE FAIR. [The meaning of the word ki here] is the same as in the verses: 'Ki' (when) thou seest the ass of him that hateth thee; 'ki' (when) a bird's nest chance to be before thee. When the daughters of men were fair, they would take them forcibly as wives for themselves. Thus Scripture tells of the violence and mentions further, whomsoever they chose, in order to include those who were married to others. Scripture, however, did not mention the prohibition concerning them clearly, and the punishment decreed upon them was only because of the violence, because this is a reasoned concept and does not require the Torah to prohibit it.

**6:3** And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive on account of man, for that he also is flesh: and his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.

#### RAMBAN

‘BESHAGAM’ (FOR THAT ALSO) HE IS FLESH. It is as if beshagam were written beshegam with a segol under the shin. And Rashi explained: “This quality is also in him, that he is only flesh, and yet he is not humble before Me. What would he do if he were made of fire or some hard substance.” This explanation has neither rhyme nor reason. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra explained that G-d said, “My spirit will not abide in man forever because of this violence and also because man is flesh, and when he reaches a certain age he disintegrates.” Ibn Ezra thus understands the verse as if it said, gam beshehu basar (also because he is flesh). But what need is there for stating this contention when it is known that they were but flesh, and death had been decreed on them, as it says, For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return? The correct interpretation appears to me to be that G-d said: “My spirit shall not abide in man forever because man also is flesh as all flesh that creepeth upon the earth in the forms of fowl and cattle and beast, and it is not fitting that the spirit of G-d be within him.” The purport is to state that G-d made man upright to be like the ministering angels by virtue of the soul He gave him. But he was drawn after the flesh and corporeal desires; he is like the beasts that perish, and therefore the spirit of G-d will no longer be sheathed in him for he is corporeal and not godly. However, He will prolong for them [this withdrawal of spirit] if they repent. The sense of this verse is thus similar to [the verse in Psalm 78]: So He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

#### OR HACHAIM

G'd said: “My spirit will not abide in man permanently. This verse needs someone to explain it. Our sages have given numerous explanations to it without explaining the plain meaning of the verse. It appears that the Torah wishes to tell us that a change occurred in G'd's dealing with man. During the lifetime of Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel, G'd personally had rebuked man for any misdemeanour. When man's deeds became increasingly repulsive to G'd, He decided not to deal with them on such an intimate basis.

The word רוחי in our verse therefore means “My Presence.” Man had forfeited the privilege of proximity to G'd's Presence. G'd's Presence withdrew from man in direct proportion to his deeds. As long as G'd had confronted man directly whenever He had reason to rebuke them they were on the spiritual level of prophets. When man began to profane himself (meaning of החל in 6,1), he no longer enjoyed that status. In the course of time outstanding individuals, צדיקים, appeared on earth. These individuals succeeded in restoring a closer relationship between man and G'd. After the destruction of the Temple there were no more prophets; the most that remained were individuals who possessed a degree of what our sages describe as רוח הקודש, a measure of holy spirit. Ever since Israel's eyes closed, we no longer have even ריח הקודש, a holy fragrance, not to mention רוח הקודש. The absence of this line of direct communication from G'd is the greatest misfortune for those of us who thirst for at least a fragrance of the holiness of our Father in heaven in order to revive our spirits. The curse we speak about originated with the generation of the deluge. G'd supplies the reason for this in our verse.

בשר בשגם הוא, man added to his abominations by adding the sin of בשר, adultery to his other sins. G'd hates sexual permissiveness more than anything else. As a result G'd resented having to communicate directly with such people.

The characteristic of the righteous is that they refine the body to give it spiritual content. The characteristic of the wicked is that they do the reverse. They degrade the spirit making it the tool of the body. This leads to the destruction of the universe. G'd referred to this when He said: “My spirit will not find satisfaction in them forever more,” not even in the world of eternity. This is because they have turned even their spirit into a tool of the flesh. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 108) states that the people who were destroyed by the deluge do not enjoy a life in the Hereafter.

Another way of understanding our verse is based on the use of the term רוחי. Whereas G'd frequently cancels an evil decree due to considerations of His attribute of Mercy, in this case G'd announced that the decree was irrevocable. Normally, G'd applies the attribute of Mercy because He keeps in mind that man is a mixture of flesh and spirit. In this particular case G'd gave notice בשגם הוא בשר, that the decree was final although man is also flesh.

