Rabbi David Block: Hi everyone, this is Rabbi David Block, again. We're now in a position to start talking about the meaning of life. Back to Rabbi Fohrman.Rabbi David Fohrman: Because when you think about the meaning of life one way of conceptualizing that is to ask, what relationship does mankind have to the world around him? What is his place on the cosmos? What we have here in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 is two different perspectives on the world, on the cosmos of how it develops, and therefore we're going to have two different perspectives on mankind's place in that cosmos too. We're going to have two different views of man's relationship with everything; man's relationship with G-d, it changes in world 1, world 2, man's relationship with the land, it changes in world 1, 2. Man's relationship to woman, to people outside of him, to vegetation, we're going to have to look at this in the context of both of these worlds, it's two entirely different pictures.

What we need to do now is begin to look at each world carefully and to try to understand our place in each. Let's begin with world 1. It's going to be our focus for the rest of the time that I have with you this week. Let's start with this question, here we are in world 1, that's the world of Genesis Chapter 1, the world that describes G-d as creator without reference to the land and heavens and all that, just G-d creating, wandering what mankind's place in it all is. So maybe a good place to start at least would be to interview G-d? G-d just created mankind here on the sixth day, a reasonable thing to do would be to ask G-d, how do You see man?

We can do this in each of the two worlds, try to ask G-d. Because the Torah in a manner of speaking kind of interviews G-d for us. If you look carefully at each of these two stories world 1 and world 2, Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, you will find that in each story G-d actually talks to this man that He has created and tells him something - from at least the perspective of the creator Himself - of what it is that he's doing here in the world. Not only does G-d talk to man in each of these stories, G-d also talks to us, which is to say, the narrator of the Torah talks to the reader of the Torah about man. So we have two things in each story, we have direct communication between G-d and man, where G-d actually says something to man about what he's supposed to be doing, gives him instructions to start things off - and we'll want to look at that. In each story we also have the narrator telling the reader something about man and man's place in the world.

So we're going to call this our little interview with G-d. We're going to in each story ask this question, what is it that G-d says to man and what is that the Torah says about man? Let's start off in world number 1. Okay so here we are in world number 1 again and we're on the sixth day and G-d has just created the animals, and then He decides it would be a good idea to create something called mankind. So right over here we're going to have the Torah talking to the reader - in other words, the narrator talking to the reader about G-d's plan to create man. Vayomer Elokim - G-d says; Na'aseh Adam betzalmeinu kidmuseinu - let's make man, this being, that is going to be in our image. Veyirdu b'degas hayam ub'ohf hashomayim - and he's going to have dominion over the fish and over the fowl; U'babeheima - and over the animals; Ub'kol ha'aretz - and over all of the land.

So this is the first thing that G-d says as He sort of declares His intentions as He creates man. The next thing that happens is G-d goes out and does it. Vayivrah Elokim et ha'Adam b'tzalmo - and G-d then

created man in His image; B'tzelem Elokim barah oto - in the image of G-d He created him; Zachar u'nekeiva barah otom - male and female He created them. So there we have it, the first thing that the Torah tells us about man, but it's not really so clear exactly what it is that it means. It's a nice poetic thing to say that man is created in the image of G-d, I mean it doesn't literally mean that look like G-d, G-d doesn't have a body, G-d doesn't have any physical form. So in what sense is it that we're created in the image of G-d?

Here we seem, at face value, to be kind of stuck, because we can philosophize about it, and if you're a reasonably inventive person you can come up with all sorts of possibilities. Maybe it means that man has a soul, maybe it means that man has a little spiritual spark of G-d in him. Maybe it means that man has a really high IQ and he's intelligent just like G-d. Maybe it means that man speaks, can articulate words, he's the only animal that can talk and G-d can speak or communicate His thoughts somehow. There's a zillion different possibilities. So the real question is, is there any evidence from the text itself that would explain exactly what it is that this means? What would it mean to be created in the image of G-d? What does the text think that it means?

The truth is, is that the verse that we just read gives us a clue. Because if we go back to the verse that describes G-d creating man in His image we can play one of my favorite games with it; Which One of These Things is Not Like the Other? The good old Sesame Street game. There are really three things in the verse and one of them doesn't seem to belong. The beginning of the verse says; Vayivrah Elokim et ha'Adam b'tzalmo - that G-d created man in His image. The next idea in the verse is; B'tzelem Elokim barah oto - in the image of G-d He created him. The verse finishes off with; Zachar u'nekeiva barah otom - male and female He created them. So obviously that last piece is the piece that doesn't seem to belong, what does the male and female He created them have to do with creating man in His image?

Why is that part of the same verse?

Here we have our first really good clue. Because my experience at least is that whenever the Torah plays this little game with us; Which One of These Things is Not Like the Other, whenever that happens usually the thing that you think doesn't belong actually belongs. The Torah is actually helping to define the category for you by including the apparently anomalous element. So over here the apparently anomalous element is male and female He created them, which is the great clue, perhaps, as to what it means to be created in the image of G-d. What do males and females do when they interact with each other? They create. They create other human beings. Look at what G-d had just done. G-d had created a human being, and now that human is actually created in His image because it possesses the ability to create other human beings just like G-d. It is a creator just like G-d.

So one tentative conclusion we might reach is that what it means to be created in the image of G-d is to be a creator like G-d. To biologically create like G-d. Now you might just object here on the grounds that man is not actually the only animal, so to speak, that creates itself, other animals also have that ability to reproduce itself. So in what sense is man unique that he is created in the image of G-d? To that we might answer that that may be true but the way that man creates biologically is similar, in a way, to the nature of G-d creating biologically, in that G-d and man are the only sentient beings that create

biologically. They are the only ones who understand what it is that they are doing in the act of creation, and can control that act of creation in some ways. It's not just a matter of instinct, it's also a matter of choice. G-d and man are the two self-aware creators in the universe.

And of course there's a difference between G-d and mankind. G-d creates unilaterally, human beings create bilaterally; Zachar u'nekeiva barah otom - male and female He created them, unlike Himself. It's interesting that this comes as a qualifier of Tzelem Elokim, man is only in the image of G-d and not G-d Himself, in as much as G-d creates them male and female rather than single and unitary. G-d is the single and unitary creator, human beings they share the power, they are bilateral creators. G-d divided the power to create, as it were, among them. The power to create is great and fearsome, G-d Himself trusts Himself, so to speak, with that power, but almost as an insurance policy, no individual human being has the great, god-like power of biological creativity. It takes two human beings deciding to make that choice together.

Okay so let's keep on reading in the text because as we keep on reading we're actually going to get not just what the narrator tells us about the creation of man, but we're actually going to get G-d Himself speaking to mankind about now his role in the world. It comes in the blessing that G-d gives to mankind on the sixth day. Let's read it. Next verse; Vayevarech otam Elokim - and G-d blessed them, the male and female, and told them; Pru u'revu - be fruitful and multiply, there's that idea of being creative biologically; U'mile'u et ha'aretz - and fill the land with your progeny. Vekivshuha - and conquer the land. What does conquer the land mean? The next words seem to tell you what that means; U'redu b'degas hayam - have dominion over the fish; Ub'ohf hashomayim - over the fowl; Ub'kol chayah haromesess al ha'aretz - and over all the animals that traverse the land.

So now we seem to get another element. Besides biological creativity, which is the first part of this blessing be fruitful and multiply, man is also told to conquer the world, to have dominion over all the other life forms in the world. But if we think deeply about that how does that happen exactly? Man is supposed to conquer the world, be in charge of all the other animals, but a lot of those animals are much stronger than man.

So imagine there you are hiking in Yosemite National Park, Yellowstone National Park and you come across a grizzly bear. You are pretty high up on a mountain, on one of these mountain passes, there's only one way to go, there's not enough room for the both of you here on this path. You've come between the grizzly bear and the cub, so Mamma bear is pretty angry and she's weighs like 790 pounds. Mamma bear fixes you with her gaze, growls and is about to attack, what do you do now? So imagine you pulled out your Tanach - your bible, and you open up to the page and say, excuse me bear, just hold on for just one second, it says right here, Genesis Chapter 1 that; Vekivshuha - that I am supposed to conquer the earth, I am the master over you. I am smarter than you bear, my IQ is much higher than yours, and it says right here in the Bible that I am in charge of you, bear. So could you please move aside?

That is not likely to work. In man versus bear, bear is going to win. So how did that actually work?

Because if you think about it over time it did work, we do master bears, we have bears in zoos, and bears do not have people in bear zoos. How did that actually happen?

The answer is, if you look historically, we did it through technology. We made tools. First it might have been a bone that we used as a club and then a sharpened bone that we used as a spear. Then bows and then arrows and cages and guns and machine guns and all sorts of things, until we really did dominate everything. Tool making, to dominate the earth, to bend it according to your will, to take its natural resources; iron ore, copper, all of those things, and to make them into what we want to make them into. That's technology and it's a community project, it's a kind of communal creativity. No individual builds a 747, it's what we do when we come together. Individual human beings, male and female, come together to create biologically. Masses of human beings come together to create technologically. And it is a kind of creativity, there's a Hebrew word for it, the Hebrew word is Melacha. Interestingly, it's the language that describes G-d's creativity when He created the world.

If you look at story number 1 of creation, G-d's creativity is cast in terms of Melacha. When G-d rests on the seventh day He rests from all the Melacha that He did. What was that act of Melacha? It really was that same kind of thing. In a way, it was proto-technological creativity, it was the Divine version of technological creativity. It was, if you had to strip it down - and this by the way is the Halachic definition of Melacha - Melechet Machshevet - the idea that Melacha is inseparable from the idea of mind. That's what Melacha is, it is - on the one hand it is mind, it is deciding what you want with mind, and then acting with your hands - at least the way the humans have it - acting with your hands to make it so. So G-d doesn't have hands, but that's what G-d did in the universe, G-d conceptualizes, I want X, and then goes and makes X.

If you think about it, through the process of creation, there's very little that's created something from nothing. There's the beginning, in the beginning G-d creates the heavens and earth, but if you look at what happens after that G-d is not doing that. He is moving stuff around, He's forming it, He's positioning things, He's taking what was and creating higher and higher levels of complexity. That really is the process of Melacha. The planning with mind and then acting so as to make those plans come true, to mold the world around me into the way I want it to be. G-d molded the universe as creating the world, and we, little creators - creators not with a capital C, but a small c - we create too, when we mold our world to suit our desires. And that allows us to conquer that world, that really is the birth of technological conquest. It's how in the end we made zoos for bears and bears didn't make zoos for us.

Let's keep on reading in the text. The next thing that G-d says to man; Hinei natati lachem et kol eisev zore'ah zerah - see, I have given to you all of the grasses that gives seed; Asher al pnei kol ha'aretz - on the face of all the land. V'et kol ha'etz asher bo pri etz zore'ah zorah - and all of the trees that give fruit, that have seeds in them as well. Ul'kol chayas ha'aretz ul'kol ohf hashomayim ul'kol romess al ha'aretz - and I have also given that resource to animals, G-d says, and to the fowl. Et kol yerek eisev l'ochlah, vayehi kein - I gave them all vegetation and it was so.

In this final part of the blessing G-d talks to man about his food source. He's going to eat vegetation; the

grasses of the fields, the fruits of the trees that give seed. But He tells him something else also, He tells him that that same food source is going to be there for animals too. The message; you got to learn to share. As much as you may be master you've got to be a benevolent master, to some extent you've got to rein yourself in, you can't take over all the resources, they're meant for the animals too.

Let's stand back and think about this last thing that G-d tells man about food. You're going to have all the vegetation, all the grasses of the fields and ultimately, man looks at not just the animal world that we talked about before and dominates it, but the plant world also. Man dominates that world, the world of food for him. This world of vegetation. Ultimately, the agricultural revolution will come along and man will take his tool-making prowess and will find ways to cultivate the earth so that he doesn't just have to be a gatherer, he can be a farmer. Man's creativity as applied to the world of animals and to the world of vegetation truly makes him master over this little world that G-d has entrusted him with.

Even though animals and man share the same food source, which is vegetation, the way animals relate to that food source is different from the way that man relates to it. If you look carefully when man eats all of the fruits of the field, over and over again the Torah will say; Zore'ah zarah, zore'ah zarah - the fruits that gives seed and the grasses that gives seed, those are the food for man. Then, when it talks about animals it talks about; Yerek eisev - the vegetation of the field, but it doesn't mention the seeds, even though obviously vegetation has seeds too. So man and animals are eating the same thing but the idea of eating seeds is something that is emphasized over and over again when it comes to man, but not when it comes to animals.

Again, maybe the reason for that has to do with the great difference between man and animals, which is that man knows what it's doing when it eats vegetation, animals just do it instinctively. Man's domination of vegetation is so complete that it dominates the vegetation's ability to reproduce itself too. If you think about what we ultimately like most, ultimately man is going to develop bread. Bread is taking the seeds of the grasses, the kernels of wheat, and then pulverizing them and building food out of it. But what we're building food out of we have to understand, we have to use our mind to cognize, is actually the seeds of others. Our domination of the plant world is so complete that we dominate their ability to reproduce itself. Not only do we kill the grasses in order to eat them, we actually can kill off their ability to have the next generation too.

Which again, is this fearsome power. Animals have that power too, but not really, because they don't realize what it is that we're doing. We realize and therefore we can have some control, and indeed, we must have some control. We can't dominate entirely, we need to make room for others to share this food source too.

So if we had to summarize the whole kit and caboodle here we're getting the following picture. Here is man, this biological creator that's Pru U'revu, and he dominates technologically in his ability to dominate animals and to dominate vegetation. But there's a kind of technological domination over the biological creativity of other species such as vegetation too. So it all comes together in this way in which man creator, both biologically and technologically, truly does dominate the world, he is a little god on earth.

He's there to imitate G-d his Creator (capital C) by being creator (small c).

So if that concludes our little interview with G-d, G-d speaking about man and G-d speaking about man and G-d speaking to man in world number 1, so what have we learned? We've learned a key cornerstone in what it is that man is doing in the universe. He is there to imitate G-d. G-d is the Master Creator but man is a creator in his domain too, has been given the ability by G-d and the space by G-d, to exercise his own creativity in the world. So maybe we can just pack up our bags, and say that's it, that's man's purpose in the world, he's there to create, to exercise his gift of creativity. He's there to dominate the world with his tool-making prowess, to invent new kinds of technology, to go where no man has gone before. To compose violin sonatas, to be a sculptor, to start internet start-up companies, to be creative in all of its various manifestations. And indeed it feels good to create, it feels wonderful, you feel accomplished when you create, and part of that sense of accomplishment perhaps comes from the fact that it is a cornerstone of what it means to be human. It is our place in the cosmos to create, to be little creator (small c) in a world, in a universe, in which is there is large Creator. To imitate G-d in that way.

But is that all? Is there something more? Is this view of man, in our place here, in our goal here, incomplete?

Well world 2 will have its answer for that. World 2 will describe man in entirely different terms, paint an entirely different picture of what it is we're doing here. But even sticking within the boundaries of world 1, it seems to me that there are implications of being a creator, and if we unfurl those implications we will refine what it is that we mean by our purpose is to be creative, or our purpose is to create. Let me try to start that with you here.

Implication number 1, so let's think about this, here I am, I am man in the world and I'm creative, so maybe my job is to just be creative, is to just do everything? It feels so good to try to just create and create and create, the more I create the better. Ah, but here's the problem, man is created in the image of G-d, he's not just created as a creator, his creativity is an expression of something, is an expression of being god-like in some way. There is a large Creator with a capital C and I am small creator with a small

c. So there's an implication there, being a creator who himself is created. Because if you think about it, there's two ways to be little creator. One way to be little creator is to ignore big Creator and just kind of do your own thing. But another thing you could do is to use your creativity as a way of relating to large Creator, to the Creator who is the Master of it all. After all, it's a path to understanding.

You see the more you understand and the more you develop your own ability to create, the more you really appreciate the absolute, awe-inspiring wizardry of the Master Creator. How would it be possible to truly appreciate G-d without having a little spark of G-d within you, that you could develop, to then stand back in awe one day and look at the heavens and just be breathless and say wow, look at what You've created, Master. That brings us to the next verses, because the next verses in world number 1 introduce us to the Sabbath. G-d creates the world in six days but on the seventh day He rests. Later on in the Book of Exodus we will be commanded to rest too every seventh day in commemoration of the fact that there is a Master Creator, that you are a creator but you're creator with a small c, you must

recognize that there is a Creator with a big C too. Your observance of Sabbath will be a way in which you manifest that recognition.

