

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 233

Bereshit | The Greatness of Man



MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

פרשת בראשית | אנגלית

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Parshat Bereshit

Rabbi Yoram's Unparalleled Uniqueness

It was a morning like any other. The prayers had just concluded in Rabbi Yoram Abargel's study hall, and the rabbi began his daily class in the holy Book of Tanya.

The daily Tanya class was a magnet for many spiritual individuals and seekers of G-d from every corner of Israel, souls yearning to sense and feel closeness to G-d.

Although the class was delivered at an early hour of the morning—seven o'clock in wintertime and six-thirty in summer—the many participants ignored every possible obstacle and came.

One particular day, Rabbi Yoram's face shone with unique brightness; his sweet words directly penetrated his listeners' hearts, and at the sound of his teachings, the eyes were filled

with many tears of longing to merit and behold a world perfected under the sovereignty of G-d.

With their imagination taking flight upon the wings of the spirit, the listeners heard with their minds' ears the blast of Messiah's shofar, and with the eyes of their imagination, they envisioned circles of dancers surrounding the King-Messiah, and the righteous ones would be with him.

Amidst the pure, G-dly atmosphere, the Third Temple arose impressively, and the High Priest stood and kindled the golden Menorah.

Then, in the midst of the lofty, uplifting lesson, Rabbi Yoram revealed a secret of his divine service and said:

"One difference between me and others is that while others concentrate on gathering vast amounts of Torah knowledge,

Parshat Bereshit - A Life Well Lived

trying to grasp and know as much of G-d's Torah as possible, and to study a great deal—I, on the other hand, upon every piece of Torah knowledge that I learned, I did not proceed until I first trained myself to act in accordance with that knowledge and to incorporate it into my life."

The uplifting daily lesson had

ended, yet it took the listeners a while to regain their composure and return to reality.

But they finally understood: the secret of Rabbi Yoram's unique sanctity and path in the divine service was toil and exertion, thoughtful deed, and meticulous execution—this was the song and melody of his holy life.

A Life Well Lived

For fifty-eight years, Rabbi Yoram sang this song of his life, the fifty-eight years before his untimely death.

Although fifty-eight years are all too few, Rabbi Yoram managed to accomplish so very much that today, when one pauses and contemplates his many achievements, they are left open-mouthed and amazed.

We are accustomed to tallying a person's life in years, and about one who lived many years in this world, we say that he enjoyed a 'length of days.'

However, in truth, a person's

longevity is not measured in years but in utilized and meaningful moments.

To each individual, G-d apportioned a certain number of moments to live in this world—and the true length of days is reckoned by how many of those moments one was able to utilize.

Thus, Rabbi Yoram merited a genuine length of days: every single moment of his life was consecrated to the service of G-d; he served his Creator with self-sacrifice, accepting upon himself the heavenly yoke and subjugating his heart and soul.

Parshat Bereshit - The Four Quarries of Creation

Who could describe upon paper the entire scope of the many ways and moments in which he served his Creator, innumerable moments that spanned his entire life?

Even in broad strokes, it is difficult to set and illustrate his greatness in writing, for Rabbi Yoram spent his entire life concealed greatly; all of the events of his life and his spiritual journey remain largely hidden and veiled.

Throughout his lifetime, he delivered tens of thousands of lessons—some in fixed venues (in the yeshivah that he established and in cities throughout the land of Israel) and some in occasional venues

(such as memorial gatherings and the like)—yet he almost never spoke about himself.

His life was filled with many tasks and challenges. He took upon himself many burdens: raising millions of shekels each month for the study of Torah and the support of the needy, bearing the worries and needs of tens of thousands upon his mind and heart—and nonetheless sharing nothing of his own worries and troubles with others.

It is certain that Rabbi Yoram merited to bring into actuality the divine will in the creation of man.

Before we explain what, indeed, was G-d's will in creating man, we must first preface.

The Four Quarries of Creation

Many are those who wish to enter the palaces of holiness and Kabbalah and to taste from the tree of life—the inner part of the Torah; yet few are the books that pave the way to this higher enlightenment.

Sensing this lack, the G-dly

kabbalist, Rabbi Chaim Vital, of blessed memory, wrote a guide for such spiritual seekers, calling it 'Shaarei Kedushah' (the Gates of Holiness).

In his work (Part 3, Gate 2), he elucidates the concept of the 'Machatzavim'—the "quarries"

Parshat Bereshit - The Four Quarries of Creation

from which the various elements of creation were hewn.

He writes the following:¹

The very first creation that the G-d emanated was the Ten Sefirot, and this is called 'The Quarry of the Sefirot.'

Next, He created another entity: a light that contains all of the souls of the people of Israel, which is called 'the Quarry of Souls.'

The Quarry of Souls is attached to the Quarry of the divine Sefirot, as it is written: "For as the sash clings to a man's loins, so too have I caused to cling to Me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah—declares the L-rd—to be My people, for a namesake, for praise, and for glory" (Jeremiah 13:11).

The light that descends from the divine Sefirot must pass

through the Quarry of Souls; therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He, is called the G-d of Israel, for He is G-d first and foremost of the Jewish souls.

It is from this quarry that the souls of Israel are hewn and descend to this world,² each according to his individual mission.

Afterward, He fashioned yet another creation: a light containing all of the angels. It is called the Quarry of Angels, from which all of the celestial angels are hewn.

This quarry is an outer garment to the light of the Quarry of Souls and receives its vitality from that source.

