



CANDLE LIGHTING 6:07 PM | 29 TISHREI | OCTOBER 10, 2025 | HAVDALA 7:09 PM

**ערב ראש חודש
שבת פרשת בראשית
EREV ROSH CHODESH
SHABBAT PARSHAT BEREISHIT**

Haftorah is מחר חודש, read when the next day is Rosh Chodesh (Samuel I 20:18-42). We bless the month of MarCheshvan. Do not say either אב הרחמים or צדקתך צדק.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA	6:10 PM
SHKIA	6:25 PM
TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM	7:05 PM

SATURDAY

HASHKAMA	7:45 AM
SHACHARIT	9:00 AM
POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR	9:30 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA	9:53 AM
PRE-MINCHA SHIUR	5:15 PM
MINCHA	5:55 PM
SHKIA	6:24 PM
MAARIV	7:09 PM



Molad for MarCheshvan is Sun., Oct. 11, 9:43 AM & 2 Chalokim.

ראש חודש מרחשון יהיה ביום
ראשון ויום שני הבא עלינו ועל
כל ישראל לטובה

SEUDAH SHLISHIT

Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Betsy & Marty Sonnenblick on the Yahrzeit of Betsy's father, ע"ה Howard Perlmutter בן יהודה בן ירמיהו.

MAZEL TOV!

Mazel tov to Chatan Torah Robert Safren and Chatan Bereshit David Garfunkel. May you each continue to go "m'chayil l'chayil", from strength to strength!



TAKING DOWN THE SUKKAH



Volunteers will be needed to take down the Shul's Succah on Saturday night, Oct. 10, shortly after Maariv, weather permitting.

ETROG COMPOSTING DROP-OFF DEADLINE

Collection box will be available on the lobby from October 5 to 16. For more info, click here: [Etrog Composting Drop-Off](#).



SUNDAY
10/11

MONDAY
10/12

TUESDAY
10/13

WEDNESDAY
10/14

THURSDAY
10/15

FRIDAY
10/16

WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

SHACHARIT	6:20/8:00 AM	6:00 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM
2ND SHACHARIT MINYON - YISHTABACH AT 7:40 AM		7:10 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	6:10 PM	6:08 PM	6:07 PM	6:05 PM	6:04 PM	6:00 PM
Earliest Talit	6:07 AM	6:08 AM	6:09 AM	6:10 AM	6:11 AM	6:13 AM
Gedolah	1:11 PM	1:11 PM	1:10 PM	1:10 PM	1:10 PM	1:09 PM
Shkia	6:22 PM	6:20 PM	6:19 PM	6:17 PM	6:16 PM	
Tzait	7:02 PM	7:00 PM	6:59 PM	6:57 PM	6:56 PM	

Rabbi Ely Shestack

President Jay Herman

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Oct. 5 through 16** - Etrog Composting with GrowTorah
Oct. 11 - Sukkah dismantling after Shacharit.
Nov. 1 - Chesed Day.
Nov. 14 - Veterans Day Kiddush.
Nov. 26 - Thanksgiving Flag Football & Pies.
Dec. 2 - Chanukah Shiur w/ Dinner.
Dec. 11 - Shabbat Chanukah Dinner.

IN OUR FUTURE - KIDDUSH, SEUDAH SHLISHIT, & ETC.



- Oct. 17** - Birthday Kiddush.
Oct. 17 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by David & Lori Garfunkel in memory of both Jonathan ^{ע"ה} and Lori's mother רחל ברוניא ^{ע"ה}; and by Brett Norton in memory of his mother, Leah bat Meyer (Lynne Norton ^{ע"ה}).
Oct. 24 - Kiddush is sponsored by Lori & David Garfunkel celebrating Uri's Auf Ruf and upcoming wedding to Abby Elson.
Nov. 7 - Birthday Kiddush.
Dec. 5 - Birthday Kiddush.

BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY KIDDUSH



To add a birthday/anniversary to upcoming lists (next Kiddush on Shabbat, October 17), click here: [SIMCHA](#). Listings/sponsorships are \$36 per family per month. RSVP for the October birthday/anniversary Kiddush by Sun. night, Oct. 11.

BOARD MEETINGS - 8:30 PM

- Oct. 13** - ALSO A MEMBERSHIP MEETING
- Nov. 24, Dec. 29, Jan. 26, Feb. 23, Mar. 30, May 11, June 29**

SHIURIM



- PESHAT OF THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM, click here: [Parsha](#).
- TORAH FOR YOUR COMMUTE, via Whatsapp, with 3-minute daily Halacha insights. To join email Rabbi Shestack at rabbishestack@gmail.com.
- POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR, analyzing Mishlei (Proverbs).
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush.
- SHABBAT SHIUR, **SANHEDRIN CH. 1**, 40 minutes prior to mincha.
- TZURBA M'RABANAN w/ Zack Doberman, Wednesdays at 8:30 PM. In-person at the shul and via Zoom.
- SEDER ON THE SIDDUR, at Seudah Shlishit.
- BEGINNER CLASS ON HOW TO READ HEBREW, Monday nights, 8:45 PM, at the shul. To sign up, click here: [Hebrew](#).