So we might say for starters that the inclusion of Sabbath here as the seventh day, as the final act, as it were, in world number 1, even though man is not yet commanded to keep the Sabbath but it's just inclusion here. The idea of G-d's Sabbath is itself sort of beginning to unfurl one of the implications of being creative, which is that it's not just about me creating and creating and creating and creating, as a matter of fact at some point I stop creating in recognition that there's a creator above me. Meaning to say, that I can use my understanding of what it is that I do as little creator to begin to actually build some kind of relationship with the Almighty. A relationship that at the very least has the component of admiration in it. If I imitate the Almighty, I can have an appreciation of who it is that I'm imitating. I understand You a little bit, I'm in awe of what You've created, I don't want to supplant You, to get rid of You, I revel in living in a world in which there is Big Creator, He's my role model. Every seventh day I rest in deference of that understanding that You are there Big Creator and I am, after all, just little creator.

But interestingly or fascinatingly, Sabbath stands for two kinds of recognition, Sabbath is about a deeper kind of recognition too. It's not just recognizing what's above me, it's also recognizing what's below me. Look at G-d's experience of Sabbath in Genesis Chapter 1. If all Sabbath is about is about recognizing a creator above you so G-d can't recognize a creator above Him, what was the meaning of G-d's own Sabbath? G-d loves the Sabbath, He's so excited about it, the verse tells us; Vayevarech Elokim et yom hashevi'i vayekadesh oto - that G-d blessed the day and then He sanctified the day. That's remarkable, because it's the only insight we ever get anywhere in the Torah about sort of what it's like to be G-d.

The whole Torah is not really about that, the Torah is about the record of G-d's relationship with us, typically speaking. We get very little insight into what it's like to be G-d in His own, numinous solitude, but what we do get is one little inkling into what it's like to be G-d, into G-d's own appreciation, His own exuberance over the Sabbath.

Vayevarech Elokim et yom hashevi'i vayekadesh oto - He was so excited He made Himself a holiday, He blessed it, He sanctified it - you can imagine G-d up in the heavens making Kiddush - He was so thrilled; Ki bo shovas mikol melachto asher barah Elokim la'asot - because on this day He rested. What was He so happy about? What, because He finally had a vacation? How hard was it for Him to create a world? He's an all-powerful being, how difficult is it for an all-powerful being to create a world? He really had to rest afterward, that's why He was so excited?

But it wasn't about vacation, it was about the consequences of rest, what rest did. In a deep kind of way rest was G-d's final act of creativity. It's described - the Sabbath is - in our Friday night prayers in a strange way as; Tachlit shamayim va'aretz - the very purpose of creation of heaven and earth is Sabbath. What do you mean the very purpose of creation is Sabbath? Purpose of all of the things I do when I work is just vacation? No, no, no. What Sabbath is, is not vacation at all, it is conferring independence upon that which you've created. You see, as long as I am creating I am connected to the thing that I'm creating. It's not really separate from me. So as beautiful as it is, it's not yet independent and it doesn't

really exist separate from me yet. In rest, a commitment to stop creating, I let go and I finally let the thing be what it is. Finished or not it is what it is and I let go, and that is the final act of creation, letting go.

It's true for Big Creator with a capital C, and it's true for little creator too, in all sorts of ways. The artist who can never stop painting, what happens eventually when you add just another curlicue and another curlicue? Eventually the canvass it's just a mess, the painting collapses under its own weight. The carpenter who can never stop whittling down the new bookshelf, eventually the bookshelf collapses. All creativity in order to really work, to be effective, has to stop and G-d knows this better than anyone how seductive creativity can be. We're seduced by it, it's godly to create, but if you never stop, paradoxically it's not godly at all, creation turns into destruction.

Save for the Sabbath. The Sabbath is where G-d models what it is to be a disciplined creator, a creator who respects creation, who can let creation go and be independent from Him. It's the great lesson of godly creativity - the Sabbath is. The Sabbath is all about respect, when we human beings observe it we respect our Creator in the sky, we say, we're only creator with a small c. And it's not just respect above, it's respect below too, we respect that which we create, we may dominate the earth, but we too can let go. We, like G-d, are committed to disciplined creativity, we will not allow creation to become destruction, we will let go.

So when we add it all up we begin to get a picture of man's place in the cosmos in world number 1. Man is little creator, small c, G-d is Great Creator, capital C. Man imitates G-d in how he creates and ultimately, man will imitate G-d in how he rests. Man, the creator, how does he relate to the world, how does he relate to land? Land - the world is his great sandbox in which he does all his creative stuff. Man, the creator, how does he relate to woman? He relates to her as his great partner in creation, they're both Tzelem Elokim, they're both created - neither has the ability really to create biologically on their own.

Together they will create children and those children will themselves come together in vast communities to create some more technologically, will build tools to be able to truly master the land. But all of this mastery ultimately will come to naught unless man can learn to be a disciplined creator as G-d is, unless man can learn to let go.

There's stories later on in the Bible in which man failed to learn this. The Tower of Babel is one of those stories, creativity gone awry, creation and creation and creation that snowballs and snowballs with no end or no limits in sight, and in the end humanity itself is sacrificed at that altar. If there is at the end of the day one great imperative that emerges from the idea that man is created with the spark of the Divine, that he is a creator himself, that imperative is respect. Respect of that which I do create, respect of that which is below me, respect of the land, the ability to let go, the ability not to destroy all the resources. To be able to have that proper distance and to be able to not be swallowed in the drive to create until you consume all and nothing is left. Respect above; there is a Master Creator above me. By creating myself I am in relationship with that Master Creator, I am beginning to understand the marvels of what He has done, I am imitating Him because to imitate Him is the greatest form of respect. You are my role model G-d. It's a kind of relationship I build with You,

And respect not just above and not just below, but respect across as well. To my fellow human beings, because who are they? The paradigm starts with man and woman. When man looks at woman who does he see? He sees someone with that same, incredible spark of the Divine, that mysterious ability to create like he can, his great partner in creation. If he sees the Divine in her as he sees in himself then respect is mandated between them, he cannot crush her, he cannot use her, they are both little gods on earth, and one cannot subvert the other.

Just a bit later on in the Book of Genesis, we have a verse that prohibits murder long before the 10 Commandments, in Genesis, by what rationale does it do so? Shofech dam ha'odom, b'odom damo yishafech - one who spills the blood of man his blood shall be spilled. Why? Ki b'tzelem Elokim asah et ha'odom - because G-d created man in His image. There is something of irreplaceable value of man, immense, ultimate value, in each of us. Every single one of us, when you look around the room; blue eyes, brown eyes, Caucasian, black, Chinese, high IQ, low IQ, inverted, extroverted, it doesn't matter, there's a little spark of the Divine, there's little creator in all of them, ultimate value. And that ultimate value means I need to keep my distance, I cannot use you as a means to my end. Each of us are ultimate ends in and of themselves, and therefore respect is the great mandate of world number 1. Respect above, respect below, and respect across. It's the great implication of being little creator in the world.

So all of this is one view of man's place in the cosmos. It begins with a drive that's one of the deepest drives implanted within humanity, the drive to be creative in all kinds of ways. It expresses itself biologically in sexuality, one of our deepest drives. It expresses itself in all kinds of ambition, whether it's building an internet startup company to whether it's being a farmer and plowing the land. An artist, a sculptor, a capitalist, our creativity unfurls itself in so many ways. But at least by implication here the inclusion of Sabbath at the end, the later proviso against killing, referencing the idea of Tzelem Elokim implanted within all of us, all of that points to something else too. It's not just about creating and creating ad nauseum, it's about respectfully creating, disciplined creativity, creativity that can and must come to a halt in rest. The balance between rest and creativity, that's the secret source of world number

1. To respect the Master Creator, to respect fellow creators, to respect the sandbox, the world itself in which we all create.

This is man's place in the cosmos in world number 1, but it's not the whole story. There's another great story to be told, another story of the cosmos itself, and of man's place within it, and that is the story of Genesis 2, of world number 2, in which everything looks different. A world in which what G-d says about man and to man has nothing to do with Tzelem Elokim - with being in the image of G-d, but with something else entirely. We'll come back and look at that story and how that story adds to the mystery of the meaning of life when we return next week.

Hi everybody it is Rabbi David Fohrman and welcome to podcast 3. We've been looking at some of the largest questions that you really can look at, questions involving the meaning of life itself. To do that we've been going back to the very beginning, the Torah's account of the creation of mankind. If you want to look for mankind's place in the cosmos, for any of our place in the cosmos, where better to find it than there?

We've been looking at this creation story and last week we found two different creation stories, we argued two different accounts, different perspectives of the same thing. Last week we talked about creation world 1, a world in which creativity was the name of the game. Who was G-d? G-d was the Master Creator. Who are we? We imitate G-d, we're little creator, with a small c. But all of that is gone in world number 2, we don't hear about man as being created in the image of G-d in the next account of creation, we don't hear even about G-d being described Himself in these creative terms.

G-d is sort of behind the sidelines while heaven and earth seem to take the main stage; These are the generations of heaven and earth. In that world what is man's goal? In that world how does he relate to the cosmos, to everything around him? How does he relate to G-d? How does he relate to earth? How does he relate even to woman? All of these are the questions that are up for grabs here in this world.

In order to start solving those questions, let's go back and try to do it the same way we did in world number 1, which is our interview with G-d. Remember you're the intrepid CNN reporter and you seek out G-d and you say, G-d, I couldn't help notice You hiding behind those curtains over there in world number 2. Excuse me, if I could just get an exclusive interview with You, I'd very much like to ask You, what is it that You have to say about man in this world over here? Do You have any message that You would like to deliver to man? If you remember that's what we did last week in world number 1, we're going to have that same conversation with G-d now in world number 2, but G-d is going to say different things. Different things about man, and different things to man.

So let's look through the text and one of the really neat things is, that G-d talks to man in this world, He talks to him about the earth, about the products of the earth, about how man is meant to relate to the earth. It's almost like in world number two all roads to G-d are going to go through the earth in this world, because the earth is at the top of the food chain, the earth is your most proximate creator. Let's see what G-d says.

Okay, so talking about man, verse 15; Vayikach Hashem Elokim et ha'Adam - G-d takes man after He has created this garden, this special garden in Eden; Vayanicheyhu b'Gan Eden - and He places him in this garden. For what purpose? L'ovdah ul'shomrah - to work it and to guard it, to watch over it. So this is what G-d says about man, what are you doing here man? Well you're here for a purpose, you're here to watch over this garden and to work the garden.

Now here I want to point out something strange to you. Because if you - remember back in the interview with G-d that we had back in world number 1, what G-d said about man and what G-d said to man were basically consistent - really just two ways of saying the same thing. Remember what did G-

d say to man back in world number 1? What did He say about man? What He said about man was that you are going to be; B'tzelem Elokim - you are going to be in the image of G-d. Then what G-d ended up saying to man was just the details of what that means. Ah, you're going to be this creator just like Me, you're going to create biologically, you're going to create technologically, you're going to master everything. You're going to be the little creator on earth. So it was very easy to see how what G-d said about man and what G-d said to man were consistent with one another and just filled in the gaps.

That gets a little bit harder in our new interview session, in world number 2, because having just seen what G-d said about man, that he's here in the garden; L'ovdah ul'shomrah - to watch over it and to guard it and to work it. So you basically say, oh so I guess that's man's goal? In a way, if you would just stop right here and you knew nothing else about what G-d said you would say that man is even subservient to the land, that the land is the center of things and man is just there to take care of the land, to shepherd it and to work it - which is remarkable to think that the universe is really about the land.

And in a way it might make sense; Eileh toldot ha'shamayim veha'aretz behibaram - these are the new creators, front and stage, heaven and earth, and then man is there to tend to this earth creator.

But now listen to what G-d says TO man. All of a sudden, the emphasis changes entirely and the question is, how does it all fit? Because what G-d says to man is; Here are all these wonderful trees; Mikol eitz hagan ochol tochel - please eat. Actually a direct command; Eat, yes eat, of all of these trees. Just there's this one tree that I don't want you to eat from. U'm'eitz hada'at tov v'ra'ah - from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that tree I don't want you to eat from. So that's what G-d says TO man.

What G-d says to man then, if you would have to sort of formulate a vision in your mind of what man's purpose is, and all you knew was what G-d said to man, you would say, oh I guess it all has to do with how he relates to these trees. He's supposed to have the benefit of all of these trees, he needs to be very careful and to observe the commands as to which trees he's supposed to eat from and which trees he's not supposed to eat from.

But do you see how radically different that is from saying that well the point of man is there to take care of the garden and to serve the garden, work the garden? It's like, hey G-d, can I have a follow-up question please, how do these two visions relate to each other? Is he there to work the garden and that's the whole point - like that's Your ultimate goal? Or is he there to keep these commands You have about the trees? Which is it in Your mind? How do they relate to each other?

That, I think, opens up a very interesting question for us. It opens up a window, I think, as to how to see man's relationships [written large 6:15], all of his relationships, in world number 2. So I'd like to dig a little bit deeper with you and suggest that if we have this apparent contradiction almost between what

G-d says about man and what G-d says to man, so let's try to resolve the contradiction by looking a little bit more carefully at, at least one of these things. Let's start with what G-d says to man. Exactly what is it that G-d says to man about these trees in the garden, the trees that he can eat from, the tree that he can't eat from? Because the truth is, when you look at the setup that He puts him in here, in this garden, with all of these trees, it's kind of a weird set up, there's some questions you can ask about it. If we get some clarity about that setup then things might start to fall into place in terms of understanding how what G-d

says about man and to man actually jive with each other. So let's go into the garden, look at these trees and ask some questions.

The first question is a question that students always used to ask me and frankly I did my best to evade them, because I didn't really have an answer for it. It was a really good question and the question is, if G- d really didn't want us to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, from this special tree in the garden, so why did He put it there in the first place? I mean, if you really don't want us to eat it, so just don't put the tree there. There's nothing more tempting than a tree that you're not supposed to eat from. So what's the solution to that? Why would you put it there?

The implications of this question are obviously rather uncomfortable. One implication is maybe G-d really did want us to eat from the tree - and this by the way is how some modern commentators understand the story, and it's a very distressing way to understand the story. Really G-d put the tree there, He really wanted us to eat from it, and He figured that He would kind of hide behind a bush over there and wait until we ate from it and then He'd fake being really, really angry. But really G-d was very happy because He wanted us to eat from this tree all along. That is one possibility. I think it's a distressing possibility because it sets up G-d as a con man, and who would want to worship a con man? It's G-d is faking us out when He says, I'm really upset that you ate from the tree, while really He's gleefully rubbing His hands and chuckling when we finally eat from it? It doesn't seem like a very wonderful way to read the story.

So back to the drawing board, if G-d really didn't want us to eat from the tree, why put it there in the first place? Question number 1.

Question number 2, how exactly does this tree do its work? The tree of knowledge of good and evil, supposedly on the day that you eat from it you become mortal. Why would that be? There is the fairy dust possibility, the magical possibility, maybe G-d reached into His bag of tricks and sprinkled orange fairy dust on this tree of knowledge and made it this death-inducing tree? That's one possibility. But my question to you is, is there a rational way of understanding a mechanism by which the tree of knowledge would actually do its work - by which the tree of knowledge would be something that if you ate from it you would eventually die?

So is there a rational way to understand how the tree of knowledge does its work? Is there a rational way to understand why G-d would put the tree in the garden if He didn't want us to eat from it? And, one more question, is there a rational way to understand the other tree in the garden that's very special, the tree that doesn't get quite as much press, namely, the tree of life? It turns out that when G-d actually made the Garden of Eden, He created two special trees, not just one in the garden; the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. Now He never actually tells mankind about the tree of life. He tells us, the reader, about it but never addresses Adam. To Adam He only talks about the tree of knowledge and says, stay away from that tree.

Now if we think about this tree, this magical-sounding tree, the tree of life, we would imagine that if you eat from the tree it would grant you sort of the opposite of what the tree of knowledge is; the tree of

knowledge is the thing that if you eat it you'll become mortal and if you eat from the tree of life, if you eat it, you'll become immortal. Almost as if mankind is thrust into the garden and given this choice - at least implicitly - between these two trees; the tree of knowledge that he's actually told about and the tree of life that he's actually not told about. But you would imagine that he would eventually get around to eating from it, because look, if I - just do the math.

If I wasn't told that there was a special tree, the tree of life, and I wasn't told that I was supposed to avoid it, and it's right there in the middle of the garden - the text describes it as; Betoch hagan - right in the middle of the garden. So you'd figure I'm eventually going to get around to eating from it and that's a fine thing. Once I eat from it, it's a tree of life, so I'm going to get eternal life. So my choice in the garden is, am I actually going to live forever because I'm going to end up eating from this tree of life or am I actually going to end up eventually dying, because I'm going to eat from this tree of knowledge?

In the same way we asked about the tree of knowledge, is there some sort of rational mechanism by which that tree eventually makes you die, makes you mortal, now I want to ask, is there any rational mechanism by which the tree of life would grant you life? Or, alternatively, is it magic? Is it that G-d has green fairy dust and sprinkles that on the tree of life, and when you sprinkle that on the tree of life, well then of course you live forever? That's one possibility. Or, is there some sort of mechanism by which eating from the tree of life would grant me eternal life?