Hence, upon the destruction of the Temple, when the flow to the Quarry of Souls was minimized, the angels were left without their

Wellsprings of Wisdom

1. See at length in 'Od Yosef Chai – Derushim' (Parshat Bamidbar).

2. Rabbi Naftali Hertz Bacharach writes (Emek ha-Melech, part I, p. 353):

"According to the tradition we have received from Heaven, the 72-letter ineffable Name of G-d, in all of its

permutations and transformations as recorded in 'Chayei HaOlam HaBa' (composed by the G-dly kabbalist Rabbi Avraham Abulafia), is the original and all-inclusive explicit divine Name, encompassing every soul—for it is the axe through which all of the souls are hewn."

Parshat Bereshit - The Four Quarries of Creation

required influx of vitality, and regarding that moment it is said: “Behold, their valiant ones cry outside” (Isaiah 33:7).³

Finally, G-d created a diminished light—a dark light,

composed entirely of harsh judgments—called the Quarry of the kelipot (forces of impurity).

From it, all of the impure forces emanated, and from it, too, the souls of the nations were created.⁴

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3. For whenever no spiritual influx descends from the Quarry of the Sefirot to the souls of the Jewish people, the supply to the angels—who are external to them—is likewise and consequently deficient.

4. The natural "place" of the nations is in the Quarry of the Kelipot, though at times Jews, too, descend greatly till they, too, reach that lowly realm, as the following tale illustrates ('Sippurei Chasidim LaNoar,' vol. I, p. 148):

Once, the Rebbe Maharash (Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch) traveled to Paris with several of his disciples.

Upon arrival they asked him: “Where shall we lodge?”

The Rebbe replied: “At the Hotel Alexandre” (which was then one of the most luxurious in Paris).

He arranged for them to stay in rooms on the floor where the casino hall was situated, and a few hours later, the Rebbe Maharash left his room, entered the casino, and sat beside a young Torah scholar who

was playing cards, occasionally imbibing himself with a glass of nonkosher wine.

The Rebbe placed his hand on the young man’s shoulder and said: “Dear Jew, nonkosher wine is forbidden to drink.”

He paused briefly and added: “Nonkosher wine stupefies mind and heart. Behave as a good Jew!”

Then he concluded briefly, “Good night!” and returned to his room, deeply agitated.

The accompanying chasidim testified that they had never seen the Rebbe so emotionally moved.

In that hotel, when guests wished to go from floor to floor—elevators did not yet exist—they sat on chairs beside the stairs, and porters carried them, chair and all, to their destination.

In his great excitement and uplifted mood, the Rebbe sat on one such chair, and porters hurried over at once to lift it, but suddenly remembering that he was staying on that very floor, he excused himself and returned to his room.

Parshat Bereshit - The Four Quarries of Creation

Some hours later, the young scholar sought the venerable-looking man who had spoken with him and entered the Rebbe's room, staying there for a long while, and on the following day, the Rebbe departed the city.

The Rebbe later said that for several generations, a soul of such purity had not appeared—yet it had been sunk in the depths of the kelipot. That young scholar became the progenitor of a well-known chassidic family in France, a family of G-d-fearing and observant Torah Jews.

In this connection we share another story:

Rabbi Raphael David was born on Thursday, 5 Av 5687 (1927), to his father, the famed kabbalist Rabbi Chayim Yehudah Leib Auerbach, Rosh Yeshivah of the “Shaar HaShamayim,” academy for the study of the revealed and esoteric Torah.

From childhood, his brilliance, quick grasp, and lofty traits were evident.

In his father's home, he imbibed love for the Torah and holiness, which were hallmarks of his character throughout his life.

He also served as Rosh Yeshivah of the kabbalists of “Sha’ar ha-Shamayim,” where a small part of his greatness was revealed: a profound genius, expert and innovator in both the revealed and the hidden aspects of the Torah.

His life is long and fascinating; we shall recount but one episode:

Rabbi Raphael David was once walking through a small town in southern Israel, handkerchief soaked with sweat in hand, searching for a certain restaurant.

He had a prized student, Shlomo, who one day vanished from the yeshivah benches, and Rabbi Raphael David would not rest, searching until he learned that the lad was waiting tables in a modest eatery down south, and the Rabbi set out to visit him.

In the back of the restaurant stood Shlomo sorting out cutlery when the owner approached: “A rabbi would like to have a word with you.”

Curious, Shlomo stepped outside—and there shining at him was his teacher's eternal smile.

“Rebbi, what are you doing here?” he barely managed to stammer nervously.

“And you—what are you doing here?”

“I’m a prisoner, Rebbi; there’s no way out. The evil forces have captured me; I have no strength to change.”

“I see, the evil forces; how fine are your words,” the rabbi's voice flashed.

Without another word, the rabbi seized Shlomo's hand and broke into a run; a passing taxi stopped, and Rabbi Raphael David pulled his student in and

Parshat Bereshit - The Ten Utterances That Created Everything

After these four quarries were established, the physical

world we are familiar with was created.

The Ten Utterances That Created Everything

When it arose in G-d's blessed will to create our physical world, He fashioned it in six days—and He did so through the pronouncement of ten utterances.

On the first day He spoke two utterances: the first, “Bereshit” —“In the beginning” (Genesis 1:1); the second, “And G-d said: ‘Let there be light’” (ibid., v. 3).

On the second day He declared, “Let there be a firmament” (ibid., v. 6), separating the heavens from the earth and also creating the angels.

And so, on each of the subsequent days of Creation, He brought into being—through

these utterances—everything we know and are familiar with: the inanimate, the vegetative, the animal realms, and, ultimately, Adam, the first human being.

Yet there was a marked difference between the creation of Adam and the creation of everything else; while every existing creature was formed by a single utterance, Adam was created by two.