Still another meaning addresses G'd's practice of paying the reward or punishment in the Hereafter, the righteous receiving his share in that world and the wicked descending to Gehinom. In this case, G'd gave notice to the wicked that they would not be judged after death but that since they had tainted their spirit as much as their flesh their spirit would also undergo the afflictions normally reserved only for the flesh. The 120 years G'd speaks about is the period needed to allow the righteous of that generation such as Methuselah to live out their allotted lifespan in full. The Zohar on Genesis 7,22 explained: “all that had a soul of living spirit in its nostrils, of all that were on dry land died,” as a reference to the righteous who died on dry land, before the onset of the deluge.

Another message contained in our verse is that henceforth G'd would never again apply the attribute of Mercy exclusively. The verse is introduced with G'd speaking in His capacity of the attribute of Mercy, ויאמר השם. It switches immediately to tell us that His spirit, i.e. that of mercy would not anymore abide in this world completely. G'd attributed part of the corruption in His world to His having exercised too much mercy. He had allowed man to indulge his greed too much. From now on G'd reserved more of His mercy for the Hereafter. As a result of this change of emphasis, even such a righteous man as our patriarch Jacob was not allowed to enjoy the benefits of this world in tranquillity. As soon as Jacob set out to so so, he experienced all the trouble with his favourite son Joseph (compare Rashi on Genesis 37,2).

**6:4** There were Nefilim in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the distinguished men came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them; the same were mighty men of old, men of renown.

#### RAMBAN

**THE NEPHILIM.** Rashi comments: “[They were called nephilim because] they fell (naphlu) and caused the downfall (hipilu) of the world.” This is found in Bereshith Rabbah. The masters of

language say that they [the Nephilim] were so called because the heart of man fell from fear of them. The same applies to the word ha'eimim.

**IN THOSE DAYS.** Rashi comments: "in the days of the generation of Enosh. AND ALSO AFTER THAT. Although they witnessed the destruction of the generation of Enosh when the ocean rose and flooded a third of the world, still they did not humble themselves and take a lesson from them." Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra explained: "also after the flood, since the sons of Anak were of the family of bnei ha'elohim." If so, we must say that either the wives of Noah's sons were of their [the Nephilim's] descendants and resembled them or that ibn Ezra will accept the statement of the Rabbi who advanced the interpretation that Og escaped from the flood, to which Rabbi Abraham will add that others too escaped with him [since the verse states: "The 'Nephilim' — (in the plural) — were in the earth... and also after that", which Ibn Ezra interprets as meaning after the flood]. The correct interpretation appears to me to be that Adam and his wife are called bnei ha'elohim because they were G-d's handiwork and He was their father; they had no father besides Him. And he [Adam] begot many children, as it is written, And he begot sons and daughters. Now these men, first to be born of a father and mother, were of great perfection in height and strength because they were born in the likeness of their father, as it is written concerning Seth, And he [Adam] begot a son in his own likeness, after his image. And it is possible that all the children of the first generations — Adam, Seth, Enosh — were called bnei ha'elohim because these three men were in the likeness of G-d. But then the worship of idols commenced, and there came upon men a weakness and slackness. And so they said in Bereshith Rabbah: "This is the book of the generations of Adam. Are not the first ones toldoth (offspring)! But what are they? [They are in the image and likeness of] G-d. They raised a question before Aba Kohen Bardela: 'Adam, Seth, Enosh?' At first, he was silent, but then he said to them: 'Up to here [Seth] they were in the image and likeness of G-d; after that, Kenan, vexers.'" Now when men began to multiply and daughters were born to them, the men of these first generations were in their strength, and because of their great desire they would choose the beautiful women of tall stature and good health. Now first Scripture tells that by force they took them unto themselves as wives, and afterwards it tells that they came in a promiscuous manner to the daughters of men who were not of that high degree, and the matter was not known until they begot children for them, and everyone recognized that they were not the offspring of other people but that they had been born to these bnei ha'elohim because these children were very tall. They were, however, inferior to their fathers in height and strength, [This is the meaning of the name Nephilim — inferior ones], just as the word Nephilim is used in the expression: I am not 'nophel' (inferior) to you. Still they were mighty men in comparison with the rest of the people. And Scripture tells that this happened in the first generation to those who were called bnei ha'elohim because they were of absolute perfection, and it is they who caused the daughters of men to beget nephilim (inferior ones); and also after that, for the nephilim themselves begot nephilim from them. The meaning of the expression, that were of old, is that after the flood, the men, upon seeing the mighty, would remember these nephilim and say: "There have already been mightier men than these in the ages which were before us." They were the men of renown in all generations afterward. This is a fitting explanation of this chapter. But the

Midrash of Rabbi Eliezer the Great, in the chapters concerning the angels that fell from their place of holiness in heaven — as is mentioned in the Gemara of Tractate Yoma — fits into the language of the verse more than all other interpretations. But it would necessitate delving at length into the secret of this subject.