So these in a nutshell are the three basic questions I want to ask you about the garden, and they add up to something. Question number 1, why would G-d put the tree of knowledge in the garden if He doesn't want you to eat from it? Question number 2, how does the tree of knowledge bring death to mankind? Question number 3, how does the tree of life bring life to mankind?

Here's the picture that I think emerges from these three questions. The picture that emerges is that world 2 creates a grand opportunity for mankind, the opportunity for loving connection with the Divine.

Indeed, not just with the Divine, but loving connection with all important beings around him. It begins with the Divine, here's how. One of the great misconceptions about mankind's place in the Garden of Eden is that the very first command that he received with reference to the trees was to avoid the tree of knowledge.

If you look carefully at the verses you'll find that that is not so. Listen to the verse. Vayetzav Hashem Elokim al ha'Adam leimor - and G-d commanded man saying; Mikol eitz hagan ochol tochel - from all the trees of the garden; Ochol tochel - you shall eat, yes eat. U'm'eitz hada'at tov v'ra'ah loh tochal mimenu - but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat from it because on the day that you eat from it you will die.

Now let me ask you, what was the first command that he got about the trees? It wasn't to avoid the tree of knowledge of good and evil, it was to eat from all the other trees. Even the emphasis is greater on the positive command than the negative. Ochol tochel - G-d says, eat, yes eat. It comes first, it's a stronger language the positive. As concerned as G-d is that mankind should not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, He's more concerned that he should eat from all the trees.

What that adds up to, I think, is that if you had to conceptualize what G-d was doing with mankind in the garden, a parenting analogy might actually do the trick. G-d is the great parent in the sky here, the Master Creator, hiding behind the curtains, trotting out heaven and earth as sort of the most proximate creators of man. But there is G-d in the background and in the background this parent that we know as G-d gives these gifts to mankind. The gifts are all of these delicious, wonderful trees. That, by the way, is how they're described when we first meet the trees. The Torah goes out of its way to describe them as delicious trees that G-d created, beautiful to look at, delectable to eat - we'll be talking a little bit more about that later. But the trees were meant as these great gifts. But there's this one tree that you're not supposed to eat from, why? Why put a tree in the garden that you aren't supposed to eat from? Why do it?

So just consult the parenting analogy. If you were a parent and you were giving some sort of wonderful gift to your kids, a great Lego model battleship, you give it to your kid or you are a grandparent and you're giving it to your grandkid, what do yo want to see happen? The kid opens up the wrapping paper, sees the gift, what do you want to see happen? If you ask most parents these questions they'll say two things. (A) I want to see my kid enjoy the gift, and (b) a thank you would be nice, some kind of recognition that the gift came from me. Now if you think about it, the truth is, it's not really one or the other, you really do want both, and either one alone sort of isn't going to cut it. Let me just kind of play out the scenario.

Imagine that little Bobby to whom you give this wonderful gift turns to you and says, Grandpa, wow, what a wonderful gift, I've always wanted a model battleship made out of Lego. I love Lego, it's so wonderful, and he kisses you, that's the just the best thing in the world. So you got your thank you, you're feeling like a million bucks. But then Bobby runs out and he goes downstairs to play on his Nintendo 64 video games and he spends the rest of night playing his video games. Then the next day he's on the phone with his friend Paul and then the next day he's outside flying a kite and the next day he's kind of bored at home asking and whining to his mother, can we figure out something to do?

Meanwhile the Lego just stays completely untouched on his shelf and he just completely disregards it. It's like you're not feeling so good, right? Like, I want to see you enjoying the gift, it's not just about the thank you. I want to see you enjoy it. It gives me pleasure as a parent to watch you enjoy that gift. It gives me pleasure as grandparent to watch you enjoy it.

So you really want the enjoyment too, but if he only had the enjoyment it's not so great either. If the kid just enjoys the gifts and it's a wonderful gift, but there's no thank you, there's nothing, there's no recognition that it came from me - what's the problem? It's not like I'm such a narcissistic guy that I need you to say thanks and I have to be recognized. And I pump out my chest and say, yes this gift came from Grandfather, and I hope you understand that, and every time that you look at me I want you to say, Grandfather, thank you very much for giving me this Lego. It's not like I need that from you. I don't even need you really to say thanks. All I want is, I'm giving this gift out of a relationship, it's a product of my relationship with you, I love you, and I'm giving you this gift, and I just want you to understand that. When you're using the gift, bottom line, I just want you to use it with an understanding that it

came from me.

In other words, I don't want you to live in an illusion, which is that my room comes with Lego battleships and you cut Grandpa out of it, and it's just that this is the way things are. So that's not so great for Grandpa. Even though - Grandpa, even if he's banished back to Florida and the kid never wants to see him again, he can take some sort of vicarious happiness, I suppose, the kid is playing with his battleship. It will be much nicer if somehow when Grandpa wasn't around anymore, when the kid played with battleships he felt almost like Grandpa was there in the room because he's enjoying this gift of Grandpa. It's almost like hugging Grandpa all over again, that would be so much richer.

So if you think about it, thank you, is one way to kind of help achieve that richness. Thank you is a way that the child recognizes that this did come from Grandpa and therefore when the child uses it he's using it with that consciousness, so it's great. But if you think about it, thank you is not the only way for a kid to achieve that recognition. There's actually other ways to do it where a kid never even has to say thank you, but he still has the recognition that the gift came from someone, came from you, came from Grandpa, or came from parent. And the way to do that is kind of the way that G-d sets up the deal in the Garden of Eden. I want you to enjoy all of these trees, enjoy these trees and I'm not even asking you to say thank you, I'm just asking you to abide by one request. See that tree over there, that's My tree. Please don't eat from My tree, eat from all of the others.

You see, if the kid abides by those rules what's he really doing? When he's eating from all the trees and not eating from your one tree he's understanding that it's not like the world comes with trees, this is just a facet of the world and I cut G-d out of it, and there are all these trees and whatever, they're my trees. Because if that were the case you would eat from all the trees. You see, when you avoid G-d's one, special tree, what are you really saying? You're saying I understand who I am, I understand that I am a guest in the garden here, and there's a Master in the garden and that's the Master's special tree. When I eat all of the other trees now while avoiding that one tree, I understand that the Master has given me a gift. The trees are all the more wonderful and delicious because as I eat them I don't just get the physical enjoyment of eating those fruits, but I get the sense of love and of giving that the Master has provided me with this because He loved me and made these delicious trees for me. Every time I eat one of these trees it feels like Grandpa is hugging me all over again - which leads us directly to the tree of life.

Remember that question I asked you about the mechanism by which the tree of life might work, was it just fairy dust that makes you live forever? I mean, after all nothing lives forever. Look around in the world, all the animals they die, everything dies, and all of a sudden you're going to be the only living thing in this world that doesn't die? Could there possibly be a rational explanation for that? There might well be. What is the only living thing that doesn't die? It's actually a being that's not from this world, that's out of this world, that's just sort of hanging out in the garden, it's G-d Himself. Might it be that the mechanism through which the tree of life grants life is that eating from the tree of life in some strange way is a way of clinging to G-d Himself - clinging so deeply to G-d that you shake off your mortal coils and share in G-d's own immortality?

Now, the idea here is a kind of hard idea to process, what does it mean to cling to G-d, you can't touch Him, you can't feel Him, you can't actually hug Him? But that sort of brings us right back to our Grandpa analogy because you can't hug Grandpa when he's in Florida either. But somehow when you play with those Legos and you receive that gift in the right way with the consciousness that it's from Grandpa, it's like Grandpa is there, it's almost like Grandpa is there giving you that hug. That's the richness of the relationship.

Let's try and think about that in terms of the garden now. Here you are in the Garden of Eden and G-d has given you all of these wonderful trees, He wants you to eat from all these trees, eat from them, yes, eat from them, just stay away from that one tree that's Mine, and you do it and you're enjoying the gifts that the Master has given you. When you do that you achieve something larger than just the delicious taste of a fresh orange on your palate, you achieve connection with your source, you achieve connection with the Master.

In Hebrew we have a word for it, the word is Deveikut - in a moment I'll show that that word actually appears within world number 2 itself - but Deveikut really means connection. It's even deeper than connection, clinging to, a reunification-with-your-source kind of connection. Because the Master is hard to connect to, in some crazy way He's just like Grandpa in Florida, you can't just reach out and hug Him. He's the ultimate extraterrestrial, you can't touch Him, you can't feel Him. So if you wanted to give G-d a hug, how would you do it? If you wanted Deveikut - connection, with the Divine how would you do that with G-d? If I want to connect to a person I hug them, if I want to connect, to become whole, to unite with G-d, how do I do that? I do that by accepting the loving gifts that He gives me and understanding that the gifts come from Him out of love. I do that when I eat from all of the trees that He gives me while simultaneously abiding by the command to avoid the Master's own tree.

Now I want to make a somewhat radical statement. When you do that it's only a matter of time until you eat from the tree of life. Right, G-d didn't even tell man that there was a tree of life in the garden, He just said, go eat from all the trees and He put a tree of life in the middle of the garden, eventually you're going to eat from the tree of life. It's almost as if all the trees are the tree of life, we don't even know which tree is the tree of life, it's just that being in the garden and accepting all of these gifts and abiding by that one restriction not eating from the Master's tree, all of that is tantamount to eating from the tree of life. When you do that you're accepting G-d's gifts and accepting those gifts is hugging G-d and connecting to Him, and if you hug and you don't let go then death cannot take you, because you're holding on to the source of eternal life. That's what it means to eat from the tree of life; to cling to G-d and not let go.

But of course you have a choice because you don't have to eat from the tree of life, there's another special tree, the tree of knowledge. And that confers death and it doesn't confer death through orange fairy dust either, it confers death because eating from that tree, the tree of knowledge, that is letting go. You're letting go of the source of eternal life, you're succumbing to an illusion that I can have all the trees, I want ultimate control, it's all mine, these aren't gifts, this is just the way the world is. Well, if these aren't gifts and you want to play that game and pretend this is just the way the world is, you can have that but

you're having that at the expense of the relationship. When you pretend that the battleship is just part of your room you might have the battleship but when you play with it you're not hugging Grandpa anymore. In the Garden of Eden you might now have all the trees including the very last one, but you've sacrificed the relationship, you're letting go. When you let go then you can't help but die like any other mortal being.

Okay, and now let me come back to our question. Now, having understood what's happening with this setup in the garden - these commands involving the trees - having understood that a little bit better, let's come back to our interview and try to make a little bit more sense of that interview. What is it that unites the two things that G-d says; that which He says about man and that which He says to man? To man are these commands about the trees, that revolves around this idea of Deveikut which we've been talking about, of clinging to G-d, what does it mean to hug G-d. How would that relate to the other piece of what G-d says about man - He's there; L'ovdah ul'shomrah - to work the garden, to take care of it?

So the first thing we might notice is it's not any old place that man is being called upon to take care of, it's G-d's garden. What that might mean is that G-d is adding a bilateral aspect to this relationship. It's not just that G-d is unilaterally providing all of these wonderful things to man, this bounty of all the trees in the garden, that man is just a taker in the relationship. G-d also gives man the opportunity to be a giver, to do something for G-d, as it were; he can take care of G-d's garden.

So when we add it all up then we find this. Man has two jobs in this world, two things that he needs to do to achieve Deveikut. He needs to be a good receiver on the one hand, to take these gifts from G-d, to enjoy with pleasure these delectable gifts of the trees and to do it and recognizing the existence of the giver. He needs to do all of that. But somehow, if all you do is take, take, take gifts given to you, that's not the whole way that love and connection are achieved, there has to be a bilateral aspect of it too, you have to be able to give back. As strong as there is a desire to get the pleasure that someone wants to give you who loves you, there is the desire to somehow reciprocate. What could you give G-d after all - G-d has everything? But G-d allows you to give something back. He says, I showed you how to garden when I first planted it, now you take over, you take care of My special place, this place that you and I can be together, this garden. Your job here is; L'ovdah ul'shomrah - to work the land and to guard over it, to preserve this place, this special place that we have together.

Okay, so now let me ask you a question here, could we extend this idea further? Might it be that this Deveikut notion, this notion of clinging to your source, of reuniting with your source, of lovingly connecting to it, is not just something that animates man's relationship to G-d in this world, but it animates other relationships too? For example, man's relationship to land. We've seen in this world that land is a kind of stand-in for your creator, it's the place from which you've come, so to the extent that man looks to land as the place from which I come, might he then seek to come back to land?

Here too, the commands in the garden can be seen as a way of coming back to land. On the one hand, I work the land, I take care of it, I give gifts to land. The way world 2 seems to characterize man's

agricultural prowess, it seems to characterize it as a gift that he gifts to land. Remember the very first verse or two in this world that described the land as parched because not only was there not rain but man wasn't there to be able to tend to the earth. Man gives a great gift to the earth by tending to it. So man gives gifts to earth, gives pleasure to the earth, so to speak, and the earth gives pleasure back to man in the forms of all these fruits.

So through the commands involving the trees; to enjoy all the trees and to take care of the land, really two things are happening at once. Man is relating to two different kinds of sources; G-d, an ultimate kind of source, but also land, his most proximate source from which he comes, from which his body comes. He's establishing a kind of unity with land too.

And, it may be that we can extend this Deveikut idea even further. The idea of becoming whole with that which you were once part of, really in a way is what makes this entire world go around, because it animates not just our relationship with G-d and not just our relationship with [man/land 31:20], but man's relationship with woman too. Because look at how world 2 describes the advent of the female human. Not as the way world 1 describes it; Zachar u'nekeiva barah otom - that G-d just created these two little creators, male creator and female creator, and divided the responsibility between them and said, you come together to create. No, it's a whole different picture in world number 2. First there's man and then woman is taken from him. Why? What's the meaning of it happening it that way?

What's interesting is, is that Deveikut - coming back and reuniting with your source, is actually the whole dynamic that's at the heart of the process of man finding a mate. Look at the text, it begins with; Loh tov heyot ha'Adam levado - it's not good for man to be alone. Man needs to connect. But G-d says, maybe he could find a mate from something else, from the animal, so He creates animals from the ground. And in a certain way there is a kind of logic to it, man comes from the ground, animals from the ground, maybe man would like to be with animals, they both come from the ground after all. But man finds that there's not enough of a unity there because the animals in some way are still foreign from man.

Then G-d says, I see what you want, you want something that really comes from you. So He puts man to sleep, takes part of him, the feminine part of him, separates it, creates an entire being around that feminine part of him and then brings that feminine being to man. Then man says, yes, this time; Etzem mei'atzamai, u'basar mi'besari - a bone from my bones, flesh from my flesh. Lezot yikareh isha - and therefore I will call her woman. In Hebrew, literally 'from man', that's her name, from man. Ki mei'ish lukchah zot - because she was taken from man and therefore, I can finally find happiness, I can finally come together with her.

Then the narrator turns and addresses the reader and says; Al kein - that's why; Ya'azav ish et aviv v'et imo v'davak b'ishto vehayu l'basar echad - man will leave behind his mother and his father and will cling to this woman, and they will become one flesh. What do you mean that's why? That's why because in a way it's hard to leave home, that's another unity, your parents, it's not just land that you come from, not just G-d that you come from, you come from your parents and you never want to break that unity, you always want to stay home. What allows man to be independent and to say goodbye in a way and to

begin to etch out a life for himself? It's the fact that he can leave behind his parents - one unity, and establish a unity with someone that came from him too, his lost feminine side, and they can come together.

Listen to that word; V'davak b'ishto vehayu l'basar echad - and man will cling to his wife and become one flesh. That's what it's about, it's about Deveikut, about re-establishing wholeness when you're two fragments, you want to come together with your source. That's what animates the drive for man and woman to come together. Very different, by the way, from world number 1. In world number 1 why does man come together with woman? Because it's the only way I can create, that's the world of creation. I can't create without woman. In world number 2 it's not about creation, it's about becoming whole, I can't be whole without woman. In this world Deveikut - becoming whole, is really what makes the entire world go around.

Okay so let's just sort of summarize. If we were to say world number 1 it's a world in which man looks at himself and sees a creator. World number 2, man looks at himself and sees a connector, sees someone who yearns to become whole with parts of himself that he was once whole with, but he sees himself as just a fragment. So man and woman come together to bring together two fragments. Man comes together with land, man comes together with G-d, achieves wholeness in all of these realms.

So what if I then drill down a little bit and say yes, connector, okay so you're into connection, to wholeness, to love, but those are lofty concepts, how do you actually do that? What's the path to love - love is such an abstract concept? How would you answer that on behalf of man number 2 in world number 2? What would he tell you? Maybe he'd tell you something like this. There is a consistent path to connection, connection might seem ethereal but there's a very concrete way that you realize it. You realize it by giving gifts, by opening yourself up to pleasure that comes to you from others and by giving pleasure back as best as you possibly can. In as much as this is the raw material of love, it too is what makes this world - world number 2 - go around. If you look at how this world is constructed, how it's described, it's all described around gift giving.