GITA COOPERWASSER ^{ה"ע} YOUTH EVENTS

- Nov. 14** - Parent/Child Learning.
Dec. 5 - Chanukah program with children's seudah shlishit, followed by musical havdalah.
Dec. 19 - Parent/Child Learning.
Jan. 2 - Parent/Child Learning.

GITA COOPERWASSER ^{ה"ע} SHABBAT YOUTH INFO



- **SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS:**
3RD-6TH: ARIELYS & JELANNY
K-2ND: ADIRA & ISABELLA
2 YRS-PRE-K: ALEXA, ARNELLA & DIAMOND
- Youth groups for 3rd through 5th Graders starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on left on entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 4 years old through 1st Grade starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me, 9:00 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, Friday night, kids can come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- Children earn tickets for coming to minyan (Friday night and/or Shabbat day), asking the rabbi questions or attending parent-child learning programs! Tickets can be redeemed for prizes.
- HIATUS UNTIL FALL - Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit, 1st to 5th graders will get 10 Torah questions in 10 minutes from Rabbi Shestack, with special snacks, tickets and more.

18-25 Saddle River Road
 Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
 201.797.0502

<http://www.ahavatachim.org>



NAME	HEBREW DATE	CANDLE EVENING OF	DEDICATOR	RELATIONSHIP
Mirla Teitelbaum	1	October 11	Joyce Sperling	Mother
Leon Eisman	5	October 15	Jamie Eisman	Father
Jonathan Garfunkel	6	October 16	Lori & David Garfunkel	Son
Rhea "Tootsie" Markovitz	7	October 17	Lori Garfunkel	Mother
Alex Singer	8	October 18	Seth Bader	Grandfather
Henry Garfinkel	14	October 24	Shelly Winchester	Father
Rachel Kor	16	October 26	Hazkiel Kor	Mother
Helene Adler	16	October 26	Rose Dworkis	Mother
Paula Sperling	17	October 27	Arnie Sperling	Mother
Edith Wigod	21	October 31	Seymour Wigod	Mother
Jerome Greenberg	23	November 2	Natan Santacruz	Grandfather
Chaim Shlomo Ben Yechiyel	24	November 3	Arnie Sperling	Mother's Family
Raizel Bat Shlomo	24	November 3	Arnie Sperling	Mother's Family
Gital Bat Raizel	24	November 3	Arnie Sperling	Mother's Family
Yechiel Ben Chaim	24	November 3	Arnie Sperling	Mother's Family
Velvel Ben Yechiyel	24	November 3	Arnie Sperling	Mother's Family
Chaya Miriam Bat Raizel	24	November 3	Arnie Sperling	Mother's Family
Julius Ellman	25	November 4	Shirley Vann	Father
Lucy Heller	29	November 8	Joyce Heller	Mother-In-Law
Yetta Singer	29	November 8	Sheree Kor	Grandmother

DAVID SCHWITZER ע"ה SOCIAL HALL

Contact Lori at garfmom@gmail.com to book the David Schwitzer ע"ה Social Hall for an event or occasion. \$250 (members), \$325 (Associates), or \$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of clean up (and a \$150 refundable security/cleaning deposit). Private caterers must be approved by the Rabbi.

CHESED TEAM

If you or someone you know needs assistance, email us at chesed@ahavatachim.org.

YAHRTZEIT PLAQUES

Memorialize a loved one with a plaque, \$300 for members/\$450 for nonmembers. We will strive to send you written notice of upcoming yahrzeit and announce name during public Yizkor. Email Amy at yahrzeit@ahavatachim.org to arrange.

DONATE A SEFER, ETC.

Donate Siddurim & Machzorim (\$40), and Chumashim (\$60). Contact David at dmgarfunkel@gmail.com for details.

MISHEBAYRACH

For a Mishebayrach pledge to give Tzedakah on behalf of those for whom you asked Hashem's blessing, when you send a check please indicate in the memo section what it is for.

HONORARIA

The available Honoraria list will be provided upon request by contacting Steven Plotnick at seplotnick@gmail.com.

SINGLES SHIDDUCH GROUP

Reach out to Rabbi Shestack or Sara Levine (saralevine06@gmail.com) if interested.

SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorships opportunities for Yahrzeits, Refuahs, and Hodahs (thanks), are available for regular shiurim, youth events and similar activities (but not for established honorariums or sponsorship funded events). Cost of sponsorship (shiur or youth event) is \$100 per sponsor. Multiple sponsors for an event will be accepted. Sponsorships will be listed in the bulletin and announced at the event (and, if possible, a placard with the sponsorship will be prepared and displayed at the event).

Sponsorships do not include any extra amenities (such as food). Please contact Steve Plotnick for questions or clarifications.

MEN'S CLUB

Email MensClub@AhavatAchim.Org to join the Men's Club.

MARCHESHVAN ADAPTED FROM CHABAD.ORG

The Jerusalem Talmud informs us that "the names of the months came up with us from Babylonia."¹ Until the Babylonian exile, the months were either known by their number, e.g., "the first month," or by names that are not commonly used nowadays. In fact, in the Book of Kings, this month is called "the month of Bul, the eighth month,"² counting from the springtime month of Nissan. The post-Babylonian-exile Scriptures (such as Esther and Nechemia), while mentioning other months, never mention this month, so there is no clear scriptural inference one way or the other. Some suggest that "Marcheshvan" appears to come from the Akkadian word meaning "the eighth month."³

Marcheshvan vs. Cheshvan

The Mishnah⁴ and Talmud,⁵ and many later works, call the month Marcheshvan. This is also the case when dating Jewish legal documents or blessing the new month.⁶ On the other hand, we find that in the oldest extant esoteric work, Sefer Yetzirah (the Book of Formation)—a book predating and mentioned in the Talmud⁷—the month is referred to as Cheshvan.⁸ The Zohar likewise calls it Cheshvan.⁹ And this is how it is usually called in everyday speech. So why the discrepancy? Because there is a difference of opinion whether the month's true name is Marcheshvan, or whether it really is Cheshvan and the mar is merely an appellation added to describe the month. There are a number of explanations offered as to the deeper meaning behind the mar in Marcheshvan.

Bitterness

Some explain that mar means "bitterness" (think of the maror we eat on Passover). The month is seen as bitter for a number of reasons: (1) After the holidays of Tishrei, the month of Marcheshvan is devoid of any holidays,¹⁰ (2) Sarah (and Rachel) passed away during this month,¹¹ and (3) During the First Temple Era the Jewish nation split into two kingdoms and Jeroboam, king of the northern tribes, instituted a pagan holiday in the month of Cheshvan to counter the worship of G-d that took place in Jerusalem.¹²

A Drop of Water

Others explain that the Hebrew word mar means "a drop of water," as in the verse "like a drop (mar) from a bucket."¹³ It is in this month in the land of Israel that we begin praying for rain, and adding mar is a prayer for rain.¹⁴ Also, the Mabul (Great Flood) in the times of Noah began in this month.¹⁵ Commentators point out that the original name for the month found in Scriptures, "Bul," is also a reference to the Mabul.¹⁶

Head or Master

Some suggest that the mar in Marcheshvan actually has a positive connotation, as the word mar can mean the honorific "Master", and it was given since this is the month that King Solomon finished building the First Temple.¹⁷ In truth, there is an element of bitterness here as well, for although it was finished then, the Temple wasn't dedicated until later, leaving the month bereft of a possible holiday. Despite the dedication of the First Temple not being in the month of Marcheshvan, the Midrash relates that the Third Temple will be dedicated in this month.¹⁸ Thus, not only will it not be a "bitter" month, on the contrary, it will be a month of rejoicing!¹⁹ May it be speedily in our days!

1. Jerusalem Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 1:2.

2. I Kings 6:38.

3. Thus it would be related to the words Merach-Shvan: Merach - month and Shvan - eight. See however the Aruch Hashalem where he suggests that it is Merachesh-Van; Merachesh (flows) Van (water).

4. Mishnah Taanit 1:3-4.

5. See, for example, Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 7a.

6. See, however, Minhagei Vermaisa 234, which says that the people of Worms, Germany, had the custom to call the month Cheshvan when blessing the month.

7. See, for example, Talmud Sanhedrin 65b.

8. Sefer Yetzirah 5:4.

9. See, for example, Zohar 2:275b, 3:260b, Zohar Chodosh 42a.

10. See Sdei Chemed, Maarechet Chatan U'Kallah 23.

11. See Esther Rabbah 7:13 and Sdei Chemed, Maarechet Chatan U'Kallah 23.

12. I Kings 12; see also Sefer Hatodaah.

13. Isaiah 40:15.

14. Pri Chadash, Even Haezor 126:7.

15. Opinion of Rabbi Eliezer in Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 11b.

16. Radak on I Kings 6:38.

17. See I Kings 6:38.

18. Yalkut Shemoni, Melachim 184.

19. Torat Menachem, 5742, vol. 1, p. 353-354; Bnei Yissaschar 2:56-57.

AHAVAT ACHIM MEMBERSHIP/ HOSPITALITY

Email Sara at membership@ahavatachim.org for membership details or Shabbat hospitality.

PERSONAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Various life cycle events related to members are announced in the bulletin (e.g., births and weddings of children/grandchildren, bar/bat mitzvahs of children, deaths requiring shiva observance, as well as travel to/from Israel to study). Other personal announcements are not appropriate except as part of the bulletin's dedication (\$36 cost - \$54 with photo).

NUMBERS & INFO

ERUV: To subscribe for updates, email fairlawneruv@groups.io. Check status at <https://groups.io/g/fairlawneruv> or call 201-254-9190.

MIKVAH: 201-796-0350. At Shomrei Torah. Go to <http://www.fairlawnmikvah.org/> for online booking.

TWITTER: AhavatAchimFL

FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100091322384429

INSTAGRAM: www.instagram.com/ahavatachim/

FLICKR: flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums

BULLETIN DEDICATIONS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AND SHUL CALENDAR

Email seplotnick@gmail.com for an announcement of a simcha, refuah or life cycle event in the bulletin or to dedicate a bulletin for \$36 (\$54 w/Photo).

COMMUNITY SECURITY SERVICE

To become part of our community security service, email Margo at security@ahavatachim.org.



Mishlei/Proverbs
Post-Hashkama Shiur 44 – Wine, Deep Waters and a Pure Heart

אֲלֵךְ הֵינִי הַמָּה שֶׁכָּר וְכָל־שֹׁגָה בּוֹ לֹא יִחַפּוּם: בְּהֵם כַּפִּיר אֵימַת מְלֹךְ מִתְעַבְּרוֹ חוֹמָא נִפְשׁוֹ: יִכְבֹּד לֹאִישׁ שִׁבְת מְרִיב וְכָל־אֵיִל יִתְגַּלֵּעַ:
דְּמַחֲרָף עֲצָל לֹא־יִחַרֵּשׁ וְשָׂאֵל (כְּתִיב יִשְׂאֵל) בְּקֶצֶר וְאֵין: "מִיִּם עֲמֻקִּים עֲצָה בְּלִב־אִישׁ וְאִישׁ תְּבוּנָה יִדְלָגָה: 'רֶב־אֲדָם יִקְרָא אִישׁ חֲסִידוֹ
וְאִישׁ אֲמוּנִים מִי יִמָּצָא: 'מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתִמְנוֹ צִדִּיק אֲשֶׁרִי בָנִיו אֲחֲרָיו: "מְלֹךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל־פֶּסֶט־דִּין מְזַרָה בְּעֵינָיו כְּלִי־רַע: "מִי־אִמַּר זָכִיתִי לְכִי
טְהֵרַתִּי מִחַטָּאתִי: –

¹Wine makes a scoffer and strong drink makes one boisterous; whoever is misled thereby will not become wise. ²The terror [caused by] a king is like [that caused by] a lion's roar; one who provokes him forfeits his soul. ³It is honorable for a man to keep away from strife, but every ignoramus¹ becomes embroiled. ⁴Because of the winter [cold] the lazy man does not plow; he will desire at harvest time but find nothing. ⁵Counsel in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of insight draws it out. ⁶Many call upon the man who promises them kindness, but who can find an honest man? ⁷A righteous man walks in innocence, fortunate are his children who follow him. ⁸When a king sits on the seat of judgement, he scatters all who are evil in his eyes. ⁹Who can say "I have purified my heart; I am cleansed of my sin"?²