## מפטיר MAFTIR

**6:5** And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that all the impulse of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

### OR HACHAIM

**G'd saw that man's wickedness on earth kept increasing. G'd regretted that He had made man on earth.** Why was the evil man did connected to "the earth?" The wording of the Torah gives the impression that man perpetrated evil deeds on the body of the earth, whereas their wickedness consisted primarily of violence and sexual perversions as per 6,11-12. While it is justified to describe the theft of land as violence and evil perpetrated on the earth, this is a mere technicality, a minor detail. Why did the Torah not simply say: "G'd regretted having made man," instead of saying that "G'd regretted having made man on earth?" This leads us to believe that if only G'd had made man elsewhere He would not now have had reason to regret it. Surely this is not what the Torah meant to tell us!

How do we understand G'd's "regretting" anything? Did not Bileam describe G'd (Numbers 23,19) as not ever regretting anything! Besides, what is the point of describing G'd as "saddened?" If this feeling had to be mentioned at all, it should have been mentioned after G'd had carried out His revenge on all the rebellious human beings and had wiped them out. The Torah addresses itself to the four elements man is composed of, fire, air, water and dust. These elements differ in importance and value, the lowliest one being dust seeing it is murky, opaque. The next higher category is water, followed by fire, followed by air or spirit which is the highest ranking of these elements. Although all creatures contain all four elements, different elements predominate in different creatures. The fish are made mostly of water, the birds mostly of air; this is why they can fly and hardly need to rest on earth. The salamander is a creature in which the element of fire predominates. Man is the only creature in which the lowest of the element, dust, predominates. The Torah reported G'd as having fashioned man "dust from the earth" (2,7). This accounts for man's primary habitat being earth. Man cannot live permanently either in the air, the water, or in fire. G'd had numerous reasons for arranging things in this way, one of them being the concept of מדרגות וסולם, that the universe consists of different levels and a ladder. In order for man to rise from one level to another it is important that the ladder which is the means for that spiritual ascent be firmly planted on earth.

When G'd observed that man's wickedness kept increasing, He realised that the fact that man was based on the lowest of the four elements was one of the causes. Also, his habitat was on earth which consists largely of the element of dust. This is the meaning of G'd saying that He saw that man's wickedness on earth had increased greatly. This is why G'd "regretted" not having made man primarily of a more refined element. The Torah prefaced G'd's "regret" by stating that man's thoughts were only

concerned with evil all day long, and He attributed this to the fact that man was not made predominantly of one of the more refined elements. G'd's "sadness" refers to the impediments that man's raw material posed to his attaining the objectives His Creator had planned for him. This is why the Torah did not say *ויתעצב אל לבו*, but *ויתעצב בלבו*. The word *אל* alludes to the ambitions G'd had harboured for man when He created him G'd did not want to change the ambitions He had entertained for man for reasons best known to Him; this is why He did not redesign man from one of the other three elements but rather allowed almost the whole species to perish in order to persevere with His original plan. Man's corruption did cause a severe setback to G'd's hopes and timetable. While it is perfectly true that the term "He regretted" is not appropriate for the Creator who has foreseen everything, the Torah is entitled to use the term because of the twin attribute of Mercy and Justice that G'd manifests. When man acts in accordance with the wishes of His Creator the attribute of Justice agrees to G'd giving predominance to His attribute of Mercy. When man rebels, the reverse is the case. Our verse describes that the attribute of Mercy preferred that man had never been made instead of agreeing that man should now be judged by the attribute of Justice. G'd was "saddened" as this was not sufficient reason to consider the whole universe as a failure, a wasted effort.