Look at the following things for example. Let's start with the creation of man itself. In world number 1 man was the very last thing being created. World number 2 describes man as the first, not necessarily because chronologically he was the first, but everything that follows revolves around man, is actually described in terms of how it relates to man, about what kind of gift it can be for man. G-d causes all of these wonderful fruit trees to be created and as they're created they're described as; Nechmad lemareh v'tov lema'achal - beautiful to the eye and delicious to the palate. So in other words, when they're actually created they're described in terms of what a wonderful gift they will be for man. People will look at this and say, wow, so beautiful, wow, so delicious. In world number 1 the trees didn't get described that way.

Let's talk about the creation of animals, how are the creation of animals characterized? Back in world number 1 G-d decided to make some animals, back in world number 2 the animals are also potential gifts to man, maybe you can find a mate among these? So G-d creates all these animals, parades them in front

of man, it's all in relation to man, it's all how man might delight in them. So man rejects the animals, so G-d says, ah, fine, so I'll create woman, another gift for you, the gift of finally finding a mate. As we even say in Sheva Berachos; Samayach tesamach rei'im ahuvim - how G-d delighted and reveled in the delight of man as he delighted in his wife. G-d is all about making man happy, about giving man some kind of pleasure, some kind of gift, any kind of gift, all kinds of gifts, it's a world of gift giving. That too is what makes this world go around.

There's two things that make this world go around. Connection with source; but connection with source is a very abstract thing, connecting to land, connecting to G-d, connecting with woman, how do you do it? You do it because there's a drive, a drive deep within man, a certain kind of raw material and that raw material is pleasure, it can be given, it can be received. If you do that right you can create love out of that. If you do it wrong it just ends up being narcissistic and hedonism. But if you can give and receive gifts, those are the building blocks of love. G-d not only makes all of these trees, but He gives man the appetite and the desire to delight in them, to seek pleasure in those trees, to accept the great gift that G-d gives to him. When man takes that drive for pleasure and sanctifies it by bringing it into a relationship, then that drive for pleasure becomes the stepping-stone to connection to G-d himself. I got these wonderful gifts and I understand that it came from You. When I marry, that understanding that it came from You, together with the delight of the pleasure, I have connection, I have love with You, and now I want to give back.

How can I give back? Let me take care of Your garden, let me give something to the land. The land gave so much pleasure to me, what can I give for land? L'ovdah ul'shomrah - I could take care of land, I can give land the pleasure, as it were, of being perfected, of reaching its destiny. It's the same with woman. Isn't it interesting that connection and unity between man and woman, intimacy between them, comes by definition as a pleasure-giving exercise, that is mutual, and by the acceptance and receipt of that mutual pleasure they connect and become whole.

So to summarize where we're at, we have two worlds. World number 1 and world number 2. In world number 1 man's relationship to the cosmos looks like man is the creator, the great imitator of the Divine. That's how he relates to everything; it's how he relates to land, it's how he relates to G-d, creativity is the lens through which he sees everything. So when man looks at land in world number 1 what does he see? He sees a sandbox in which he can be creative, land is a thing, it's just another thing that's created, it's a tool, a thing that G-d gave me that I can work with and that I can build with, that I can be little creator just like G-d is Great Creator.

But in world number 2 man sees things differently. Man doesn't look at himself as creator but as connector, coming together with that from which I come. In world number 2 man looks at land and heavens - and land and heavens again aren't the sentient beings that created him, that thought about him and figured out how, man doesn't see a model of creativity. But man looks at them and says, I came from you, I came from land, I want to come back to land. Man even looks at G-d behind land and says, ultimately, I came from You and I want to come back to You. Man looks at woman and wants to come back to her as well. It's so different than world number 1. In world number 1 man looked at woman and

what did he see? Man number 1, motivated by creativity, sees a co-creator. Man number 2 sees someone who he can become whole with. The reason for union with woman in world number 1 is to achieve something else, to be creative, to have children. In world number 2 it's an end in and of itself, to connect and become whole.

Next week I want to try to see if we can take these two different models and integrate them somehow. Because after all, we really only live one life. We have to somehow understand what it means to live our lives bringing world number 1 and world number 2 together. But even before we do that I think we can stop right now, take a deep breath, look back upon what we've seen and begin to have some sort of framework for attacking that greatest of all questions, how do I find meaning in life? What place do I have in the cosmos that is meaningful? There's an answer or a path to an answer that world number 1 holds out for me, and another path for an answer that world number 2 holds out for me.

World 1's answer is creativity. Being creative is how you actualize your place in the universe and there is ultimate meaning in that creativity. Biological creativity; conceive children, raise them, you will die but they will be there even after you die. You put your blood, sweat and tears into raising kids, it's what you've brought into this world. What greater achievement can you imagine than this little, independent being, who is not so little anymore? G-d created independent human beings, humanity, and now you have too. But it's not just biological creativity, there's all kinds of creativity, there's technological creativity, there's aesthetic creativity, you're an artist, look what you bring into this world, you're a composer, look at what you bring into this world. You're a scientist, you discover ideas, you unravel the creativity of the Creator and understand and provide that knowledge for the rest of humankind. You're an entrepreneur, you create the new internet startup company. In all these ways we transcend ourselves, even if we die, look at what we leave behind.

In creativity we transcend ourselves in some sort of ultimate way too, because we're little creator with a small c, and G-d is Big Creator with a large C, and in our own creative activity we gain an appreciation and a sense of awe for the creativity of the Master Himself.

So yes, creativity has ultimate meaning, it IS meaning of life for world 1.

But world 2 has a different answer for what is the meaning of life. World 2 says, we can find meaning through love, through connection with others. If I have loved well, I sense in some way that my life has been meaningful. Even if I die, even if you die, our lives were meaningful because of that love. It's not just love between man and woman, love between parent and child, between man and his Creator, all the times when the little fragments come together and become whole. Even Chesed - the brotherhood of man, we were all once whole, part of one great family. There is a kind of ultimate meaning in love.

You know, there's a fascinating book, a novel written by John Green; The Fault in Our Stars. The book is the story of a precocious teenager by the name of Hazel who has a terminal illness, cancer, her life will be cut short. She meets a boy by the name of Augustus, who also has cancer and by the end of the book it becomes clear that his life too will be cut short. Their challenge really, is to struggle with death faces us but how do we find meaning despite that? Is there a way? Augustus has a kind of answer; he struggles to

find meaning through impact - lasting impact. What heroic thing can I bring to the world, can I leave the world with, that will be here even after I die? That's world number 1 talking. Creative man; what can I bring to the world that wasn't here before I was, that will transcend me and live on even in my death?

But there's another answer, an answer that even Augustus at some point seems to recognize, it's Hazel's answer, it's love. At some point Augustus says it. He turns to Hazel and says - and I'm quoting now from the book. " 'I'm in love with you', he says quietly, 'Augustus', she replies. He says, 'I am', he was staring at me and I could see the corners of his eyes crinkling. He says, 'I am in love with you and I'm not in the business of denying myself the simple pleasure of saying true things. I'm in love with you and I know that love is just a shout into the void and that oblivion is inevitable and that we're all doomed and that there will come a day when all our labor has been returned to dust. I know the sun will swallow the only earth we'll ever have and I am in love with you'." What he's telling her is that love too passes this litmus test. That at the end of the day if you die and all you can say is that you've loved, at some level your life still matters.

The question that faces us next week is that world 1 and world 2 give very different answers to meaning in life. World 1's answer, if I just followed that, so I'm a creator, I find meaning in all the different ways I create. World 2, if I just follow that, I find meaning in all the different ways I connect. So which is it?

Could G-d not decide when He created man how to create two different worlds? The schizophrenic being who is pulled to create on the one hand, is pulled to love on the other hand? Or is there some way of integrating these visions? Does the real larger meaning of life find itself when humans can somehow bridge the divide between creativity and love? How would they do that?

We'll come back and explore that next week.

Hi everybody this is Rabbi David Fohrman and welcome back to podcast 4. We're considering issues of meaning in life, and we were talking about world number 1 and world number 2, what we've been calling the story that Genesis number 1 tells about creation, and the story that Genesis number 2 tells about it. What we found is, that each story seems to paint man's picture in the cosmos differently, seems to give a different answer to the great question of where does our meaning in life come?

The answer of world number [one 0:35], it is through creativity G-d, the ultimate Creator in the universe, man, little creator, created in the image of G-d, his destiny to create like G-d creates. G-d creates man biologically, mankind has the ability to re-create itself biologically. He has the ability to create technologically much as G-d did when G-d created the world itself. Man has the ability to go back into that sandbox, the world, and to create and to mould it as he sees fit. That's one great answer to the meaning of life. We find it by exercising our creativity, there is something sacred about creating, about imitating our creator, about effecting the world in this kind of way.

But, what we've been calling world number 2 seems to provide an entirely different kind of answer, world number 2 seems to be a world where different values reign. The prime value; love, connection, clinging to your beloved, clinging to them physically and becoming one flesh, reuniting between man and woman. Man and G-d; man comes from G-d, reuniting in a way, connecting with G-d, so as to form that whole. Connecting with land, we come from land too. Connection. Love. These are the great values of world number 2.

The question I left you with is, so at the end of the day is this just a picture of a kind of deep, schizophrenia in the heart of mankind; two entirely different things that we strive for, creativity on the one hand, relationships on the other, and never the twain shall meet? Or not? Is there some way in our heads that we can integrate this?

Looking at the Torah, does the Torah help us see how any of this might get integrated? Or are we stuck? Do we pursue two different things almost like we have our foot on the back of two steeds, these horses galloping, and what if they gallop in opposite directions? Because these really are two different aims in life, so what am I supposed to do? How do I try simultaneously to achieve these two different things? Or is that even what I'm supposed to do?

So as a way - at least for myself - of trying to come to grips with some of these questions, I tried a little thought experiment. I actually tried this with a few people over here in the Aleph Beta office and now I want to invite you, podcast listeners, to experience this thought experiment along with me. So I'm going to give you two different paths, two different visions of your life. If you sort of fast-forward 80 years from now and I want to ask you which of these you would find most fulfilling? There's going to be a world 1 path and a world 2 path. The rules of the games are, you've got to pick one or the other, there's no compromise. So which of these two would you pick? Let me describe each for you, try to paint a little picture in your mind here.

Path number 1, the creator path. So 80 years from now, you look back in your life and here's what it

looks like. You're blessed with exceptional creative skill. You were playing around in chemistry class in Tenth Grade and discovered a new metal alloy. Along with your chemistry teacher you published a paper on that, got written up in an academic journal, and people are clamoring for you to get into the Ivy League. There you majored in software engineering and you started an internet startup company, [the ULU 4:23] or dominance of the home video market. YouTube is nothing compared to what you put together.

It seems like whatever it is that you touch, somehow your creativity sparks new revolutions here and new revolutions there. You're written up on five different Wikipedia pages. It's not just you, it's your kids too. Biological creativity, you have these children who are just as creative as you are, they're showing great, great promise in their young lives. You're famous. You're rich from all of the public acclaim, from all of your inventions. You go places and you're mobbed by fans.

Yet, you have nothing in terms of relationships. The sad truth of it all is that none of your relationships have really worked out. It's been so in marriage, you had some kids, but you don't get along with your kids and don't get along with your parents. There's really nobody that you call a deep and close friend, that you look back, that you have a really warm and close and abiding relationship with. So yes, you have your adoring fans who, like paparazzi, huddle around you and ask for your autographs and take selfie pictures with you. But they're not really interested in you, they're interested in being seen with you.

You're a lonely celebrity, but you've made your mark on the world. The world is a different place, maybe even a better place, because you've been here. That is option number 1, path number 1, path of world number 1.

But here's the path of world number 2 and it looks very different. Eighty years into your life you look back in your life. You've had warm and abundant relationships with people. Deep, satisfying relationships. Your life is full of love, of giving and receiving these gifts. You feel that your loved ones have gotten to know you and you've gotten to know them. Every day, every conversation, it feels like you're discovering the person next to you anew. So your relationships are abundantly fulfilling.

But everything that you've sought to create, to build in your life, has somehow just turned to dust, nothing has really worked out. You had your dreams, you had your professional dreams, you tried to build a company, it fell apart. You tried to build a house, you couldn't do it. You tried to become a software engineer, you tried to compose violin concertos, you took piano lessons ad nauseum, nothing stuck. You never really did anything. Never accomplished anything, never built anything. But your relationships - your relationships are warm and vibrant and loving and satisfying.

Which of these paths would you choose? If you had to choose only one and you couldn't mix and match, which would you choose?

So I want to share with you the results of my thoroughly, un-scientific survey that I took here in the offices at Aleph Beta, I asked this question around, and while I will delete the names to protect the innocent, here were some of the reactions, or the consensus reactions. So one consensus reaction is that hands down - everyone I talked to at least - chose the second option, chose relationship fulfillment. And I

think that's very palpable. If we really think about it, I suspect that that's how many of us would choose.

I remember vividly a song from growing up, Harry Chapin's The Cat's in the Cradle. It was really all about that, the great balance between career at one level - world number 1, and family, your child, relationship - world number 2. Here's this father and he has this child and he loves his child, and the kid just wants to spend time with dad, but dad's busy, dad's gone to work. Dad's not watching a football game at work, he's in work so he can provide for kid, but somehow it crowds out that time for kid. The story is the saddest story in the world. That song is tragic. I remember a Rebbe of mine in high school, told me, he says, when I turned on the radio and I heard that song for the first time, I had to pull over to the side of the road, I was sobbing so hard.

It's the tragedy of trading world 2 for world 1. World 1 seems so all-consuming, but you can't put a world 1 price tag on things from world 2. A friend of mine tells a story of how in high school in Cleveland, so they had a career day where parents were invited to come in and talk about their careers. So all of his friends were having their dad come in and this one was going to talk about his beer factory that he had, and this one was going to talk about what it was like to be a commercial airline's flight instructor, and everyone was going to come in and talk about their careers.

This friend of mine, he was so proud of his father, his father was a career guy but also managed to integrate his Talmud study and he taught a Talmud class every day. He said, Dad, I want you to come in and talk about your career and how you teach these classes and how you put it all together, tell my class the story. The father said, well look if I did that, I'd have to take off the day from work and here's what I make per hour in my day at work and I do this so that I can put food on the table, so that I can be able to support you and Mom and the other kids. And if you think it's worth it for me to take off that time, that's going to be worth $2,000, then I'll do that. But you tell me if you think that's worth it. The kid was like, well no, I guess I can't tell you that it's worth $2,000.

But you listen to that story, it's like the saddest story in the world. Because it's putting a world 1 price tag on something that's not from world 1, it's from world 2.

So let me just come back here to this reaction of my office mates to this stark choice of world 1 and world 2 that I put before them. What do we make of that? How might that help us in a way go back to the text in Genesis and understand it? How does it help us understand our lives? So here's what I at least make of it. It seems to me that the mere fact that everybody in my thoroughly, un-scientific survey chose world number 2, says something. It suggests, going back to the Biblical text, that maybe there's a progression here.

In other words, I presented to you in the last three or so podcasts, this vision of world number 1 and then this second perspective of world number 2. But let's go back to the Biblical text and remember that world number 1 actually comes before world number 2. Bereishis barah Elokim et hashomayim v'et ha'aretz is the world in which G-d is the Creator, in which man is created B'tzelem Elokim. Following that; Eileh toldos ha'shamayim veha'aretz behibaram - these are the generations of heaven and earth, and in that world relationships are key, the whole world revolves around them. So, very generally speaking, it

may well be that world 1 leads into world number 2. In other words, there's a reason why world number 1 precedes world number 2. Maybe at some level world number 1 is a steppingstone into world number

1. In other words, to make that a little bit more concrete, maybe as fulfilling as it is to be a creator B'tzelem Elokim, it doesn't hold a candle to the fulfillment that comes by building relationships that are deep and that are meaningful. By connecting with those who we were once one with.

Now, what this might further suggest, if it's really true that world number 1 is a steppingstone to world number 2, and this is, I think, something which we really have to think about, why is that true? In other words, what is it about world number 1 that helps you get to world number 2? That would suggest that it's not really possible to get to world number 2 without achieving something in world number 1, without achieving your potential in world number 1 at some level of being a Tzelem Elokim - of being a creator, at some level, at least little creator. Why would that be so?