Take the cow as an example: G-d wished to create a cow, and by uttering the command that all living animals be created on the fifth day of creation,⁵ the cow came into existence. In the one

— *Wellsprings of Wisdom* —

declared to the driver, "To the bus station, please, to the bus to Jerusalem."

The evil forces surrendered before the Rabbi's resolve; Shlomo burst into cleansing tears.

Today, Shlomo is a Torah scholar and a father of children who toil in Torah

study and are meticulous in the observance of its laws.

5. The Tanya explains (Sha'ar ha-Yichud ve-ha-Emunah, ch. 1) that even created beings not mentioned explicitly in the Ten Utterances were nevertheless created through them, by means of permutations,

Parshat Bereshit - The Ten Utterances That Created Everything

single utterance, both the body of the cow and its animating life force were formed.

The same was true for all of creation—the inanimate, the vegetative, and the animal.

But when He came to create the human being, G-d did so not with one, but with two utterances:

The first utterance: “Let us make mankind” (Genesis 1:26); the second utterance: “He breathed

into his nostrils the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7).

With the first command, “Let us make mankind,” the human body was fashioned, together with the animal soul—also called the vital or foundational soul—and all of its components.

But with “He breathed into his nostrils,” G-d conferred upon Adam a divine soul, one that is literally “a portion of G-d above,”⁶ a spark of G-d Himself, as it were.

Wellsprings of Wisdom

substitutions, and gematriot of those very utterances:

“Although the word ‘stone’ is not found among the Ten Utterances in the Torah, divine life-force nonetheless flows to the stone through the combinations and substitutions of letters revolving in the 231 gates, forward and backward, as explained in Sefer Yetzirah, until it descends from the Ten Utterances and a combination spelling the word ‘stone’ is derived—and that is the stone’s vitality.

The same is true with every creature in the world—the names by which they are called in the Holy Tongue are themselves the letters of speech that have cascaded from level to level [to enliven them and give them vitality].”

See Betzur Yarum (Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel’s commentary) on Sha’ar ha-Yichud ve-ha-Emunah (ch. 1), where we expound at length how the general utterances of creation devolve into particular and individualized ones.

6. G-d desired that we know and be aware of the depth of the soul’s unity with the Divine; hence, the Torah uses the term “He breathed.”

It is, by way of illustration, as a medic who breathes mouth-to-mouth when offering life-saving first aid.

Breathing is far more intensive and exhaustive than speech; while speech is from the person’s external breath, breathing is from the innermost breath of a person.

Parshat Bereshit - The Source of Israel and the Nations

The divine soul that was placed in Adam contained, in

total perfection, the entire Quarry of the Souls.

The Source of Israel and the Nations

The creation of mankind having been completed, G-d addressed him and declared: "Adam, from every tree of the garden you may surely eat, but there is one tree—the Tree of Knowledge—from which you must not eat."

This command constituted the first trial and test in history: to eat or not to eat?

Had Adam withstood the trial and refrained from consuming the forbidden fruit until the beginning of Shabbat, the world would have reached its rectification and zenith of perfection.

But Adam did not merit this; the primordial serpent succeeded

in "biting" and harming him, and man ate from the fruit.

In that moment, the dreadful quarry above—the Quarry of Kelipot—was breached, and the souls of the nations slipped through the gap and emerged, forming a sizable column and entering into the body of Adam.

Up until now, Adam contained only the Quarry of Souls—namely, the souls of the Jewish people. Now, after the sin, the souls of the nations were found inside him as well.

In the words of the Arizal:⁷

"When G-d created Adam, all of the souls included in him were

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One who inflates ten balloons tires much sooner than one who lectures for three hours straight because inflating expels inner breath from inside the person.

G-d, so to speak, took His own inwardness and gave it to each of

us—that is the holy soul of a Jew, literally "a portion of G-d above."

Whoever grasps this and connects to the loftiness of their holy soul will never err or will at least do all they can to rectify their errors immediately.

7. 'Likkutei Torah' (Tehillim, Psalms 32).

none other than the souls of the Jewish people; had he not sinned, the nations would never have come forth into the world.

After he sinned, sparks of the nations' souls were mixed within him.

This is the meaning of the verse, 'You are called Adam' (Ezekiel 34:31) —only the Jewish people's souls were initially encompassed in Adam."

For the roughly 2,200 years that followed the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, great upheaval and confusion reigned. Souls

descended to this world in an upturned and disorganized manner: in the very same household, two brothers could be born—one from the Quarry of The Souls and the other from the Quarry of Kelipot.⁸

Then came our forefather Jacob, who merited to rectify and refine these quarries, and by the power of his lofty divine service, he caused all of the pure and holy souls of the Quarry of Souls to collect within him, and henceforth, only they would issue forth from him and from his seed forever onward.⁹

Wellsprings of Wisdom

8. Each of the patriarchs played a major role in rectifying the world, but Jacob, the third and last of them, achieved the decisive repair that the world required.

From Adam's sin until Jacob's era, souls were intermixed—pure, luminous souls with empty and hollow ones.

During that long span of time, many families had children of widely varying degrees of holiness and impurity, such that often, one son possessed a soul from the Quarry of

Souls, while his brother a soul from the Quarry of the Kelipot.

Our patriarchs experienced this as well:

Abraham fathered two sons—Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac's soul was holy, while Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, bore a degraded soul.

Isaac fathered two sons—Jacob and Esau. But while Jacob's soul was holy, Esau's was a dark soul.