A. The first four pasukim begin by describing those whose self-discipline is lacking, and the consequences therefrom.

- V. 1 → Wine makes a scoffer and strong drink makes one boisterous; whoever is misled thereby will not become wise.
 - o Wine, perhaps drunk with some moderation, leads to scoffing. As the intoxicant becomes stronger, the person imbibing becomes loud (remember that Shlomo previously directed scorn at loud women³). The conclusion is that scoffing and being loud present a barrier to wisdom.
- V. 2 → The terror [caused by] a king is like [that caused by] a lion's roar; one who provokes him forfeits his soul.
 - o Presumptively one only provokes kings if he lacks the self-control to refrain from doing so.
 - o At Mishlei 19:12 we learned that "[t]he king's fury is like a lion's roar. . . ." Malbim understands the chapter 19 reference to an already furious king, while our pasuk warns that even when the king is not angry, one must respect his authority, and violating that respect can have serious consequences.
 - o Translations of נִפְשׁוֹ seem to be evenly split between soul and life, perhaps based on who the translator believes the word "king" refers to, Hashem or a mortal king, respectively.
- V. 3 → It is honorable for a man to keep away from strife, but every ignoramus becomes embroiled.
 - o Alshich sees this as a contrast to the previous verse, *i.e.*, it is wise to avoid conflicts that could bring harm to oneself, but it is "honorable" to avoid strife even when there is no danger of adverse consequences.
 - o **"When two people quarrel with each other, they observe which of them becomes silent first. Then they say: This silent party is of finer lineage."** Kiddushin 71b.
 - o The Rema, citing the Beit Yosef in the name of the Raavad (Even HaEzer 2:4), notes that while remaining silent during a quarrel is praiseworthy, even in the face of accusations about lineage, silence in response to accusations made outside a quarrel may be treated differently.

¹ While we've commonly translated אֵיִל as a skeptic, here ignoramus fits the context better.

² Mishlei Chapter 20.

³ See Mishlei 7:11 & 9:13.

- V. 4 → Because of the winter [cold] the lazy man does not plow; he will desire at harvest time but find nothing.
 - o Meiri suggests that the underlying issue for the lazy man is his inability to justify suffering the cold when the gratification from the effort is not immediate, but delayed until harvest.

B. The pasukim then take a look at good people, what got them there, and identifying them. We will take as a given that the use of וְאִישׁ in these pasukim suggests a man of distinction.

- V. 5 → Counsel in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of insight draws it out.
 - o Rashi sees the double וְאִישׁ as informing us that two different men are being discussed. The Me'am Loez, seeing the reference to water here as a metaphor for Torah (as it is often used), suggests that the man "drawing it out" is the first man's Rebbe, getting the best from his student.
- V. 6 → Many call upon the man who promises them kindness, but who can find an honest man?
 - o It seems that this pasuk is encouraging us to distinguish between those who promise kindness and those who can actually be relied upon.
 - o Remember that we learned at Mishlei 14:20 that "the lovers of a rich man are many", suggesting that some of those lovers may not be sincere.
- V. 7 → A righteous man walks in innocence, fortunate are his children who follow him.
 - o Malbim offers that the man being discussed is moving between two stages of life. Being a צַדִּיק is certainly a positive description, but being a חָסֵד, a person solely dedicated to doing the will of Hashem, is greater.
 - o The Chevel Nachala has an interesting take on this pasuk. Entirely in my own words based on my understanding of his viewpoint, he suggests that the חָסֵד has been able to push aside the Yetzer Hara that often masquerades as intellectual analysis, in favor of simply living a Torah lifestyle with faith in Hashem and our forefathers. And this level of faith can be passed down to one's children, whereas righteous fathers who want their children to use critical reasoning in interpreting the Torah and halachot will too often see those children leave the fold.

C. We have a reference to a king sitting in judgement, followed by a perhaps rhetorical question: "Who can say, 'I am cleansed of my sin'?" Well, it is rhetorical if you accept the statement of Kohelet 7:20 that "there is no righteous man on earth who does good and never sins," and agree that this never ceases while a person is alive. Recall that we begin Maariv with "וְהוּא רַחוּם וְכַפֵּר עֲוֹן" – "And He, being merciful, forgives iniquity"⁴, even immediately after Yom Kippur. What sin could we possibly have committed in the brief moments between Neilah and Maariv? Apparently, even those few moments are enough.

- V. 8 → When a king sits on the seat of judgement, he scatters all who are evil in his eyes.
 - o Rabeinu Yonah sees this as a statement regarding the positive effect a righteous king can have on society when he commits his time and focus to administer justice among the members of his community.
- V. 9 → Who can say "I have purified my heart; I am cleansed of my sin"?
 - o Many see verses 8 and 9 as having a direct link. You may have the merit to live in a society with a righteous king rendering justice, but no mortal king can uncover and punish all sins. Hashem also renders justice from a seat of judgement, and wants you to look inward and judge yourself to motivate you towards corrective steps in Olam Hazei.

⁴ See Tehillim 78:38.



Etrog Composting with GrowTorah!

Are you wondering what to do with your etrog after Sukkot? Instead of letting it go to waste, join GrowTorah's Community Etrog Composting Program!

This initiative is a beautiful way to return your etrog to the earth, enriching our GrowTorah gardens' soil and fostering new growth.

Last Day for Drop Off: Friday, October 16th



For more information about Etrog
Composting and Bal Tashchit:
www.growtorah.org/etrog



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With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel.