This leads to one of the interesting caveats - if I can go back to our little office discussion - one of the people that I interviewed about this, said that to some extent they thought it was a little bit of a false choice. Because my extreme view of option number 2 is that the only kind of fulfillment you had were these really deep and meaningful relationships, but that you had no creative fulfillment whatsoever, whatever you tried to do failed. You couldn't build anything in your life, you had no hobbies, you had no success in developing yourself, whether learning music, or whether writing, whatever you tried to build just utterly failed. This person suggested that maybe that's not so realistic. In other words, maybe it's not really possible to have really rich and meaningful relationships unless you can build something in your own independent life before you even get into a relationship.

I think that's a very interesting insight and maybe is a clue perhaps as to how world 1 is a steppingstone into world 2. In other words, before I enter into a relationship, I actually have to be an independent person. World number 1 is really about mankind being given the tools to be independent people. The Ultimate Creator in the sky says, here I'm going to give you the power that I have, the power of creativity. You're going to exercise it and you're going to feel powerful. It's your source of self-esteem. Look at what you can do, you can create like the Master of the Universe can create, look at how sanctified you are.

That really is the basis for all kinds of respect in the world. Not just that you should respect other people because they're creators just like you - which is certainly true. Not just that you should respect G-d - which is certainly true - because now that you have an insight of what it means to be a creator you can have all the more appreciation for the Master Creator in the universe. All of that is true, but you can respect yourself, you understand that you too are a sanctified being, you're a little creator on earth. It is that power to create, that ability to create, that sort of establishes you as an independent person, capable of entering into a relationship.

Because what happens if you try entering into a relationship and you're not an independent person? You have no self-esteem, you have no sense of self, you haven't actually done anything with your life. Well, if you try doing that, your relationships are not likely to be all that fulfilling. Because a relationship by

definition is a relationship between two independent beings. Two independent beings realizing that each other is independent magically form this we, this union together, and that union is wonderful, and it's an escape from loneliness, it's something larger than both of us.

But the paradoxical part of that union is that as much as it's a we, an us, it's also two I's, there's me that's separate, and there's you that's separate, and somehow we come together. But if I'm not independent I'm just going to get sucked in, there's not going to be any me left, and how will that make you feel that there's no me left? You don't want just a yes man in your relationship, you don't want somebody who is just a little puppet of you, you want somebody who has a sense of independence and from that place of independence is willing to relate to you and to give to you. If I have no sense of independence then what I give to you isn't even meaningful.

Let's say I take you on a date and I say, so where would you like to go? Where would you like to go out to eat? And your answer is like, oh wherever you like is fine. No, but like what kind of food do you like? Do you like Indian food? Do you like - there's this really cool new Japanese place down at the harbor, do you like that? Well, you know, I just really want whatever it is that you would like. I mean at some point that gets annoying. I want to know like who are you? What are your interests? Tell me what you like and I'd like to actually explore those interests with you, because I want to know who you are. But if there's no you there, there's no there there, like who am I relating to already? I didn't get into a relationship with a sock puppet!

So coming back to this idea that world 1 is connected to world 2, it's a bridge into world 2, you start with world 1 and you get to world 2, we may start to have an inkling now as to how that might be so. In other words, here's one sense in which world number 1 is a prerequisite to world number 2. If in world number 1 man gains power through the ability to create; I can establish myself as an independent being, that's a necessary bridge on my way to a relationship. I have to be independent, as it were, before I can be interdependent. You might think of a relationship as interdependence, as that two people who could be independent choose to give to one another, and through the act of giving to one another and servicing the needs of one another connect and achieve a kind of wholeness that is larger than each of their selves.

I take you out and you actually tell me you'd like to go to a Thai restaurant, so I take you to this gorgeous Thai restaurant and I'm so happy because I understand what it is that you like and I can respond to what it is that you like. Then you can reciprocate. You know that I love classical music, now you're into jazz, but you surprise me and you take me out to a classical music concert and you enjoy it with me. You ask me to explain the background of the music and who Leonard Bernstein is, and who Dvořák is, and why the music is meaningful to me and you explore that part of my life. That's wonderful, we can connect because we are two separate people, who are really sharing each other's lives

- interdependence.

So that's one thought that crossed my mind about how it is that world number 1 might sort of integrate with world number 2. But let me go back to my little, intra-office discussion for a moment, because in

my brief interviews with people, folks in the office brought up a couple of other caveats, reservations that they had about my stark choice between world number 1 and world number 2. Another thing that one of the people that I interviewed here in the office mentioned is what - something that she saw as a kind of ironic point, which is that even though she felt very strongly that world number 2 if you had to pick your achievement, if you're going to achieve only in world number 1 or only in world number 2, it would hands down be world number 2, you'd want fulfilling relationships. She says, that in real life people don't always do that.

In other words, she was willing to bet that if you interviewed 100 people, 90 of them would say it's all about world number 2 and it's all about having fulfilling relationships, and yet if you look at what they're actually doing in their lives most of the day, they're actually world number 1 people. What are people actually focused on for most of their day, nine to five, or nine to six, or nine to seven, or eight to eight? It's your career, your job, advancement, the next bonus, the next milestone, you founded a company, the next great product you can bring to market, you're a farmer, you're focused on getting the next crops out. I mean, that's what you're focused on. How many people sit around all day and just try to improve their relationships? You can say I'm a world 2 person, but aren't you paying lip service to this?

In other words, to be kind of cynical about it, maybe we're all hypocrites, maybe we're all - if we are interviewed we'd say, yes, yes, it's very important, our relationships are very, very important, our relationships. But in real life we're focusing on building ourselves up as a creator, the impact that we make in the world.

So again, I wonder though if the paradigm that we're starting to build here might just kind of answer that. In other words, it's not really that we're hypocrites, there's actually a nicer way of seeing that.

World 1 naturally leads to world 2, that you really do have to start in world number 1, you have to build yourself up as an independent being, that's what getting an education is. If I don't have an education how can I hope to give to you? What can I really give you anyway? I have to learn how to build. That's what an education teaches me. A prerequisite for relationship is the development of self that comes from making myself into a Tzelem Elokim, a little creator in this world.

And, by the way, picking up on that theme, that until I have actualized myself as a creator at some level in this world, that I don't really have anything to give you in a relationship. Think about that in terms of world 1 and world 2, not just in terms of the human perspective but in terms of G-d's own perspective. You know if these really are two separate worlds, world number 1 and world number 2, two separate sets of values, maybe that's true not just for humanity and humanity's relationship to the cosmos, but maybe that's true for G-d Himself in world number 1 and world number 2. G-d Himself in world number 1, the great value for G-d is creativity, the six days of creation, world number 1, Genesis Chapter 1, how would you define G-d? G-d is creator, that's all G-d is really doing, it's about G-d being creator. He's making stuff, making the universe. And if you think about the values of that world, the values of that world is creativity, it's a prime value, it is like an end in and of itself.

But then what happens? The seventh day comes and G-d stops. G-d rests from creativity and suddenly

there's this bridge between world number 1 and world number 2, and the bridge is what we call the Sabbath. Yes, the Sabbath. Do you ever ask yourself why it's there? Why is it between world number 1 and world number 2? It's like the last thing that happens in world number 1 is the seventh day, but you could also say the first thing that happens in world number 2, just before Eileh toldos ha'shamayim veha'aretz behibaram - these are the generations of heaven and earth as they were created, the first thing that happens just before that is the Sabbath. What is the end of world 1 is the beginning of world 2. The Sabbath can be seen as a kind of transition between the two worlds. A leaving of one world and its values of creativity and an entering a new world with its values of love. Once the Master Creator is done creating he can turn his attention, as it were, to other things, other more important things, relating.

It's interesting, in the Friday night prayers we speak of Shabbat as the; Tachlit ma'aseh shamayim va'aretz

- as the purpose of the creation of heaven and earth, which is a strange sort of thing to say, in what sense is the Sabbath the purpose of creation itself?

The answer is while you're creating you think it's all about creating, I'm making and I'm making and that's my ultimate value. Just like as I'm going to school I think it's all about a career and it's all about what I'm going to do, and it's all about becoming the best creator I can be. But then there's something strange, which is that like while I'm doing that, the whole process of my life, why I'm going through an education, and I'm building myself up, I think I'm doing something really meaningful, I'm doing something really meaningful.

And then I hit this midlife crisis where I finally made it, and I'm finally a successful creator. Then I think, okay, but what now? What is this all about? What does this really mean? Somehow the strange, ironic thing is that at the end of it, it feels empty and you think, until now the last 20 years it didn't feel empty. While I was pursuing this goal it didn't feel empty and suddenly when I arrive at the top of the heap and I've actually made it and I'm sitting in my corner office and I'm looking out at the traffic below and I'm thinking, but is there something more?

That's the natural transition, it's the Sabbath transition into a new world. How is the Sabbath the purpose of creation itself?

Well, we talked before about one aspect of Sabbath, the idea of showing respect to your creation, not adding one more curlicue to the painting, somehow letting go and having the creation be something independent from you. Yes, that is one aspect of Sabbath, but there is another aspect of Sabbath too. After I have let go, after my creation is independent, then what? Then I want to spend time with it, I want to relate to it. After you put down the hammer, after you're no longer fiddling with creation, then a new possibility exists, and that possibility is relationship. Relationship. If I am a creator it's going to be a relationship with that which I've created, that which came from me. It's a relationship that I can only have once I'm done creating. As long as I'm fiddling with you I don't really have a relationship with you, I have to stop fiddling with you, stop making you into something, declare you an independent being.

Once you're independent from me then I can enjoy you, I can actually give to you as an independent being and you can give back to me as another independent being and we can have a relationship with

each other.

But in order to do that I have to stop. I have to stop creating so that you're an independent being, and I also have to stop creating so that I'm not preoccupied with creating anymore. So that I can have other things on my mind. I have to rest so that I can focus on you and on connecting with you, on giving to you, which is what world 2 is all about. World 2 is that G-d creates this place, this wonderful place where we can be, and that's where you sort of see the purpose of creation itself. Because creativity wasn't just creativity for creativity's sake, what was G-d really building? A universe. And what was that universe? It was a home, a home for us. That's what G-d was building.

It's like while you were building it, you couldn't even focus on it being a home, you just had to focus on the process of construction, you were just a builder. But after, in Shabbos, you begin to look at this and say, oh my gosh, what have I been making this whole time? I have been making this world for the one that I love. This place that's perfectly designed for humanity to exist, a world where I can give to humanity. And that leads you to world number 2 in which all of creation itself is cast, and says, what was this all about? It was all about a world where I could give.

That's why we talked about last week how the whole world of world 2 is a world in which G-d is pleasure-giving to people. Look, these delicious trees that are so beautiful to see and good to look at, this is what I'm making for you. You could use a mate, maybe try some animals? No? That doesn't work?

Ah, here, a woman, a bone from your bones, flesh from your flesh. In this world you're connecting with Me because you came from Me, I'll give you a sense of that, I'll give you someone who came from you to connect with, and you'll taste that deliciousness in your physical world and you'll understand how delicious it is to connect with Me. It's a world of connection that becomes possible through a world of creation.

G-d created the environment, the universe itself, with all of these gifts, everything in the universe is a gift, down to the trees, down to the fruit. What's the word for fruit? Pri. What's the word for creativity? The blessing that G-d gives to people; Pru u'revu - be fruitful and multiply. These are the gifts of creativity that I'm giving you, it's My fruits, I have something to share with you now. So world number 1 really is a bridge to world number 2. The Creator in building this home has given the greatest gift possible to His beloved, everything in the home is there for the beloved. The creativity itself is now a gift, and maybe - maybe it's the same for us? We are Tzelem Elokim, and we're meant to follow the path of our Creator. Our Creator shows us the example.

What would it mean for us, little creator, to follow that path? Well it's the same kind of thing. First we've got to create and build ourselves up and create things that we could actually have, that we could actually give in life to the one that we love. Then once we do that we're in a position to love, we have some gifts that we can give, we have a home that we can make for the one that we love, an environment for them. Now you're ready for love. While you're involved in world number 1, world number 1 is its own world, creation is all-consuming. When I'm in school I'm just thinking of being in school, it's only when I'm done that there's that sense of emptiness. It's almost like I see a little door and that door is

leading me into world number 2. The door says okay, now put down your hammer a little bit, realize that all of this is just giving you the ability to relate. Who are you going to relate to? What gifts are you going to give them?

Now, by way of qualification, let me just add this. I have presented a paradigm which is kind of stark, a world 1 paradigm and a world 2 paradigm, and the transition between them. But the truth is, is that it's more like alternating current in electricity. I go from world 1, a transition from Shabbos into world 2, but then perhaps back into world 1, the transition to Shabbos, world 2, back into world 1, transition to Shabbos, world 2. Life really is going back and forth between the creative realm and the relationship realm.

Remember Shabbos for us isn't a one-time event, it happens every seven days - and there's not just a Shabbos in the daily cycle. For those of you who have seen our talks on Aleph Beta on the Mo'adim, I refer you back to Parshat Emor this year and last year, in our Parsha videos, we talked about different levels of Shabbos. Almost like different orbits, like planets orbiting at different speeds and different cycles. So you've got Shabbos for days, and then you have Shabbos for months, which are the Mo'adim. The Mo'adim - all of the Holidays have Sabbath-like qualities to them, but what the Sabbath is on the daily cycle, the Mo'adim - these Holidays, are in the yearly cycle. Then there's a Sabbath for years itself, the Sabbath for land. The seven-year cycles and the 49 cycles. All of these are Sabbath-like events.

In our life too, yes we've got these great moments, these milestones of creativity that we reach when we've finally built that internet startup company, we've finally brought that product to launch, and we have these milestones in our world of our relationship, our marriage, our tenth anniversary, the birth of a kid, the Bar Mitzvah of a kid. But in life we're constantly going back and forth, we're building and then we're creating a place for our beloved, we're making gifts that we can give to our beloved, we're going back and forth between those worlds. And in that back and forth lies our meaning.

There's a fascinating Rambam I want to share with you on this, I found yesterday, in Hilchot De'ot. The Rambam - Maimonides, at the very beginning of his magnum opus, the Mishna Torah, he talks about these themes in a very interesting way. I'm quoting now if you want to follow along if you have a Rambam, Hilchot De'ot, Chapter 5, paragraph 11.

The Rambam says; Derech ba'alei dei'ah - people who are intelligent, they go about achieving certain goals, there's three basic goals that they achieve, but they achieve them in a certain order. The first thing they do is; Sheyikaveh lo odom melacha hameparnesset oto techila - they find something that they can do, that they can create, that they can build, so that they should have something to give, something that they themselves can be independent. A way of earning a living as it were. V'achar kach yikneh beit dirah

- and after this they build themselves a home. V'achar kach - and after that; Yisah isha - they find someone to marry and they marry a woman.

Shene'emar - and you see this in the verse, he says. There's a verse that talks about going out to war. Now the verse itself is a fascinating verse, it was a verse that always troubled me but I think this Rambam really puts it into focus. I'm quoting now from Deuteronomy Chapter 20, verse 5. It says that before

Israel would go to war so the leaders of the nation would stand up before the troops and they would make the following declaration. They would say if there's any man here that has planted a vineyard but has not yet tasted the first of its fruits, they should leave the front and go home, go back to the vineyard, lest they die in war and someone else will have those first fruits. If someone has built a house and has not yet lived in it, let him too go home, lest he die in war and someone else take over his house. If there is someone who is engaged to marry a woman but has not yet married her, let him go home and marry her and be with her, lest he die in war and someone else take her.

It always troubled me when thinking about these verses that - so who cares? So I died. If I died I'm not going to know about someone else taking over the house. Dying is really, really bad, so it's like, who cares if I died before the house or after the house? Nobody wants to die, so how is it that these guys get to go home? But what the text is telling you is something very deep, that each of these things are ends in and of themselves. Think of them in terms of world number 1, or world number 2, and the bridge between world number 1 and world number 2, Shabbat. World number 1 what did you build in your life? You made a vineyard, you changed the world, this vineyard is your vineyard, it's your expression of yourself, it's how you, B'tzelem Elokim came and with your own bare hands, with Melacha, you built this wonderful vineyard, and you haven't yet tasted the first fruits. I talked to you last week about death; death is a kind of litmus test for meaning, that somehow the most meaningful things in life have to be meaningful even in the face of death.

That's what the verse is talking about here, you might die, of course you might die, death is a fact of life, it can't be escaped. But there's a difference between death when you are on the cusp of realizing your mission to create, leaving that tantalizingly unfinished, and death when you had a chance to bring completion into your drive to create. When you built yourself this vineyard and you actually can taste of its fruit, then - then you can die in peace. So go home, eat of its fruit, don't allow the tragedy of death to keep you away from that one, final step that you need to feel like you've made it in this world, that you've made it as a creator.

The same thing applies for a house. A house too is a different kind of creativity, you've built something in this world, but what is a house for, what is a vineyard for? Ultimately it allows you to be an independent being, so you could have something to give to someone, so that you can marry - the last thing described in these verses - so you can marry and have something to give. Each one of these things is a kind of end in and of itself. It's so much an end in and of itself that if you haven't achieved any one of them, you should go home rather than face the possibility of death. You should finish the vineyard project. You should finish the house project. You should finish the project of marrying.