9. Rabbi Chayim ben Attar, the holy Or ha-Chayim, writes the following (Deuteronomy 32:8):

Parshat Bereshit - The Source of Israel and the Nations

He also brought into effect that from that point forward, these holy souls brought into bodies would be called the souls of Israel, whereas those from the Quarry of Kelipot would

be termed the souls of the nations.¹⁰

Let us now further focus on the “portion of G-d above,” the divine soul of the Jew.

But first, one more introduction.

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"Know that every act of the Al-mighty is made as - 'this corresponds to that,' good versus evil.

All of the souls in creation have been given the taste of two trees—one good, one evil.

The good tree was Adam, and the evil tree was the evil forces that oppose G-d.

When Adam sinned and the forces of evil became intermingled with good, even evil souls began to emerge from his offspring—until one singular, pure soul was born, containing within it all the holy souls. Through this, the 'good tree' was once again clarified and renewed.

This individual was our forefather Jacob.

10. In our work, Ch’elev Ha’aretz ('Nefesh' section), we explain at length the exalted stature of the Jewish soul, which we quote here briefly:

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi writes in Tanya (chap. 1–2):

“Our world consists of four strata—inanimate, vegetative, animal, and intelligent.

Each is sustained and brought into being by divine life-force.

The “intelligent” class includes all human beings; yet, despite the external resemblance between Jew and gentile, there are several essential differences between them:

1. The very substance of the body:

The gentile body is formed from the four elements themselves—fire, water, air, and earth; the Jewish body, however, is fashioned from the spiritual aspect of those four elements as well.

In 'Hayom Yom' (29 Elul), the words of the Baal HaTanya are cited: "We have absolutely no concept of understanding just how precious to G-d the very body of a Jew is."

2. The vital soul that animates the body is entirely different by a Jew:

The gentile’s vital soul draws its life from the three wholly impure powers, and therefore no inherent, selfless goodness abides in it; acts of kindness are done only when some tangible or intangible benefit is anticipated.

The Fundamentals of Creation: Four Elements

King David, praises G-d in his songs, saying: “Praise G-d; I will

thank the L-rd with all my heart, in the counsel of the upright and

Wellsprings of Wisdom

The Jew's vital soul, however, receives its life from Kelipat Nogah, whose forces are neither good nor evil; hence, genuine goodness and kindness are innate to it.

As the Gemara states (Yevamot 79a): “The Jewish nation bears three signs that are innate to them: compassion, bashfulness, and the bestowing of kindness.”

Because these traits are embedded in their vital soul, a Jew's body is naturally drawn to mercy and benevolence, without requiring strenuous effort to evoke them.

3. The Divine Soul, which is unique to the Jewish people.

Besides the vital soul, a Jew houses a lofty entity called the Divine Soul, whose brilliant radiance dims the sun.

The Creator—who fashioned all existent beauty, hue, splendor, and majesty—testifies that the most magnificent thing that exists is the Divine Soul, declaring, “Israel, in whom I take pride” (Isaiah 49:3).

Plainly said, the Divine Soul stands far above the rank of angels.

Hence, only a Jew is suited and prepared to reveal the divine light within himself and the world; only he has the emotional capacity to truly feel

holiness, to experience elevation in holiness, and to grasp the profound depths of the holy Torah.

This is a great merit that the Jewish people have, but with it also comes a great and towering responsibility.

We bring an excerpt from Rabbi Meir Shalom Wallach (‘Maayan HaShavua,’ Leviticus, p. 538):

“The final Torah portion in the Book of Leviticus is Bechukotai.

After it first details the manifold blessings for one who heeds G-d's voice, in its second half, it enumerates the many curses for one who does not.

Amid the torrent of rebuke, the Torah says: “I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham I will remember, and I will remember the land” (Leviticus 26:42).

At first glance, what place does this verse have among the many passages of reproof? On the contrary, it speaks in the Jewish people's favor, recalling their noble and august ancestors?

Rather, this in fact obligates us to be worthy offspring of our forefathers and to walk in their ways.”

Parshat Bereshit - The Fundamentals of Creation: Four Elements

in the assembly... The power of His works He has declared to His people” (Psalms 111:1–2, 6).

The Ramchal, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, explains:¹¹

“In this Psalm, David lauds G-d’s greatness, saying, ‘The power of His works He has declared to His people’—Out of His love for Israel, G-d wished to reveal to them the hidden mysteries, to make known to them a wondrous wisdom unknown to all of the other nations who have no share or part in His Torah.

When the Creator, blessed be His Name, desired to fashion this lowly world, wherein man would dwell to serve Him and in His Name, He first prepared loftier worlds—worlds entirely spiritual, without corporeality; for only in our realm does physical matter exist.

From the four letters of His holy Name (the Tetragrammaton), He created the four elements:

From the letter Yud (י) —the element of water.

From the first Hei (ה) —the element of fire.

From the letter Vav (ו) —the element of air.

From the final Hei (ה) —the element of earth.¹²

This it is hinted at in the opening verses of the Torah: "In the beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was chaos and void, and darkness reigned over the face of the deep, and the spirit of G-d hovered over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:1–2):¹³

“The earth”—refers to the element of earth; “Darkness”—the

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11. ‘Shaarei Ramchal’ (“Binyan Olam,” p. 409).

12. The holy Arizal writes (‘Pri Etz Chayim,’ Gate of Rosh Chodesh, ch. 3): “The four letters of the Divine Name—the Tetragrammaton—correspond to the

four elements: Yud=water, Hei=fire, Vav=air, final Hei=earth.”

13. This verse, "Bereshit bara—"In the beginning He created" refers to the creation of the most primal potential

Parshat Bereshit - The Body - Fashioned of Four Elements

element of fire;¹⁴ "Spirit"—is the element of air, and the "Waters" refers to the very element of water.