Bereishit

WRITTEN BY RABBI SACKS IN 5768 (2007–2008)

The Garments of Light

The context is one of the best-known stories of the Bible. Together in the Garden of Eden, surrounded by the rich panoply of creation, the first human couple have everything they could possibly want – except one thing, a tree from which they are forbidden to eat. Needless to say, that is the one thing they want. “Stolen waters taste sweet,” says the Book of Proverbs. They eat; their eyes are opened; they lose their innocence; for the first time they feel shame. When they hear the “Voice of God” they try to hide, but they discover that God is someone from whom we cannot hide. God asks them what they have done. Adam blames his wife. She blames the serpent. The result is paradise lost.

The episode is rich in its implications, but I want us to study one of its strangest features. The woman has been told that “with pain she will give birth to children.” Next, Adam is informed that he will face a life of painful toil. There then follows a sequence of three verses which seem to have no connection with one another. Indeed, they sound like a complete non sequitur:

“By the sweat of your brow,” God says to Adam, “will you eat bread, until you return to the land, for from there you were taken. You are dust, and you will return to dust.” Then the man named his wife Eve, for she would become the mother of all life. Then the Lord, God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

Genesis 3:19-21

The problems are obvious. Adam has just blamed his wife for leading him into sin. He has also been condemned to mortality. Why, at just this juncture, does he turn to her and give her a new name? And why, immediately afterward, as they are about to be exiled from Eden, does God perform an act of kindness to the couple – giving dignity to the very symbol of their sin, the clothes with which they hide their shame? The mood seems to have changed for no reason. The bitter acrimony of the previous verses suddenly dissolves, and instead – between Adam and his wife, and between God and the couple – there is a new tenderness. Rashi is so perplexed that he suggests that the middle verse is out of chronological sequence. It is the end, not of the story of the sin of eating the forbidden fruit, but of the earlier scene in which Adam gave names to the animals and while doing so found “no suitable companion.” As we will see, that is not the only way of interpreting it.

Stranger still is the interpretation given by the first century sage Rabbi Meir to the phrase “garments of skin”, “*kanot or*” (or “*bigdei or*”). Rabbi Meir reads the *ayin* of the second word as an *aleph*, “*kanot or*” – and thus interprets the phrase as “garments of light.” This is an almost mystical suggestion and a deeply intriguing one. Why – not when they were in paradise, but as they were leaving it – were the couple bathed with Divine radiance, clothed in “garments of light”?

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said, “It is impossible for there to be a session in the house of study without

some new interpretation.” In that spirit let us see whether we can find new meaning in this passage.

When he heard the words, “dust you are and to dust you will return,” it was the first time Adam became conscious of his mortality. There is no more profound self-knowledge than this – that the world will one day be without us, and we without the world. Much of civilisation has turned on this single fact, that our lives are finite, a microsecond in the context of eternity; that however long we live, our time is limited and all too short. The Torah is silent on what Adam’s thoughts were in the wake of this discovery, but we can reconstruct them. Until then, death had not entered his consciousness, but now it did. What, if we are mortal, will live on? Is there a part of us that will continue, even though we ourselves are no longer here? It was then that Adam remembered God’s words to the woman. She would give birth to children – in pain, to be sure, but she would bring new life into the world.

Suddenly Adam knew that though we die, if we are privileged to have children, something of us will live on: our genes, our influence, our example, our ideals. That is our immortality. This was an idea that eventually shaped the character of the whole of Judaism in contradistinction to most other cultures in ancient and modern times. The Tower of Babel and the great buildings of Ramses II – the two most significant glimpses the Torah gives us of the empires of the ancient world – testify to the idea that we defeat mortality by building monuments that outlast the winds and sands of time. Judaism had a quite different idea, that we defeat mortality by engraving our ideals on the hearts of our children, and they on theirs, and so on to the end of time. Where the Mesopotamians and Egyptians thought of buildings, Abraham and his descendants thought of builders (“Call them not ‘your children’ but ‘your builders’”). Judaism became the most child-centred of faiths.

But there is one significant difference between personal immortality and the immortality we gain by those we bring to life and who will live on after us. The latter cannot be achieved alone. Until he became aware of his mortality, Adam could think of his wife as a mere *ezer kenegdo*, usually translated as “a suitable helper.” He thought of her as his assistant, not his equal. “She shall be called ‘woman’ [*ishah*] for she was taken from man [*ish*].” She was, in his eyes, an extension of himself.

Now he knew otherwise. Without Eve, Adam could not have children – and children were his share in eternity. He could no longer think of her as an assistant. She was a person in her own right – even more so than he was, for she, not he, would actually give birth. In this respect she was more like God than he could be, for God is He-who-brings-new-life-into-being.