But there are three different stages. Three different stages that G-d Himself went through in His path of being G-d, and that we, B'tzelem Elokim, we go through these stages too. First G-d made stuff in the world; vineyards were part of that, as it were, and we as a human being we make our vineyard like G-d in His six days of creation, He made the vegetation and all that stuff. But at the end of it all what had G-d really made? He had made a world, a house, a universe, and He invited us in. And then He created a little summer home for Himself, this garden - two houses that we could connect, our universe house and then

a house inside that universe house, the garden - and invited us into the garden, into that house. That's where we connected with Him. That was the world of connection.

Then G-d said, you try this too. You too, Tzelem Elokim, you can cultivate beautiful things. I'm the Gardener, I teach you how to garden. I cultivated the Garden of Eden, but now you, you can learn agricultural prowess from Me, you make your garden, you make your vineyard, you make your house. Then, you know what a garden and a house is? It's the greatest gifts you can give to someone that you love. You can marry a woman and you can build a home with her. You can provide for that home, you can give her somewhere to be. Creativity is nothing in the end if it's not in service of someone that you love.

While you're in the creative world it seems like everything and it is everything, it's an ultimate goal, and that's why if all you can do is build your vineyard then you should go home and finish building it before you face death, because it's an ultimate goal. But after that you'll look and you'll say, what next? You'll say, building a home. So you'll build a home and while you're doing that, that feels like an ultimate goal, but when you done you say, what was that for? Then there's a part of you that says it was for love. I want to marry, I want to connect to someone, and then you'll do that and that's the way of the world, the Rambam says.

Then the Rambam says, don't do it the other way around. There's a natural progression here. Tipshim - the Rambam says, stupid people, you know what they do? They get married first - Mat'chilin lisah isha. After that; Yikneh bayit - they think, oh maybe I can buy a home. After that at the end of their days when they're too weak to do anything they go and they say, oh maybe I should find a way to express my creativity, I should find a way to support myself and to actually do something in this world. They find out that they can't, they end up taking Tzedaka - taking up charity from other people.

The Rambam then says, and that's why later on in the Torah, in a part of the Torah that talks about curses that will come to Israel if they don't properly follow G-d's will, it talks about these three imperatives but in backwards order. It says that you're going to find yourself being engaged to marry, but some other man is going to take her. You're going to build a house, but someone else is going to take the house from you - you're going to die and someone else will take the house. Kerem titah - you'll build yourself a vineyard, but someone else is going to take its fruits.

The Rambam says the curse here is not just that you're going to be unable to find fulfillment, the curse is that the order is going to be wrong, you're doing it all backwards. You're starting with marriage and then you're going to the house, and then you're going to the vineyard. There is a natural order of things, it is world 1 - creativity, world 2 - relationship. It's creativity in service of relationship.

So in conclusion - at least in conclusion for this week - what I want to say is, is that there seems to be a natural bridge between world number 1 and world number 2. World number 1 is supposed to lead into world number 2. World number 1 goals and world number 2 goals, creation and connection, seem to have ultimate value when you're in that world, but still, one is a bridge to the other. When you've achieved a certain level of creativity, there's a challenge there, and the challenge is to be able to stop and

to enter another world. That's the Shabbos challenge. To enter a world of relationship, to understand that this creativity was in the service of something.

In a deep way what I might be able to argue is that really it's all about, in a way, being a Tzelem Elokim, following G-d's example, acting as if we're in the image of G-d, taking the lead from G-d, what did G-d do. G-d created a world and built a home for us and then ushered his beloved in and related to them.

What are we supposed to do? We're supposed to do the same thing, we're supposed to also create in the image of G-d, devote ourselves to that. But also to build a home, to be able to be in a position to be able to give gifts to the one that we love.

You even see it as part of world 2. In world 2 in which G-d ushers us into that home, into Gan Eden, and seeks to relate to us in that loving kind of way, to give us those gifts and to establish that connection with us, in that world, G-d says, you know what, you try it too. The same way that you came from Me and I want to connect back with you through these gifts, I'm going to give you the experience of something that comes from you, woman, and you connect back to her. V'davak b'ishto - and cling to her, and become one flesh, and taste that joy of unity with something that you've been separated from, from which you came, which came from you. You, Tzelem Elokim, take the path that I've taken, seek connection after creativity just as I have.

This week I've described an ideal for you, next week in what may be the final week of this podcast, I want to describe what happens when that ideal crumbles, what are the dangers that that ideal poses. Because this path from creativity to connection is strewn with the possibility of failure. Being a Tzelem Elokim, a little creator, just like G-d, invests man with great power but power is always dangerous - just ask J. R. R. Tolkien from Lord of the Rings. The great ring of power is also the source of all evil.

Remember the first great story of history after world number 1 and world number 2 is established, is the story of the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the root of all evil in the world.

At the end of the day if you really want to understand the meaning of life, it is not enough just to understand the rosy ideal of a perfected vision of what it means to achieve meaning of life through engaging in creativity and then connection. All of that is wonderful, but what does it mean to fail in achieving meaning of life? To have the best intentions but to fail anyway, miserably, to taste that terrible frustration, to be tripped up by your own sense of power. That is the story of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and you can't really understand the meaning of life without understanding the danger implicit in pursuing that meaning.

That is the heart of the story of eating from that tree, and that's what we'll explore next week. I'll see you then.

Hey podcast listeners, this is Rabbi David Fohrman and welcome back to podcast 5, which looks like it's going to be our concluding segment in this series reflecting on the meaning of life, the grandest of all questions maybe.Just on a personal note I want to say this series has been a lot of fun to record, and it's really been a journey for me. I don't know if you as a listener see it as a journey, but certainly the process of recording was a kind of unexpected adventure.

I think when I first started researching this course - and I was doing it together with Immanuel Shalev who should get a lot of the credit here for being a very vigorous kind of Chavrutah in this process with me. When I started, I really had no idea where we were going to end up with. I had ideas about where I was going to end up with but it wasn't actually this. It was an unexpected adventure. Your comments helped steer things in particular directions, my interaction with Immanuel here in the office steered things in particular directions, and just as I began to grapple with the concepts they took different shape for me as time went on, and I'm always excited when that happens.

I think like any good saga it continues past the nominal end point. This week is going to be the end point here, but really there's so much here and so many other avenues to explore after having laid this foundation that I really want to give us one last chance to kind of do that as a group. So I'm happy to announce we are actually going to schedule a webinar. If you want to participate live in that webinar, we can only accommodate X amount of people, so we're going to open that up to our Premium tier of subscribers - a good opportunity if you're thinking of wanting to support Aleph Beta even more, to upgrade your membership to Premium. And if you're a subscriber at our regular tier, do not fret, you'll be able to hear a recording of the webinar when we release it the next day. The date for the webinar live, the interactive kind of live experience, that's going to be at 8:30 pm Eastern Standard Time, on August 5. So put that in your calendars, 8:30 pm Eastern Standard Time, August 5. I look forward to getting to schmooze with all you guys in real time about all of this.

Also feel free to send in advance questions or comments and we'll try to get to those in the webinar. You can send those to [info@alephbeta.org.](mailto:info@alephbeta.org) Again, that's [info@alephbeta.org.](mailto:info@alephbeta.org)

In the meantime, on to our regularly, scheduled podcast, here we go. Last week I plotted for you a kind of path between what I had been calling world 1 and world 2. World 1, where man focuses on creativity, world 2 where man focuses on connection. I suggested that there was a kind of natural progression here, that if world 1 is focused on imitating G-d, on little creator trying to sort of actualize his creativity in imitation of Big Creator, capital C, there's a reason for that, it's a necessary step on the road to connection.

What I mean by that is that before you can be in a relationship you really have to be a somebody. You become a somebody, you assert your independence as it were, by expressing creativity in the world, doing what G-d did on some small scale. When you do that, when you establish yourself as a somebody in some kind of way, you can begin to enter into a relationship with another somebody. You can begin to take steps towards what we've been calling world 2.

But today I want to consider with you the disaster scenario. In other words, last week we talked about an ideal scenario when man develops creatively and then enters into a relationship, but there is a disaster scenario, where everything sort of goes off the rails and the Torah gives you a picture of that at the very beginning of Biblical history. If you think about the beginning of the Bible as two visions of creation itself, with Genesis Chapter 1 and Genesis Chapter 2, we can almost think of that as G-d sort of laying the tablecloth, putting down a setting for the story that's going to follow. So if that's the setting for the story, where does the story really begin? The story begins after the two accounts of creation; creation 1 and creation 2, well what's the first story you have there? The story of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Right there at the beginning of history I think we get a vision of what it looks like to go off the rails. It's not just that the Bible was being dour and deciding to start with sin because man is inherently sinful or something like that, or would just want to make us all depressed. No. The tree of knowledge temptation is a necessary feature of life after world number 1. You have to struggle with it as you enter world number 2, there's no way around it, and here's why. Man has a challenge in world number 1, that challenge is to actualize his own innate sense of creativity. To understand that he is little creator imitating Big Creator. When things go well it all looks fine. When things go well little creator does creative things, he engages in technological innovation, he builds dams, water systems, composes operas, and good things can flow out of that.

One of those good things that we talked about a couple of weeks ago is respect. If I understand that there's something sacred inside of me, little creator, and I see you, and you're little creator too, another Tzelem Elokim. And I see Bob and I see Phil and Sandy and Susie and all these people, and I understand that they're all inherently so special, ends in and of themselves, they deserve ultimate respect from me, and I treat them with that respect. That's a great thing. I treat G-d Himself, the Master Creator, all the more so with respect, and that's a good thing too.

But here's how the whole enterprise can go off the rails. There's a dark side to being a Tzelem Elokim, a creator in the image of G-d. The dark side of Tzelem Elokim, of being little creator, of respect, of self- respect, is that I become so infused - intoxicated as it were - with the might of my own creative powers, that I'm not willing to recognize a Grand Creator above me. It would be so much more convenient for me if the buck stopped with me. The challenge of Tzelem Elokim is to recognize that you're only a Tzelem Elokim, you're not Elokim Himself, you're not G-d Himself, don't give in to that illusion.

Now, if I were to give into that illusion, what would my experience in the garden look like? Instead of the utopian vision of the garden, where, having learned to respect myself and others and G-d I can engage in relationships with them in this beautiful garden, you have the dystopian vision of the garden, where man succumbs to the temptation to eat from the forbidden fruit. I want to eat from the Master's tree - why? Here's why. I like pretending that I'm master of the garden. That's a dress-up role I can really get into. G-d, He wants to give me all these gifts, all these fruits, but I don't like being dependent upon someone else. If I was in charge of the garden, if all of these gifts weren't just gifts, but they were by rights mine - if my room came with all of these Lego battleships, all of these toys - if that's just the

way it was, then I wouldn't have to worry about anyone looking over my shoulder anymore. I would have the ultimate control over my own destiny, I would even control good and evil themselves.

Let me stop and ask you a question, why is the forbidden fruit of all things called the tree of knowledge of good and evil? What a strange name. Why would the Master's tree, specifically be called that? What does one thing have to with the other? What does eating from that tree have to do with knowing good and evil? Is it a philosophy tree? What does it even mean? And besides, how does this tree change my perceptions, does it have some fairy dust in it that somehow magically transforms me?

I want to suggest it's not magic at all, there's actually a rational mechanism by which this tree does its work. As a matter of fact, it couldn't be otherwise, it has to be that eating from the Master's tree changes the way you look at good and evil, because what is good and evil? I mean just on a very simple level, what is good and evil? You know one of the problems we have when we look at the story is that we over-philosophize it, you know, what is good and what is evil, and we think about ontology and epistemology and all these philosophical issues and Kant and Hegel and all these things. What does the Torah mean? Theologically how - what is good and evil really? Let's put that all aside and just ask a very simple question, what does good actually mean as the Bible uses it? You know, the way you know a word and what it means in the Bible is by looking at how the Bible uses it. So how does the Bible actually use the word good in the early parts of Genesis? How does it use the word evil in the early parts of Genesis?

Let's actually take a look at it and our look is actually going to show us what this tree of knowledge of good and evil is all about. Where does the word good appear in the early parts of creation? Well, after G- d creates everything, every day He looks at it and behold it is good. Vayar Elokim ki tov, Vayar Elokim ki tov - over and over again, G-d sees that it is good. So it's interesting, G-d actually is a knower of Tov. Actually, that's what the snake sort of says, the snake says, oh don't eat from the tree because the tree is going to make you be like G-d knowing good and evil. The definition of G-d is the one who knows good and evil. Well it's sort of true. G-d knows good, we know that, He keeps on saying it after He creates everything.

Well if G-d knows good, does He know evil? Do you ever have G-d talking about evil or knowing evil? So at face value not, because in creation you don't ever have; Vayar Elokim ki ra'ah - that G-d sees that something is Ra'ah. But you know what, if you look later on in the Torah you'll actually find that you do have something like that, right before the flood; Vayar Hashem ki rabah ra'at ha'adam ba'aretz … vayitatzeiv el libo - G-d saw that the evil of man's heart was very great, and He became very sad. That's the last thing that happens before G-d decides to destroy the world. It's [actually the same 11:35] formulation as; Vayar Elokim ki tov. Here it's Vayar Hashem ki rabah ra'at ha'adam. Instead of seeing that things are good, here He sees things are bad - and, by the way, decides to destroy the world. The first time around when He sees things are good, He decides to keep what He's created. But when He sees things are bad, He decides to destroy what He's created.

You know what, there's a middle stage too. The last thing G-d created was man, humankind, but after

He created man, for the first time G-d says; Loh tov - it's not good for man to be alone; E'eseh lo ezer kenegdo - I am going to make him someone to be with him, a companion for him. That leads to the story of the creation of woman. So what does Loh Tov mean in context? Well if Tov means that's really good, I'm going to keep it, if Ra'ah means that's bad, I'm going to get rid of it, we're going to have a flood, Loh Tov means that's okay but it's not good enough, it needs improvement, so I'm going to fix it. It's almost like there are these three grades that G-d can give creation. There's Check Plus which is good, we'll keep that, there's we're going to Get Rid Of That, that's Ra'ah, and then there's Needs Improvement, which is Loh Tov.

If you think about it, it makes sense, those are actually the three grades that you would expect a creator to give what he's created, you would want a creator to give grades to what he's created because a creator has responsibilities. The responsibility of a creator is to make sure that he doesn't mess up and bring something into being which is really awful. You want to make sure what you create works. So a creator has to stand back and evaluate it and see whether he thinks it's good or not. He has a responsibility to do that.

Not only does he have a responsibility to do that, he has the ability to do it, because he can do so objectively. He's outside of the system. You see everything in the system, inside creation, all of those things have an interest, they're biased, you can't trust them to decide this is how things should be. But the creator doesn't have any interest, he's outside the system, he doesn't even live in the system, his only interest is just making sure that the system is good. So he's the one that can decide yeah, we've got to fix this, take care of that, get rid of this, this is good.

So the creator really is the knower of good and evil, which explains in a deep way, the temptation of humankind to eat from the tree. What's really in it for you to pretend that you are Big Creator? You see if you let little creator, that sense that I am a creator, if you let that sense get out of control and you come to think of yourself as THE ultimate power in the universe, I am the ultimate creator because there's nothing above me in the food chain, well then you can delude yourself into thinking - you will delude yourself into thinking - that it is up to you to make declarations about how things should be. And wouldn't it be great to have that power? And indeed that is the consequence of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. It's not fairy dust that changes your way of looking at good and evil, it's a natural consequence of eating from the Master's tree. If you think you're the master, that's what happens. You arrogate to yourself the right to make these distinctions, to say, yes, this is the way it should be, this is good, this is not good, this is not the way it should be.

The only problem is, you're not outside the system, little creator, you're in the system, you have interest, you have a horse to race in the system. You have all sorts of biases, all sorts of interests. But now - now you don't really have to deal with that, do you? You don't even have to admit that they're there. Those interests can influence you and you don't have to feel bad about it, because you can just declare that this is the way it should be. Things should be the way that I see it. You can pretend you're objective when you're not.

And that's the frustrating thing with evil in the post-tree world, nobody thinks they're evil anymore. Stalin, Hitler, they all think I'm doing the world a favor, no, this is the way the world should be, it should "judenrein", we should kill 10 billion people in a purge. Yeah, this is the way things should be, I'm in charge. And even the greatest villain, just says, no, I have the power to say this is how things should be, I'm not bad. All of my desires just hide behind this faked objectivity that I can just make these decisions.

The word Tov in Hebrew as well as English is one of these very hard to pin down words because it really has two meanings. Tov can mean that which is right, good and just, that's one sense of the word, but it can also mean that which I like, that which conforms to my desires. The problem is, when someone in the system uses the word Tov, there's that tension between the two. I never really know which Tov I'm talking about. I think I'm talking about this is the right, good and just, but really it's just the Tov of my desires, it's hiding behind that.