Each and every element possesses its own innate nature and innate quality:

Fire—is naturally hot and dry; Air is by nature moist and

hot; Water is most commonly cold and moist; and the element of Earth is by its nature dry and cold.¹⁵

After these four essential elements were created, G-d continued on with the formation and creation of His entire world.

The Body - Fashioned of Four Elements

On the sixth day, the Creator took these four elements and formed from them the human body.

From the element of earth were made flesh, sinews, skin, and bones—"For dust you are,

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matter from which all existence was created.

The Ramban explains (Genesis 1:1): "The Holy One, blessed be He, created all beings from absolute non-existence.

In the holy tongue, the only idiom for producing something from nothing is bara—'He created'; yet in fact, He brought from sheer, absolute nothingness a very subtle substratum, one possessing no substance but rather a potential force ready to receive form and emerge from potency into reality. This is the first original matter, and is called by the Greeks 'hyle'."

14. The Ramban further writes (ibid.): "Fire is referred to as 'darkness,' because the elemental fire is dark;

were it to be red, the night sky would be red in appearance (due to the 'source of fire' that surrounds our atmosphere)."

15. Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh explains ('Lichyot Im HaZman, II, p. 45):

"Every element has an intrinsic quality and an incidental, secondary quality.

Thus, fire is hot and dry: the heat is its intrinsic property, the dryness is only incidental.

Air is moist and hot: essentially moist, incidentally hot.

Water is essentially moist and only incidentally cold.

Earth is essentially dry and only incidentally cold."

Parshat Bereshit - The Body - Fashioned of Four Elements

and to dust you shall return”
(Genesis 3:19).

From the element of water came the human blood vessels and other vital bodily fluids.

From the element of fire, the innate warmth of man was derived.

And from the element of air came the breath of life itself—“He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”
(Genesis 2:7).¹⁶

These four elements¹⁷ settled primarily in the following four organs, together with the associated 'humors' or natural characteristics:

The element of Water settled in the Lungs; these two are naturally related to the 'humor' of the White bile; The element of Fire settled in the Liver; these two are naturally related to the 'humor' of the Red bile; The

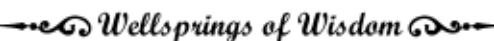
element of Air settled in the Gallbladder; these two are naturally related to the 'humor' of the Green bile; And finally, the element of Earth settled in the Spleen; these two are naturally related to the 'humor' of the Black bile.

The human being, having been created and fashioned by G-d, stood upon his feet, and his pure and refined heart and radiant smile cast light all around him.

We must add that from these four elements emanate the four foundational holy character traits, as explained by Rabbi Chaim Vital (Shaarei Kedushah, Part I, Gate 2):

From the element of fire comes humility—the ultimate lowliness, keeping far from every kind of anger that stems from hollow pride.

From the element of air comes silence, as if one is a mute, opening his mouth only for



16. As the holy Zohar states ('Sitrei Torah,' Lech-Lecha 80a): “In this fashion, He created the body out of four elements: fire, air, earth, and water.”

17. 'Etz Chayim' (Gate 50, ch. 2) by Rabbi Chayim Vital.

Parshat Bereshit - About The Animal Soul

matters of Torah and mitzvot, or what is necessary for bodily maintenance and to honor others.

From the element of water arises revulsion toward all bodily pleasures and unnecessary indulgences.

Finally, from the element of

earth comes to man a sense of joy and satisfaction in one's lot—"for all that Heaven does is for good"—and an eagerness, with utmost gladness, to serve one's Creator, as it is written: "I rejoice over Your word like one who finds great reward" (Psalms 119:162).

About The Animal Soul

After Man's body was formed, the animal soul was joined to the G-dly soul.

The animal soul (nefesh ha-behemit) is comprised of four dimensions:

The inanimate dimension, the vegetative dimension, the animal dimension, and the intelligent dimension.

Imagine a building with four storeys: a basement, a ground floor, a first floor, and a second floor.

Just as a basement is usually a "technical" level, so too in the human psyche the basement corresponds to the foundational, inanimate soul.

This stratum stores every base sentiment a person has accumulated—his sufferings, pains, the hurts he has sustained, the successes he has achieved, his pleasant experiences alongside the unpleasant ones.

Above it lies the ground floor—the vegetative soul.

Here all of the character traits—good and bad—are rooted.

These good and bad traits are not included in the 613 commandments, yet they are the very basis for the fulfillment of all 613: generosity of heart underlies mitzvot that require monetary outlay, whereas miserliness forms the basis for

Parshat Bereshit - The Divine Soul—A “Portion of G-d Above”

refraining from them.

Above that is the first floor—the animal soul, where a person has many broad faculties and the rare capacity to employ their abilities correctly, and bring out their potential into actuality.

Above all, stands the second floor—the intelligent dimension or soul.

This is not the divine soul; the intellectual soul is mundane and exists in the gentiles as well in

the Jew, as our Sages said (Eichah Rabbah 2:13): “Wisdom among the nations—believe.”¹⁸

Thus, as stated above, with the utterance “Let Us make man,” the body and the animal soul—also called the foundational or vital soul—were created together with all of their components.

Now we turn to the second utterance G-d uttered to create Man: “He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.”

The Divine Soul—A “Portion of G-d Above”

The Jew is unlike all other nations of the world, and humankind.

The Jew is animated and sustained by a divine soul. Chasidic teaching explains¹⁹ that although this soul—termed the “divine spark”—is a single, simple essence, it nevertheless includes several layers that are not readily revealed on their

own, and for them to become manifest, the Jew must refine his soul; the purer he is, the deeper the levels that are uncovered.