Once he had thought these thoughts, recrimination ended, for he saw that their physical being, their “nakedness,” was not simply a source of shame. There is a spiritual dimension to the physical relationship between husband and wife. At one level it is the most animal of desires, but at another it is as close as we come to the principle of Divine creativity itself, namely that love creates life. That is when he turned to her and for the first time saw her as a person and gave her a personal name, Chava, Eve, meaning, “she who gives life.” The significance of this moment cannot be sufficiently emphasised. It was not that previously Adam had given his wife one name and now gave her another. It was that previously Adam had not given her a name at all. He called her *ishah*, “woman,” a generic noun not a proper name (Incidentally, he himself had not had a proper name until now either. He is simply called *ha-adam*, “the man” – a word that appears 21 times [3x7] in this early narrative. Not until he confers on the woman a proper name does he acquire one himself, Adam).

With the appearance of proper names, the concept of person is born. A noun designates a class, a group of things linked by common characteristics. Nouns speak of sameness and therefore substitutability. If we lose a belt, we can buy another. If our car is stolen we can replace it. “Belt” and “car” are nouns, in both cases objects defined by their function.

A name is different. It refers not to a class or group of things but to an individual in their individuality. The primary bearer of a name is a person. Only by extension do we give names to non-persons for which we have special affection – a pet, for example. The concepts of “name” and “person” are intimately linked. We cannot have one without the other. The single most important ethical truth about persons is that none is substitutable for any other. As persons, we are unique. “When a human being makes many coins in the same mint,” said the Sages, “they all come out alike. [By contrast,] God makes every human

being in the same image, His image, and they are all different.”

This is what gives human life its dignity and sanctity. Without it, we would not know love – for love in its primary sense is always directed to a person: to this man, that woman, this child, in their uniqueness. One who truly loves does not love abstractly. The lover in *The Song of Songs* never tires of describing his beloved, her hair, her cheeks, her eyes, her mouth, the things that make her what she is and not woman-in-general.

This is also what gives human love its particular pathos and vulnerability. We know that like us, our beloved will eventually grow old and die, and that they can never be replaced. If we knew we would never die, we would need no intimations of eternity. But because we know we will one day die, one of the greatest things that can happen to us is the moment beyond time (the one we know we will never forget) when two souls touch and between them form a bridge over the abyss of mortality. That is what *Shir HaShirim* means when it says, “Love is as strong as death, its passion as unyielding as the grave” (the idea Dylan Thomas translated into the words, “Though lovers be lost, love shall not; And death shall have no dominion”).

At another and more general level, this is what gives human life its sanctity. “A single life,” said the Sages, “is like a universe.” However life-like robots may one day become, there will always be this fundamental difference between a machine and a person. Machines can be replaced. Persons cannot.

The moment when Adam turned to his wife and gave her a proper name, Chava, was a turning point in the history of civilisation. It was then that God robbed the couple in garments of light. For it is only when we relate to one another as persons possessed of non-negotiable dignity, that we respond to the “image of God” in the other. In a sense the whole of Judaism – or at least mitzvot *bein adam le-chavero*, “the commands between us and our fellow human beings” – is an extended commentary to this idea. The rules of justice, mercy, charity, compassion, regard for the poor, love for the neighbour and the stranger, delicacy of speech and sensitivity to the easily injured feelings of others, are all variants on the theme of respect for the human other as an image and likeness of the Divine Other.

The idea goes deeper still. There is an intimate connection between the way we relate to other people and the way we relate to God – and this too is expressed in the difference between a noun and a name.

Though God has many descriptions, two are primary: Elokim and the four-letter name we may not pronounce, known generally as Hashem. The Sages distinguished them by saying that Elokim refers to Divine justice, Hashem to Divine compassion. The eleventh-century poet and philosopher Judah Halevi made a different distinction. The word *E-l* was generally used by pagans to signify a god, by which they meant, a force of nature (the sun, the storm, the earth, the sea, and the many other deities worshipped in ancient times). Monotheism was and is the insistence that none of these forces or powers represents ultimate reality. Each is only a segment of it. The One God is the totality of all powers. That is the God represented by the word Elokim. It is a collective noun, meaning, “the force of forces.” Elokim is God as we encounter Him in nature, in the vastness and intricacy of creation.

Hashem, by contrast, is not a noun but a name. It refers to God not as a power, or even the totality of all powers, but as a person, a “Thou.” Hashem is the One who speaks to us and to whom we speak, who loves us as a person loves, who hears our prayers, forgives our failures, gives us strength in times of crisis, and teaches us the path of life. In one of the most profound insights in the history of Jewish thought, Halevi taught that the difference between Elokim and Hashem is the difference between the God of Aristotle and the God of Abraham.