Leads to a situation - I facetiously described in my book: The Beast that Crouches at the Door, a dark and rainy night in Manhattan. The dark and rainy night, and you park and you have a beat-up, old Suburban, and you hear the sickening thud and you look behind you, there's no one there, but there's this Porsche, with this mangled front end, and it looks like you hit it, that you backed up into it. And the question is should you leave a note?

You're about to leave a note, but then you start thinking to yourself, I don't know, how do I know that I hit it? I mean it's true I did hear a sickening thud as a I backed up, and it's true there is a mangled front end in that Porsche, but maybe that front end was mangled before I got there? Maybe the thud was when I ran over that Coke can in the gutter. And anyway he's so rich, I mean look he has a Porsche and what was he doing parking there when anyone could hit him like that? I mean he was just inviting this. He's probably insured, it's not going to hurt him or anything, and I can't afford this, my insurance rates are going to go up and he's rich, it's not going to make a difference to him. This is Robin Hood, this is the poor against the rich and it's the rights of the downtrodden.

Before you know it, you've worked yourself up into a frenzy, where you think that it's the absolute positive and right and just thing for you to rebel and not write that note. Because the two kinds of good get conflated; which good is it, what I want or the way things should be?

So what's happening in our story? The man of world number 1, that Tzelem Elokim, the proud possessor of creativity, small c, has a challenge going into world 2, how will I deal with that power, with that sacredness that I sense inside myself? Will I deal correctly with it? Will I use that as a force for respect on my way to love? Will I understand that I have to have self-respect, I can't allow myself to be squashed, I have that sanctity, I have self-esteem. Will I assert my respect for others? Will I look around and say, you, you are another little creator, another little c, and I have to respect you and I have to respect you, and I have to respect you. That's one way I can do it, but it's not the only way. There's a dark side to Tzelem Elokim, to seeing that power of little creator inside yourself.

The dark side is to magnify that power and say that's all there is, and in effect I am the only creator here and nothing else matters. It means G-d doesn't matter anymore, I will eat from the fruits of His tree, I am

master of the garden. It means the land itself is subservient, it's not something that I need to be in relationship with. No, I'm the master, it's mine, I will take its bounty and do with it what I will. It means, as well, that I don't really have to have respect for other humans either. I, after all, am the knower of good and evil, my way of seeing things makes it the way it ought to be, it's my way or the highway now. Once I take that approach all of my relationships suffer, all of them break. My relationship with G- d breaks, my relationship with land breaks and my relationship with woman breaks. And those are the punishments from eating from the tree.

The punishments aren't really punishments, they're consequences. Listen to the various punishments that comes as a result of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Think about what the common denominator here is in all of them. Consequence number 1; Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden. Then for Eve; B'etzev teildi banim - in sadness will you bear children, in toil will you bear children. And; V'el isheich teshukaseich v'hu yimshal bach - your desire will be for your husband but he can rule over you. Now to the man; Arurah ha'adamah ba'avurecha - cursed be the land on your account; B'itzavon tochlenah - in sadness and in toil will you eat from it all the days of your life.

V'kotz v'dardar tatzmi'ach lach - thorns and thistles will it grow for you; V'achalta et eisev hasadeh - when you eat the grass of the field. Bezei'as apecha tochal lechem - by the sweat of your brow you will eat bread; Ad shuvcha el ha'adamah - until you return to the dust, because from dust you were taken.

What themes bind together all of these punishments?

The themes are broken creativity and broken relationships. The relationship with G-d breaks. G-d casts you out of the garden, [you sinned and not 21:29] love anymore so why are you in My special place, leave. Your relationship with land breaks. You were supposed to be the servant of land, to understand that you came from it, to take its gifts and its bounty and to understand from whence it came. But now, now you tried to manipulate land, you tried to dominate it illegitimately, you tried to pretend that you were the master and therefore the land will remind you who is master. You will work it, you will try to unify with it, but you will be struck with sadness every time you will because it won't really work.

The land will dominate you even as you come to work it, it will not yield to you, thorns and thistles will come from all of your efforts, you won't be able to cultivate it effectively, the land will remind you who the boss is. You used to have a nice, symbiotic, innocent relationship with land, if you manipulate it, it's going to manipulate you back.

So the punishment for land is about a broken relationship with land but it's also about broken creativity with reference to land. Little creator, you thought you could be Big Creator, right? Yeah, you'll want to create, you'll want to create with land, won't you? You'll become a bread maker. What is a bread maker? You're making processed food, you're using Melacha to shape things the way you like it. You're not just taking fruits, you're making bread, you're taking seeds and smashing it and then making it into flour.

Playing these life and death games where you kill the wheat and then you take the wheat and you put water back in and you enliven it with yeast and then you kill it again and then - and you make your bread and it's all this great Melacha, playing G-d thing. But you know what? You're going to do that in

sadness.

What's so sad about making bread? B'itzavon tochlenah kol yemei chayecha … bezei'as apecha tochal lechem - by the sweat of your brow you'll make bread, in sadness will you eat from it. In sadness will you eat from it because the sense of connection to land will be gone. Yeah, you can be creator if you like, you can dominate, but world number 1, little creator man, was just supposed to usher you into world number 2, a world of connection. But your connection to land is broken. So you're going to make your bread, but you're going to feel sadness when you make the bread, that sense of connecting and coming back to land in a joyous way, that you won't have any more. Yes, you'll come back to land but it's going to be sad and you'll come back to it, by the way, in death. Aphar atah v'el aphar tashuv - you're dust and you're going to come back to land in dust. So that's how you'll [connect 24:23] to land, not in a joyous way now, in a sad way, little creator.

So if your relationship with G-d becomes broken, you get cast out of the garden, your relationship with land becomes broken, relationship between people becomes broken as well. This is one of the most poignant tragedies of the garden.

It begins with the sin of eating from the fruit itself. Loh tov heyot ha'Adam levado - it wasn't good for man to be alone, so G-d created a woman so that they could unify and find joy with each other, two fragments that find each other, masculine side and a feminine side, searching for their lost other half.

Love was supposed to reign between them. What would love mean? It would mean coming together with one another and understanding who the other is. That's what love always is. Taking gifts and taking pleasure from one another when I recognize who you really are, who is giving me that pleasure.

But there's a game that we can play in love and it's not such a nice game, it's the squashing of recognition. Adam can play it and Eve can play it, and each does in the early stories of Genesis. What's the meaning of Eve giving the fruit to Adam? Adam is attracted to Eve, his lost feminine side, but when she says, yes, I'll accept you, but here's this fruit, it will make you like G-d, what does that in essence mean? It means I'll accept you but the conditional here is, why don't you have some of this fruit? I had it and I'm pretending that I'm G-d, maybe if you had it, I'd like you even better - that's the implied idea. And this is the great tragedy of playing this game in love, which is I'll love you but not for who you are, but from some dream of who you can be that you can't really be. If you could be like G-d maybe I'd love you even more.

So that's one kind of treachery between man and woman, but here's another kind. Look at Adam. Adam, he eats from the tree, so does he have responsibility for that? Yeah, it's true Eve gave him the fruit but look, he had free choice, he didn't have to eat from the tree, he ate from the tree. G-d says, what did you do? Listen to Adam's response. It aint my fault; Ha'Isha asher natata imadi - the woman who You gave me G-d; Hi natnah li min ha'etz va'ochel - she's the one who gave it to me and I ate. Listen to this, it's preposterous.

Whose fault is it? Well it's Eve's fault she gave it to me. It's actually not even Eve's fault it's Your fault, because You're the one who gave me Eve who gave it to me. It's everybody's fault but mine. Who are

you? Are you crazy? Look you're saying this to the Master of the Universe, you think you can really get away from this?

But that's the bitter fruits of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, isn't it? You're the maker of right and wrong now, you're the one who gets to decide how it should be, that's the way it looks from my perspective. Yeah, the fact that it's my desire influencing me and I'm partial, I don't see that. Everyone can see you're crazy except for yourself. To you it makes perfect sense to say it's not my fault, it was her fault and it's G-d's fault, it's everybody's fault but mine.

Eve betrays Adam in love and Adam turns around and betrays Eve in love. G-d says, you know what, this is going to become a pattern. When you eat from the tree and you don't even know who you are anymore, you don't even understand you're little creator anymore. You're all dressing up and thinking your Big Creator and that's why you're naked, you can't even deal with it, because you can't bear to look at yourself and admit that you're just human, that you're just a player in this game. You want to pretend you're outside the system and the great knower of good and evil? Your relationships will come crashing down. Because your relationships are built on the fact that there's little creator here, and there's little creator, and there's little creator there, and there's two of them, and there's four of them, there's six of them, there's millions of them. But each one of you are going to think there's really only one, that you're the big C, the Big Creator, and might makes right, and it's your way or the highway, and how are you ever going to get along with anyone?

So let me propose an interesting kind of way of reading what we normally think of as punishments, as natural outcomes. Man's punishment, he sought to dominate the earth and now the earth will come back and doesn't like being dominated, so the earth is going to end up dominating him. So Eve, there was something manipulative about offering the fruit for Adam, so it's like the manipulation is going to come back to bite you, he's stronger than you are; V'el isheich teshukaseich - you're still going to desire him too; V'hu yimshal bach - and he could use his physical strength to dominate you. The Torah is giving you a vision of broken love, of what love and union looks like when it's broken. Yes, you'll still come back together, humans in world number 1; Zachar u'nekeiva barah otom - the language from world number 1, male and female He created them, you're co-creators, you'll still come back to create. But the world number 2, love between you, it's been broken, it's been shattered, you're in a fight with each other.

You know what happens when there's intimacy between you but you're in a fight? It's a very lonely kind of creativity isn't it? It's all about having kids. You'll have kids, but; B'etzev teildi banim - in sadness will you bear children. (A) It's not going to be so easy anymore, creativity gets broken now because you misused creativity thinking that you were master creator. (B) Not just in toil will you bear children, but the other meaning, the more literal meaning of [B'itzavon/B'etzev 30:48, in sadness will you bear children. What if you conceive children with physical intimacy but without emotional intimacy? That's what it's like when there's intimacy in a fight, it's sadness, and you can still have kids, but it's sad.

When you think about it, the vision of all of the punishments of the tree of knowledge of good and evil,

what they're really all about is leaving world 2 behind and being stuck in world number 1. Leaving behind the world of love, the world of connection. So yeah, you'll still be a creator, man, you'll still try to create from the land, but there's a sadness because your connection to land is impaired. Yeah, man and woman, you'll still come together to create, but there's a sadness because the connection between you is impaired. And you'll be banished from Eden, from the special place where you connect with G-d, and you'll be missing that connection too.

The tragedy continues with what happens next. Look at the story that immediately follows the banishment from Eden. Here are Adam and Eve cast out of the garden, cast out and away from world number 2, marooned in this lonely but creative world number 1, and what happens? The first words after the banishment; V'ha'Adam yadah et Chava ishto - and man knew his wife Chava. Now knowing here of course is a euphuism for intimacy, because she is going to become pregnant and she's going to have a child. But listen to how that intimacy is characterized and listen to how different it is from the way intimacy got characterized in world number 2.

First of all even the word Yadah is ominous - know, as a euphemism for intimacy, man knew Eve. Listen to that verb, what does it remind you of? What was the main feature of the last story, the tree of - knowing - good and evil. It's almost as if in this act of intimacy you get the dark echoes of that tree.

How so? Well, let's remember the way it was supposed to be back in the garden, in the utopian vision of the garden. In world number 2 intimacy was mutual; V'davak b'ishto vehayu l'basar echad - man and woman, man clings to woman and they become one flesh. THEY become ONE flesh. Equality.

Mutuality. Listen to how different it is now; And man knew Eve. Very unilateral, wouldn't you say?

He's the only one doing anything, it's as if she's just this thing and he's using her. V'ha'Adam yadah et Chava ishto - Et is a connector in Hebrew between a verb and a direct object, it's almost like he's treating her like an object, she is something to be acted upon.

So let's go back to this euphemism for intimacy; 'knowing', with its echoes of the tree. It's almost as if the Torah is saying, his intimacy with her is overshadowed by that tree. How so? The tree is the thing that makes me say it's all about me and my way of seeing things and if I take that into intimacy and it's all about me, then you're just something that I use. So man uses Eve in a kind of way.

But then what happens? Eve becomes pregnant with a child that she will ultimately name Kayin - Cain. She says something remarkable when she gives birth, she says; Kaniti ish et Hashem - I have acquired this man with G-d. This little man. You can imagine this woman overcome with the wonder of childbirth, there's this little man that's come from me, it's the most miraculous, crazy thing in the world. Me and G- d; Kaniti ish et Hashem - we've created this man together. Hmm, who did she leave out of the picture?

She left Adam out of the picture. Oh yeah, him, just a momentary contribution, I carried this baby for nine months, G-d made the biochemistry, it was really me and G-d. Look what just happened here. Man used her and made her into insignificance in his own eyes, and what about her, she looks at the same act and sees him as insignificant in her eyes. Everybody has got their own way of seeing things where you're the center and the other is insignificant. That's the bitter fruits of the tree.

I want to close by exploring a mystical symbol that emerges at the end of the story of the garden, because I think if you look at that symbol carefully, just right there in that image that forms in your mind you get a picture of everything we've been talking about. The symbol I'm talking about are angels, known as Keruvim - cherubs. As Adam and Eve are banished from the garden, G-d sets up two angels - these cherubs - to make sure that they will never get back into this special, sacred place, the garden. Who are these cherubs and what do they signify?

Interestingly, they're holding a sword - a flaming sword, but the sword is described in a strange way, not only is it flaming but it's a; Cherev Hamit'hapechet - which means it's a double-edged sword. So picture this, these two angelic beings and there's this sword between them. So here's the interesting thing about Keruvim, they always come in pairs, you never find just one, that's the way they are here right outside of Eden and that's where they are later on in the Torah when they appear in the Tabernacle. Adam and Eve, as they're banished from Eden, they're a pair too, and these paired angels they have a sword between them; Adam and Eve, didn't they really have a sword between them too?

The argument I'd like to make to you is that the Keruvim - the angels, as Adam and Eve turn around, as they're banished from the garden and they look back and they see those angels, all they're seeing is reflections of themselves. Who are they? In a way, they are angelic beings, they are a little slice of the creator, they're in the image of G-d, they're the only mortal thing on earth that has that Divine spark, that's little creator, the sentient being, just like G-d. There's something so wonderful and important about that. And here are these two beings, that were taken from each other, who should be in love but instead of being in love they're in a fight with each other. There's a sword between them, they look at the Keruvim and they see themselves; the cherubs are nothing but a reflection of themselves, two beings who should be in love but are separated by a double-edged sword.

A sword has two edges here because when I use it against you, what does the other edge do? It slices into me. Which is the irony of every fight between two people who should be in love, we're a we, so if I destroy you what am I really destroying, I'm destroying our we, and yet I tear you down anyway. That's the great irrationality of the human condition, when little creator thinks that it's big creator, that it's my way or the high way, that I and I alone am the arbiter of right and wrong and good and evil. How can we compromise anymore if I know the truth, if it's my way? You know, if I understand that I'm little creator and I understand that you're little creator and we each have different ways of seeing things in the world, we can respect each other and get along and we can have love - and respect as the foundation of love. But, if I think that it's my way or the highway and I'm outside the system and I have THE way of seeing it, how do I compromise with you anymore? And my relationships fall apart. Not just my relationship with G-d, my relationship with my beloved other humans, my relationship with Eve.

And that is the tragedy of the cherubs with the sword between them, it's just a reflection of Adam and Eve themselves. Even look at the word for sword, how do you spell sword in Hebrew? Chet, Reish, Beit. How do you spell cherub in Hebrew? Chaf, Reish, Beit, almost exactly the same. You know what that means? It means that the word for sword in Hebrew, it's just a corrupted form of the word for Keruv. If I take Keruv - angel, and I mess with it, it becomes sword. Here are these two Keruvim, but if you corrupt

the connection between them somehow then a Cherev emerges between them and separates them, and that's the tragedy.

By the way, right there, in that image, is kind of all of human history. You know, I registered for this course recently on Coursera, it was a course about the art of war, so to speak, the philosophy of war, taught by a professor at Princeton. In the course he argues that war is not really an aberration, it's fundamental to humanity, it's a lens through which you can view humanity. I think almost the Torah's view is exactly the opposite. War is a corruption of humanity. We're supposed to be angels - Keruvim with a Chaf. When somehow our view of ourselves as creators get corrupted, when we see ourselves as master creator, war is inevitable, we're just not going to be able to get along, there's going to be a sword between us and everyone else.