The Midrash states (Bereshit Rabbah 14:9): Five names are given to it—nefesh, ruach, neshamah, chayah, and yechidah.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

18. Of course there are vast differences here between Jew and gentile: in a gentile, the animal soul with its four stories derives its vitality from the three wholly

impure kelipot, whereas in a Jew it comes from the intermediate kelipat nogah.

19. See at length in Be’er HaChasidut (‘Derech Mitzvotcha,’ vol. 2, p. 305).

Kabbalah and Chasidut align these five strata of revelation within the soul, and broadly divide them into two categories of faculties:

Internal faculties—within conscious awareness: nefesh, ruach, neshamah.

Encompassing faculties — hovering above the person’s conscious awareness: chayah, yechidah.

To further clarify:

Nefesh – Of this stratum the Torah says, "For the nefesh of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11) and "The blood is the nefesh" (Deuteronomy 12:23). It is the essential, natural divine vitality that sustains a person in every aspect—biological and spiritual, and in Etz Chayim (Gate 6, ch. 5) it states that the nefesh enclothes itself in the Liver.

Ruach – Enlivens the emotional and active faculties of the soul; and enclothes itself in the heart.

Neshamah – Enlivens the revealed, conscious intellect; it enclothes itself in the brain.

Chayah – The encompassing light above consciousness that is nearer to the person, influencing the soul’s faculty of will, and radiating in an encompassing manner over the entirety of one’s soul.

Yechidah – The more distant encompassing light, that operates in a manner that is hidden and concealed; it influences the soul’s deepest faculty of pleasure and delight.

The Ramchal, of blessed memory, writes (Adir BaMarom, p. 369):

“Know that true life consists through the bonding of Nefesh–Ruach–Neshamah, such that the ruach grasps the neshamah above and the nefesh below, and unites them together.”

True vitality is felt precisely when the higher neshamah-level soul, manages to reveal itself within the lower nefesh-level soul—and this is possible only when the intermediate level, the ruach, is utterly pure and free of undesirable qualities and impurities.

Now, after this lengthy preface, we return to clarify what

Parshat Bereshit - To Ascend and to Uplift

we opened with at the outset of our discussion:

What was the ultimate divine purpose in the creation of man?

To Ascend and to Uplift

Truth be told, this question requires a deep and insightful answer, one which we find in the words of the Baal HaTanya, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, of blessed memory (Tanya, ch. 32):

“The foundation and root of the entire Torah is to exalt and raise the soul over the body ever higher—up to the primal Source and Root of all worlds—and likewise to draw the infinite light of the Blessed Ein-Sof into Knesset Yisrael; that is, into the fount of all Jewish souls.”

My father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel, explained (‘Betzur Yarum,’ vol. 6, p. 174):

“The entire mission of a Jew in this world is to make the soul prevail over the body. That is the struggle: who will win—soul or body?

Heaven forbid that your body should ever rule over you.

Picture yourself driving a car:

you must control the steering, for if, G-d forbid, the wheel were suddenly to decide that it will no longer heed your pull and steering, and would turn however it pleased, your life would be in very imminent danger.

So, too, the body must submit to the soul; the body constantly offers all kinds of suggestions to its understanding and liking; but be wise—do not listen to it.

Our task in this world is to ensure that the soul ascends thousands of spiritual rungs, all while the body remains down below, close to the ground.

The soul must also draw down the light of Ein-Sof, blessed be He, into Knesset Yisrael—and here there are two stages:

First, one must raise the soul above the body; only once you have passed that stage can you move on to the second: drawing upon yourself the divine light.

But if a person is sunk in material concerns and fantasies, he certainly cannot draw down any divine light.

Therefore, the very beginning of one's divine service must be to give primacy to form and the soul and elevate it over the physical matter.

This, of course, involves myriads of levels, one atop the other.

But whoever wishes to know where he truly stands spiritually, must examine how he stands in the fulfillment of the mitzvah of loving one's fellow Jew."²⁰

As Rabbi Shneur Zalman continues (ibid.):

"By fulfilling the above—viewing one's body as despicable and loathsome, and taking joy only in the joy of the

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

20. Once in a lecture delivered by my father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel, of sainted memory, he recounted to the assembled scholars the following stirring story:

"One day during public reception hours, a distinguished rosh-yeshivah—an exceedingly great Torah scholar—came in.

I accorded him the proper respect due and asked him how I might help him.

I saw that the words were stuck in his throat; he shifted uncomfortably, his body language radiating distress and embarrassment. Finally, from his broken phrases he uttered, I understood that he had come to beg my forgiveness for slander he had spoken against me, entirely without cause or basis.

He had come to discover that all that he had said had been merely falsehoods

and hearsay, and he soul pleaded that I pardon him wholeheartedly; he was ready to do whatever I imposed.

In truth, I forgave him at once and with a full heart—King David had taught me to think and feel that whatever happens is not only up to man, but rather 'The L-rd has told him to curse'

(Samuel II 16:10).

But knowing that the sin of evil speech had robbed him of many merits of Torah, mitzvot, and good deeds, I was filled with compassion. How could I help him recover what his evil tongue had stolen?

So I said: 'I forgive you entirely—on condition that we study together, as study partners, the depth of the spiritual blemish of lashon hara? and the irreparable damage it causes.

Parshat Bereshit - To Ascend and to Uplift

soul—one has a straight and easy path to fulfill the mitzvah to ‘Love your fellow as yourself’ toward every Jewish soul, from the greatest to the smallest.