We may also understand the passage in connection with what Maimonides wrote in chapter 5 of his *הלכות תשובה*. "G'd and His knowledge are one and the same [not like man whose perceptive powers are outside his essence. Ed.]. We are unable to understand this properly, just as we lack comprehension of how G'd can know every detail of the future without such knowledge robbing man of his freedom of decision. All we know as a certainty is that G'd does not interfere with man's free choice. The *ראב"ד*, with characteristic lack of deference, adds that Maimonides is incorrect, that G'd's perceptions are similar to someone foretelling the future by means of a horoscope. Maimonides is surely closer to the truth as G'd's perceptions cannot be compared to man's. Who would dare suggest that G'd obtains knowledge from outside sources, through trial and error and all the other methods used by us to define the character of what we see, hear, or touch. G'd is able to deny, i.e. totally ignore and remain unaffected by knowledge He had previously acquired. It is this the *רמב"ם* had in mind when he wrote that man cannot comprehend the manner in which G'd perceives. When Bileam declared (Numbers 23,21) that G'd had not seen any iniquity in Jacob, he referred to exactly this ability of G'd to totally ignore something that He knew was going to occur in the future.

We can therefore say that at the time G'd created man He totally excluded from His conscious mind all and any sins that man would ever commit. He did so for two reasons. 1) G'd is good and does not dwell on evil. This reason does not suffice, however, because G'd needs to know what will happen and what will be the ultimate outcome of what happens now. 2) G'd excludes such future events from His consciousness so that the wicked cannot claim they had been programmed by G'd due to His omniscience, and that therefore they are not culpable for their evil deeds. The wicked believe in what we call "self-fulfilling prophecies," and they consider G'd's foreknowledge as belonging to that category. This concept is part of the verse (1,31): "G'd looked at all He had done and here it was very good." G'd "saw" i.e. foresaw, only what was good, i.e. the deeds of the righteous. Of course you will ask: "if so how could G'd punish someone for a

deed that He had not seen?" The Torah tells us that at at this point in time G'd chose to look at the deeds of the wicked; what He saw caused Him to regret that He had for so long ignored these deeds in order that His knowledge would not become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

**6:6** And the Lord repented that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.

**RAMBAN**

**AND THE ETERNAL REPENTED... AND IT GRIEVED HIM AT HIS HEART.** The Torah speaks in the language of men. The purport is that they rebelled, and grieved His holy spirit with their sins. The sense of the expression at His heart is that He did not tell this to a prophet, a messenger of G-d. This expression is also found with respect to thinking, just as: to speak to my heart, and other similar expressions. In Bereshith Rabbah there is a significant matter concerning this, expressed by a parable which the Rabbis bring of an agent and an architect. This constitutes a great secret which is not permitted to be written down. The one who knows it will understand why here the Tetragrammaton is written while in the whole of the rest of the chapter and the account of the flood, the name Elokim is used.

**6:7** And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth: both man, and beast, and creeping things, and the birds of the air; for I repent that I have made them.

**OR HACHAIM**

**G'd said: I will wipe out man.** G'd had to repeat here once more that He "regretted" having made man so that we would understand that G'd's regret expressed in the previous verse was not because of man's deeds, but concerned man's creation per se. Had G'd wanted to wipe out mankind only because of their deeds, anyone who had not committed a serious sin would not have been affected by the decree to wipe out man. This would comprise all the people under twenty years of age. If the decree was due to G'd's regret at having made man at all, everybody would be included in the decree. In view of the fact that the Torah tells us through the repeated use of the word *נחמתי* that every human being was included in the decree, the Torah had to continue immediately and tell us that there was one single exception, namely Noah. The Torah tells us that Noah "found favour in the eyes of G'd," i.e. not on account of his deeds. Once G'd had decided that He "regretted" having made man Noah's good deeds would have had no impact on his fate. He needed an act of grace by G'd to save him. The fact that G'd granted Noah grace does not mean that he did not deserve to survive based on his good deeds. There are certain categories of *מצות*, good deeds, which secure a person grace in the eyes of G'd. G'd has deliberately refrained from telling us which *מצות* fall into that category because otherwise everybody would merely concentrate on performing those commandments.

**6:8** But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord.

**RAMBAN**

**BUT NOAH FOUND GRACE IN THE EYES OF THE ETERNAL.** The meaning thereof is that all his deeds were pleasing and sweet before Him. Similarly: For thou hast found grace in My sight, and I know thee by name. This is like the verses: And He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison; And Es-

ther obtained favor in the sight of all of them that looked upon her. Scripture mentions this in contrast to what it said concerning his [Noah's] generation, namely, that all their deeds brought grief before Him, blessed be He. But of Noah it says that he

found grace in His eyes, and afterwards it tells why he was pleasing before G-d: because he was a perfectly righteous man. Noah