A philosopher can come to the realisation that the universe has an author, a creator, a first cause, a “prime mover.” But only a prophet (or a child of Abraham and the nation of prophets) can relate to God as a person. Hashem is God as we encounter Him not in creation but revelation.

If we now turn to the biblical text, we see a remarkable phenomenon. In Bereishit 1, God is described as Elokim. In chapters 2 and 3, He is called Hashem-Elokim. In chapter 4, for the first time He is called Hashem alone. Something changes in the course of these chapters: not God (who does not change) but the human perception of God.

In the first chapter, which speaks about the birth of the universe and the slow emergence of order from chaos, man is part of nature. That is the (partial) truth in the discovery that we share much of our DNA with other life forms. It is also why God is described as Elokim, the author of nature. In chapters 2 and 3, man begins to use language. He becomes, in the words of the Targum, “a speaking being.” God brings the various forms of life to him “to see what he would name them, and whatever the man called each living thing, that was its name.” But thus far he only uses nouns, first for the animals, and then for his wife, whom he calls *ishah*, “woman.” He has moved from nature to culture (of which language is the first step), but he has not yet understood the concept of a person. It is only after he gives his wife a proper name that the Torah uses the word Hashem alone. It is only after he has become aware of his wife as a person that he is capable of understanding God as a person.

Judaism was much more than the discovery of monotheism, that there is only one God. That idea is contained in the word Elokim. It was also the discovery that God is a person – that the fact that we are persons, with loves, fears, hopes and dreams, is not an accidental by-product of evolution (as some neo-Darwinians claim) but is an echo of the ultimate reality of the cosmos. We are not gene-producing machines but persons, each of us unique, irreplaceable, here because God wanted us to be. That

is the world-transforming concept of Hashem – and it was only when Adam responded to Eve as a person that he could respond to God as a person. That is why the commands between us and God are inseparable from the commands between us and our fellow human beings.

Now we understand that extraordinary sequence of three verses. Discovering his mortality, Adam knew that he could only live on through his children, born through an act of love. That was when he realised that immortality cannot be achieved by one alone, but only by the union of two. For the first time he looked on his wife as a person in her own right, and expressed this by giving her a proper name. Having done this, he was able to experience God through His proper name, Hashem. At that moment humanity ceased to be a mere biological species and became *homo religiosus*, man-in-search-of-God who meets Hashem, God-in-search-of-man. That is the profound message of the first three chapters of Bereishit, a story about language, relationships, and what it is to be a person.

Judaism is the story of how the love we feel for another person leads to the love of God, and robes us in garments of light.

Around the Shabbat Table



- Why must understanding the dignity of the other as a person precede the ability to have a personal relationship with God?
- How does having children help with the feeling of vulnerability that comes from mortality, and provide a sense of immortality?



Covenant & Conversation

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

FAMILY EDITION

INSPIRED BY THE TEACHINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Bereishit: The Blame Game

DEVELOPED BY RABBI COBI EBRAHIMOFF



parsha
recap

After the seven days of Creation, the Torah tells us about Adam and Chava living in Gan Eden. God had told them not to eat from the Etz Hada'at (the Tree of Knowledge), but the serpent tricked Chava into eating the fruit, and she then gave some to Adam. When God asked Adam why he ate it, he didn't take responsibility. Instead, he blamed Chava – and even God – by saying, 'The woman You put here with me – she gave me the fruit'.

- Why do you think Adam chose to blame Chava rather than saying sorry to God?
- Why do you think God put the fruit-tree in the garden if He did not want them to eat from it?



a closer
look

הָאִשָּׁה אָשֶׁר נָתַתָּה עִמָּדִי

"The woman You put here with me..."

(BEREISHIT 3:12)

RABBI SACKS TEACHES US:

Adam blames the woman. The woman blames the serpent. The result is they are both punished and exiled from Eden.

Bereishit is a set of variations on the theme of family, and none runs smoothly. With Adam and Chava comes conflict. With each successive generation, new tensions arise. This is the great power of the Book of Books (the Torah) and the reason it has never lost its hold on the human imagination: It is about us, people we can recognise and identify with.

The real dramas are not the ones fought in court or on the battlefield. They are the ones fought and resolved in the home, between parents and children, between siblings, between husbands and wives.



moral
matters

LET'S DISCUSS:

- Why do you think the Torah tells us stories about **people who make mistakes**?
- Can we learn more from **mistakes** than from **perfect behaviour**?
- Every generation in the Torah seems to face tension or disagreements, this is part of being human. But why do you think that people so often **blame, argue, and disagree**?
- Adam blamed Chava, and Chava blamed the serpent. Does blaming someone else **protect you from consequences**? Why does honesty matter, even when it is difficult?

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