For once one’s own body is despised and abhorred, and the soul and spirit—who can know their greatness and source in the living G-d?—and since they all match, having one Father, therefore all Israel are called true brothers by virtue of their

soul-root in the One G-d, although their bodies are separate.

Accordingly, those who make their body primary and their soul secondary cannot enjoy genuine love and brotherhood—but rather, only a love that depends on some ulterior factor.

That is why Hillel the Elder said of this mitzvah that it is ‘the whole Torah, while the rest is its commentary.’ ”²¹

~*Wellsprings of Wisdom*~

After due preparation we began studying the relevant laws, and then we also entered a bit of the inner dimension—probing with in depth study that pierces the soul.

Believe me, were we to comprehend even a small part of the depth of this sin, we would lose all desire to ever transgress it again.

The Torah scholar possessed extraordinarily broad understanding, and we studied together until the message had sunk in— that never again would he stumble in evil speech—and then I knew that henceforth he would devote his life to restoring the holiness stripped from him.”

From that day and on, that rosh-yeshivah greatly revered my father and was

connected to him with every fiber of his soul.

21. On the night of 28 Tishrei 5776 (Motza’ei Shabbat Bereshit) the painful funeral procession of my father took place, and it concluded close to dawn.

The ark of holiness that was my father was concealed, and the sorrow and pain was unbearable.

Suddenly a young scholar—clearly in the throes of terrible emotion—pressed closely to the freshly filled grave and collapsed upon the mounds of earth.

During the following days of Shivah his story emerged:

Ten years earlier for some reason, some dispute arose, and in his brazenness he

Above All: Satiating the Heart

We have expanded upon this many times, but, due to its importance, it is worth repeating again and again:

The mitzvah of Ahavat Yisrael—loving a fellow Jew—means that the heart must actually feel a true love for every Jew.

This is not some abstract or ethereal notion, but a tangible emotional reality.

This feeling must be expressed chiefly, among other

things, by granting the other genuine honor and dignity.

As it states in the prophet Isaiah: “And you shall draw out your soul to the hungry, and the afflicted soul you shall satisfy; then your light shall shine in the darkness, and your gloom as the noonday” (Isaiah 58:10).

“Draw out your soul to the hungry”—give over your very soul and put it forth to the hungry. And this must be done in a real way, so that “the afflicted

— Wellsprings of Wisdom —

had left my father’s kollel, opened his mouth unrestrainedly with slander, and spoke evil about the man who had for years supported all of his spiritual and material needs.

A month later his wife wrote to my father in tears, describing their dire finances—her husband’s folly had cost them his monthly stipend and all of the weekly aid granted to the kollel families.

My father replied: “Open a bank account in your own name, and I will continue depositing the stipend as before; it is better for your husband not to know, lest he cause you distress about it.”

Thus, for ten years my father supported

that family—while the husband never ceased to defame his benefactor.

When my father was taken to the heavenly court on High and passed from this world, the wife wept bitterly and joined the hundreds of thousands who came to escort him.

Upon returning home broken, her husband mocked her with foolish words; and it was then that she decided it was time to reveal her benefactor’s greatness in return for her husband’s vileness.

Her words pierced him like a serpent’s venom, and frenzied, he ran to the grave to beg forgiveness for years of baseless slander and badmouthing.

Parshat Bereshit - Above All: Satiating the Heart

soul you shall satisfy”—the hungry person standing before you will later depart feeling satiated and satisfied.

Whoever attains this measure of lovingkindness, earns a great reward that the verse expresses: “Your light shall shine in the darkness, and your gloom will be as the noonday.”

Let us explain this a bit further:

Across the many pages of our history, the people of Israel have known many benefactors amongst their ranks.

Some such generous benefactors have had their deeds recorded for posterity; as for others, their deeds are known only in the highest realms above.

One such individual whose generosity echoes onward to this very day is Ben Kalba Savu’a.

The Talmud says (Gittin 56a): “Why was he called Ben Kalba Savu’a? Because whoever entered his house hungry as a dog (‘Kalba’) left it fully satisfied (Savu’a).”

Indeed, satiating the body is a most lofty virtue, yet there is an even higher virtue: satiating the emotions of others.

Every human being—regardless of their age, education, or occupation—often feels emotional hunger and lack, and it then requires great sensitivity and immense wisdom to satisfy another’s feelings.

No two people have the same feeling of hunger; each and every person is an entire world unto himself.

The Reshit Chochmah (Gate of Derech Eretz, 1:20) delineates these lofty character traits thus:

“One must be gracious to all creatures, compassionate to the destitute, a savior to the poor, wise among the wise, a partner to the righteous, a comrade to the sincere, a friend to the pious, merciful to the students, a father to orphans, supportive to the widow, a reminder to the discerning, a teacher to the simplehearted, a source of joy to the downtrodden.

Parshat Bereshit - Above All: Satiating the Heart

Whoever gladdens the anguished and broken-hearted, comforts the mourners, and speaks to the hearts of the poor and afflicted—is assured a share in the World to Come.”

And as abovementioned, none of this can be perfected so long as the body rules the soul, it

demands of a person to lift themselves upward on high.

My father, Rabbi Yoram, spent his entire life doing exactly the above – satiating hearts—in the most complete and loftiest way.²²

That was his guiding light and great secret, and the key to his success.

Wellsprings of Wisdom

22. Throughout the thirty years of his leadership, my father met people daily—some were individuals who visited regularly, others only rarely.

It made no difference: anyone who approached him could speak with him freely, and he truly listened.

People would later share that they felt rivers of genuine love flowing from Rabbi Yoram’s heart into their own; the rabbi would answer with a radiant face, his response seemed as if it descended from on high, from the higher worlds and realms.

Whoever merited to encounter him, never forgot the experience—the awareness that there was a righteous Jew of lofty stature who loved him as himself and deemed him to be precious and worthy.

Jews of every stripe and from every background—from the simplest laborers to the most scholastic, from the least observant to the most pious and meticulous in their observance of

Judaism—all sought his closeness and longed to be in his presence; people never tired of being near Rabbi Yoram.

Every Shabbat he delivered four classes—Friday night, Shabbat morning, afternoon, and then on Motzaei Shabbat as well—altogether spanning some seven hours, yet many people attended each and every one, week after week.

Each person who crossed his path felt how dear and beloved he was to Rabbi Yoram; every individual was sure that he was among those who were the very closest to him.

This was no abstract love—it was a concrete love, and his actions and prayers yielded results.

Rabbi Yoram truly longed and yearned that every Jew should only have the very best, and enjoy goodness and happiness—not only spiritually but materially too.

Summary and Practical Conclusions

1. When it arose in G-d's blessed will to create the world, He did so in six days through the ten utterances. These utterances brought forth all existence—the inanimate, vegetative, animal, and human realms to all their myriads of details and specifications.

2. A distinction, however, exists between the creation of the human being and that of everything else: Each creature was formed by a single utterance, whereas the first man was formed by two:

1) “Let us make man”, followed by – 2) “He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.”

3. With “Let us make man” the body and the animal soul—also called the foundational or the vital soul—were created together with all of their components; with “He breathed into his nostrils” G-d endowed Adam with a divine soul.

4. The ultimate divine intent with man's creation is that he elevates the soul above the body;

man's task in this world is to raise and elevate the soul and lift it up thousands of spiritual rungs and levels, all while the body is lowly and naturally ‘close to the ground.’

5. A Jew who attains this—who lets the soul rule over the body—can draw upon himself and his surroundings the infinite light of G-d, and further extend this divine light upon the Jewish people – Knesset Yisrael.

6. This spiritual elevation contains many levels, and involves many forms of divine service and labor.

A way to gauge the spiritual standing of anyone who wishes to do so is to examine his dedication and fulfillment of the mitzvah of Ahavat Yisrael – Love for a fellow Jew: one's heart ideally must feel genuine love for every Jew, in the most palpable sense.

Furthermore, this feeling must be expressed chiefly through giving true honor to the other, as

Parshat Bereshit - Summary and Practical Conclusions

Isaiah teaches: “Draw out your soul to the hungry,” granting those who need it, a feeling of respect and value and dignity, and as the verse continues, “And the afflicted soul you shall satisfy.”

Whoever truly fills the hungry soul with satiety of

meaning and honor will merit the conclusion of the prophecy, “Your light shall shine in the darkness and your gloom as the noonday.”

May G-d grant us the merit to truly achieve this, and bask in the light of G-d’s glory.

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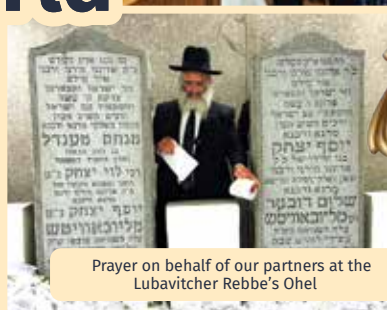


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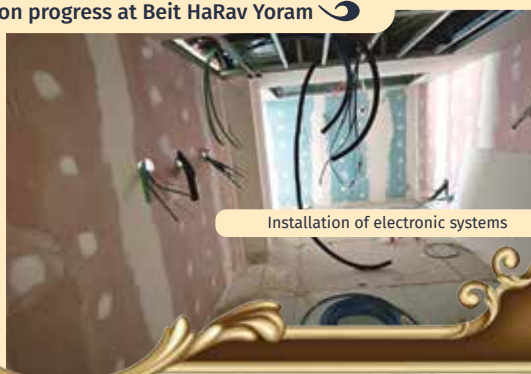


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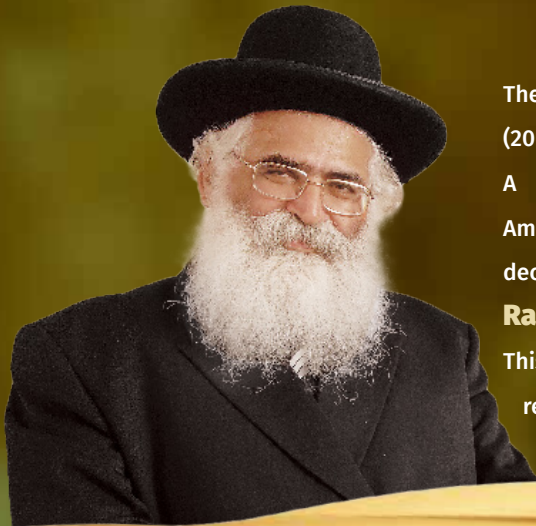
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City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	5:54 pm	6:51 pm	7:22 pm
Miami	6:33 pm	7:24 pm	8:02 pm
Los Angeles	5:58 pm	6:53 pm	7:27 pm
Montreal	5:47 pm	6:47 pm	7:15 pm
Toronto	6:12 pm	7:12 pm	7:41 pm
London	5:44 pm	6:50 pm	7:12 pm
Jerusalem	5:49 pm	6:38 pm	7:17 pm
Tel Aviv	5:46 pm	6:36 pm	7:13 pm
Haifa	5:44 pm	6:37 pm	7:14 pm
Be'er Sheva	5:46 pm	6:39 pm	7:16 pm

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HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

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