Isn't it interesting, if you think about kingship, where does kingship come from? It comes from swords. Kingship is the idea that I'm on top of the world. Anthropologically, how did kings develop? Well the mightiest warrior, the one who defended your tribe against the others, and killed more of the other guy than everyone else, he becomes king. There's this very close connection between violence and little creator thinking he's big creator.

There's one final tragedy in the Keruvim, again, going back to world number 1, world number 2. World number 1 is supposed to be the basis for world number 2, but after the banishment from Eden, the sadness of that banishment is that you're marooned in world number 1, where I'm a creator but without the connection and love of world number 2 - in all my relationships. That too is signified in a fascinating way by the language of the Keruvim. How do you spell Keruv - one more time - Chaf, Reish, Beit. I mentioned they are paired angels, these letters; Chaf, Reish and Beit, they are all the paired letters. As you may know, letters in the Hebrew language they have numerical values; the numerical value for Chaf - 20, the numerical value for Reish - 200, the numerical value for Beit - 2. You see the common denominator? They're all the twos; 2, 20 and 200. So these paired angels called the Keruvim; Chaf, Reish, Beit, that's if you spell it forward.

But bear with me for a second, spell it backwards. Beit, Reish, Chaf. What does Keruv spelled backwards spell? It spells Bareich - which means blessed. Okay so we have a Keruv here within these first two chapters of Bereishit, what about Bareich, do we ever have a blessing? Oh yeah we actually do. Isn't that interesting? Going out of Eden, after the banishment from Eden, we meet two Keruvim, but what about going into Eden? At the close of world 1, right before you get ready for world 2, before there was a garden, before man was in Eden, when world 1 talked about the creation of man, man the creator, after G-d created man on the sixth day; Vayevarech otam - and He blessed them. Giving them the mandate of little creator, to be fruitful and to multiply. That's what males and females do together.

Remember there's two reasons why males and females come together, there's a world number 1 reason and there's a world number 2 reason. The world number 1 reason is you're my co-creator, I cannot create without you. But that's a utilitarian reason to come together. In a way, if that is all it is then you're my tool, I can't create without you, I just need you in order to create, I'm using you for something.

World number 2 introduces something else. World number 2 takes that idea of being a creator as a basis and builds upon it, and if you build upon it properly, if you let that sense that I'm a creator grow into a sense of self-respect, of mutual respect of other creators, and then you're ready love and you can enter into this relationship with them. Then, world number 2 ushers you into a whole new world of relationships. V'davak b'ishto vehayu l'basar echad, a new reason why males and females might come together, and it's not just to create, it's to connect, it's to be whole, to cling to one another; Vehayu l'basar echad - and to become one, to restore a wholeness. And that is love.

If the impetus for intimacy between man and woman in world number 1 is creativity, the impetus in world number 2 is love.

Now imagine yourself visually. Here you are, you're Adam and Eve, you've just been created, you have this immense creative power inside you, you're in world number 1 and now just imagine being ushered by the Creator into the garden in world number 2. Being ushered in there by hearing this blessing of being fruitful and multiply, and then being introduced to the garden, into this world of love and connection and a whole new level of your relationship. So it's almost as if you can imagine that Chuppah that you're going to, it's adorned with these words, that blessing that G-d is giving you on the sixth day as He's ushering you into the garden; Beis, Reish, Chaf. You're passing through it and you see, Beis, Reish, Chaf, on top of you, Bareich - blessing. You hear this blessing from G-d and now you're in the garden and G-d wants you to be in love.

But somehow you ate from the tree, the Master's own tree, and your relationship with each other began to fall apart. Eve manipulates Adam, Adam comes back and blames her and manipulates her and their relationship is in tatters. Now you're being banished and you look back towards that Chuppah and what do you see? You see Keruvim; Chaf, Reish, Beit. You're actually seeing the Beracha backwards. You're seeing that same Beis, Reish, Chaf but you're looking at it from the other side, so you're seeing a mirror image of it, and it doesn't look like Beis, Reish, Chaf anymore, it looks like, Chaf, Reish, Beit. So what do you see? You don't see the bridal canopy of blessing anymore, you see something else, you see the Keruvim; Chaf, Reish, Beit, these cherubs who should be in love. You see yourself, but you see yourselves with the sword between you because that's all you are now, lovers with a sword separating them. That's the real tragedy of Adam and Eve as they're banished from the garden.

In conclusion, let me share with you just a closing thought, as I kind of wrap up this series. I think we've really seen two different paths to meaning that really is one large path. It begins with Tzelem Elokim, actualizing yourself as a creator, and hopefully blossoms into all kinds of wonderful relationships where you're a fragment of something larger and you come together with that something larger. And that wholeness feels wonderful and we call it love. That's what it's all about. Life is about building but hopefully building things and gifts and homes for the ones that you love, connecting with them. But there's a danger on the way, the danger is, Tzelem Elokim it's special stuff, sacred stuff, being in the image of G-d. It's the key to our glory but could also be the key to our downfall. It's a glory we all have and don't mistake it and think that you don't have it.

You know, last week I talked about creativity in the grandest of terms; the internet startup founder, the composer who composes a symphony. But we all have creativity, it's what makes us human. We feel alive when we create. When we plant roses and we work the land, we're creating, there's something spiritual about that. When we build a house, we're creating, when we compose an essay, when we have kids, it's all around us creativity, and we should revel in it, it's what makes us godly. We should use it to find within ourselves to respect others, to respect G-d, and for it to be the beginning of a bridge to relationships that we build to others. We should find self-respect in creativity, but we can't let little creator succumb to the belief that it's all about me.

It's an easy belief to succumb to, look how powerful human creativity is. Right now we have spacecraft hurtling past Pluto with seven perfectly calibrated, scientific instruments, ready to take snapshots of it as it passes at ten miles per second. That spaceship was launched ten years ago, I think, in 2005. It's hundreds of millions of miles away and it's still communicating with us. We are powerful, our creativity is the key to that. The question that faces humanity over the next hundred or thousand years is whether we can survive the onslaught of our creativity, or will we use it to destroy ourselves in war? There are tragic consequences for little creator thinking he's Big Creator. In the macro level it can be the end the world, it could be the end of nations in war. On a micro level it could be the end of your relationship with your wife, with your kids, when you war against them, when you think your way of seeing it is the way of seeing it and you have the keys to good and evil.

Really finding meaning in life, means understanding who you are. There's a Chassidic story, I think, about a man who would have two pieces of paper, one in each pocket. On one; Onochi aphar v'epher - I am just dust. On the other; Bishvili nivrah ha'olam - because of me the world is created. Finding meaning in life is about holding both of those pieces of paper in your pocket and they're not contradictory. On the one hand we are just dust, we're going to die. That's ultimately the lesson we had to learn after we pretended to be Big Creator. You think you're Big Creator, life is over after 100 years or so, we're all going to die, we're just dust and we return to the dust. Ah, but what dust are we? Look at how sacred we are. Look at how wonderful we are. We can create, we can relate, and in so doing, have the most meaningful of lives.

Immanuel Shalev: Hi everyone… Rabbi Fohrman: Hi folks…

Immanuel Shalev: Okay, let's get started. Welcome to the Meaning of Life webinar; question-answer session. This webinar kind of evolved out of one of the most exciting podcasts that we did on the meaning of life. We want to give you guys the chance to ask questions on the meaning of life - you've submitted questions, the questions have been reviewed, there are some incredible, incredible stuff, we're excited to talk about it.

Just so you know, just a point of order, you can ask your own questions during this webinar, there's a place to submit questions below, feel free to interrupt, ask as many questions as you can, we'll probably ask you some questions as well. We're excited to hear from you, this is a collaborative process. That's my brief introduction. Rabbi Fohrman - turn it over to you.

Rabbi Fohrman: Hey, so I just want to say hi over here and I'm looking forward to this. I always enjoy the chance to be able to actually interact with some of you folks about the material that we're putting out here.

Just a quick word of introduction, the fellow off here to my left - I don't know if he appears on the left of your screen, but he appears on the left of my screen - is Immanuel Shalev. He directs operations for us here at Aleph Beta and you guys get a chance to see the inner workings of Aleph Beta - at least a quarter of Immanuel's office, and a quarter of my office that appears in the background to this video. Immanuel played a really wonderful role here in the development of this course, he was kind of my Chavruta for it. As I think I may have mentioned in the audio of the courses themselves my ideas changed quite a lot about this course over time, and you guys were a big part of that and Immanuel was a big part of that also. We [did 1:54] spend a lot of time going over stuff both before recording and also vetting things, recording different versions of things and putting it all together and ruminating.

So Immanuel, I just want to thank you for your input in this and making the course as wonderful as it is.

Before we get into some of the questions, I just want to say that for me this course was exciting because this is stuff I periodically think about; meaning of life in its larger sense. Kind of been the history of my thinking about it and for me it goes all the way back to - I think it must have been 1999 or so when I took my first stab at the topic and put together a course called; [A Meaning of Life Five Cents 2:38] patterned after Lucy's booth on the Peanuts comic. I don't know if you guys know Lucy and Charlie Brown from Charles Schulz but The Psychiatrist is In, and Psychiatric Advice Five Cents. So I figured, Meaning of Life Five Cents. That was a course that I built out actually using some Kabbalistic concepts of the Sefirot.

Then - it was kind of one stab at it, and then here when Aleph Beta was just kind of getting started about a year or so ago in the summer, we took another stab at this, and never actually developed it into a

course we put online or anywhere. It was patterned - it really had a whole different focus. Focused around the kind of tantalizing question; is life a game and what does game really mean? I think I may have actually done a webinar on Tisha B'Av dealing with some of those topics, which was kind of an early version of things, last year.

This year when we started to talk about doing this course we were thinking of coming back to some of those themes about game and then we just kind of developed it. For those of you who have been around the block and watching Aleph Beta videos, you may know that back in this year's Parshat Toldot video is where you can begin to see world 1 and world 2 as they developed in this course, in Eileh Toldot - these are the generations of - we talked about the meaning of those words in Tanach. This is an attempt to go back and look at each of these worlds and it's kind of gratifying to see that seemingly the Torah is talking about meaning of life issues right where you would expect them to be, which is kind of right there at the beginning.

So it was a great journey of discovery - obviously a journey of discover that continues. I think we've maybe scratched the surface in some ways and maybe gotten somewhere deeper in other ways. But it's been an exciting journey.

One of the things that I'm curious and I'm wondering if maybe you guys can write in here at the bottom

- I think the way you're going to be inputting mostly is through the chat box on your screen. So one of the things I'd like to ask you to reflect on and maybe I'll begin to reflect on this and kick it off to Immanuel, is what, if anything, was your favorite part of this course? Is there anything you particularly hated? Is there anything you particularly liked?

I'll kind of kick off that discussion. For me the process was great. One of the things I particularly liked was actually something which is, I think, a contribution of Immanuel in Audio 4, which was, I think, the very poignant notion that world 1 and world 2 each have their own currency. It's almost like money.

And what money is, is the kind of universal symbol of value that everybody agrees on, it's just understood. World 1 has its own universal symbol of value, and world 2 has its own universal symbol of value, and they're two different things. It's like when you come home from Israel and you've got all those Shekels in your pocket and they're jangling around and you realize that you can't even use the highest denomination in America, it just doesn't mean anything. So too if you take world 1 currency and try to use it in world 2, it doesn't work, and if you take world 2 currency and try to use it in world 1, it doesn't work.

Of course, world 2 currency is the currency of connection, of love, and if you use that in world 1 settings

- you bring it into the boardroom at [Cravath 6:30] in midtown Manhattan in the middle of an intensely bargained deal protecting oil tankers, it's just not going to get you anywhere. If you take world 1 currency and try to bring it into world 2 - and we talked about some of that, to me, that was one of the most poignant parts of the course, and I have to thank you, Immanuel, for that insight. That it seems so - like it makes so much sense to take the currency of creativity and value and try to quantify things and you're a startup company and everything is how do you quantify success. But nobody really thinks about

quantifying success in terms of relationship building. That isn't the way we normally think of quantifying success. But it's a world 2 value and it's world 2 currency, and when you're in world 2, world 1 currency doesn't mean as much.

So to me that was my favorite kind of - I think - takeaway insight from the course, so thank you Immanuel for that. I'll pass the mike over to Immanuel over here, and then I'd love to see what you guys have to say.

Immanuel Shalev: Yeah, let's start on some questions. Just a quick point of order, can you guys see us? You can just type in the question-answer thingy to let us know - I know one person said they had a problem. Yes, okay, good, thank G-d, great, thank you.

\tOkay, while I have you in the question-answer box and before we start our first question, if you want to share your favorite part of the course right there, that's a good place to do it. We're going to read that while we gather and talk about some questions. So let us know.

\tLet's get started. The first question Rabbi Fohrman is a little bit difficult, it is asked by [Noah 8:17], who asks, practically, what does this look like? Does it help me decide who to marry, what job to get, what school to attend, what career to choose, where to live, how much vacation, when to have kids, et cetera? And, what about all the little things in life, should I consider meaning of life when I go to school or go to work, in my marriage, my relationship with my parents? It's a doozy.

Rabbi Fohrman: [Laughs] Okay, so there's a lot of stuff in there, kind of asking for what are the practical takeaways into the everyday decisions both big and small that we make in life? So I guess, let me take my hand to that - Immanuel could you give me the first part of the question again?

Immanuel Shalev: Sure, practically, what does this look like? Does it help me decide who to marry, what job to get, what school to attend, what career to choose, where to live, how much vacation should I have?

Rabbi Fohrman: Okay, so those are a lot of questions. Without getting into each one in detail, the answer is a resounding yes. You know I think that meaning of life probably these issues should be influencing our decisions both large and small. To me one of the gratifying things about this is that I think that if we're right that world 1 has an answer to meaning of life and world 2 has an answer to life, those are two great beacons that we can use in making these kinds of decisions and actually evaluating them in an intelligent way. I think the challenge of life comes perhaps in moving around the buttons on the graphic equalizer.

If you are old enough to have a graphic equalizer, not just rely on your phone to play your music for you, so you know that you have these - you have bass and treble and you've got other kind of qualities that you can adjust. I think the - every decision is a function perhaps of both of these values and the question is, how much do you weight the decision towards one value or another?

So for example, getting married, so what would you say, is - and let me actually put this out to you guys and we can poll about this. Getting married, would you say that's a pure world 1 question, a pure world 2 question, or both? What would you say? And you can just write in over here - anybody responding? I only see pink flowers, the screen has a flower, the screen has a…

Immanuel Shalev: Oh here you go, [Miriam is responding 10:55].

Rabbi Fohrman: Miriam says both. So I would agree. It's both, but I would say it's weighted towards world 2. So in other words, when deciding who to marry it's fundamentally a world 2 decision. If you think about marriage or mate, in the Torah it shows up actually in world 2, but there's aspects of world 1 in it possibly.

So for example, what would it look like to look at marriage through a world 1 lens? And by the way for those of you who are involved in dating or whatever system you're in, or Shidduch dating, if you have kids in it or anything, so I think you can relate to what I'm talking about. Where people sort of think about what kind of marriage partner they want, one way to think about it is what profession do I want him to go into or what profession do I want her to go into? So to some extent it's like I want to be secure and to some extent it's also like no, I have a vision of marrying a doctor, or I have a vision of marrying a lawyer, or they're going to be in Klei Kodesh and they're going to do something Jewish. How will they express their creativity?

So that is an important issue to some extent. I want to be a partner with someone in expressing their creativity, I want to express my creativity. Will they have an appreciation for the kind of creativity that I want to express? Those are important issues.

But there's other important issues also, which is the relationship issues. Is this someone who I can accept pleasure from? Is this someone I want to give pleasure to? Is this someone that I want to become whole with and create a we, and have that joy of oneness with? Does that work for me? So those are - it sounds like - no, marriage is primarily a world 2 issue, but it has elements of world 1 in it.

When you think about work it's the same thing, what kind of job do I want to have? Primarily a world 1 issue, but elements of world 2 exist in it also. So for example, it's yes, what kind of impact do I want to have in the world is my primary issue, but it's also what kind of workplace environment do I want to be in? Do I want to be in a company where - that promotes cutthroat competition between people? Or do I want to be in a company that has a real sense that these are people who are all on a same team, that - where camaraderie and kind of kinship works, or a sense that the company is contributing to the world at large?

So I think that the - and by the way, there's no right answer to some of this too. I mean, some people may say, well look, at work I can handle - it's an 80 per cent world 1 thing, and as long as I have 20 per cent world 2 I'm fine. And that may work for one person. For another person they may say no, my primary issue is at work I really want to feel I'm in a collaborative environment and I don't feel I can contribute and be creative in any other kind of way. So I think each person sort of needs to take their

pulse about world 1 and world 2, but at least those are the parameters that you really want to be thinking about as you adjust your graphic equalizer with each of these decisions.

Immanuel, I'll hand this over to you.

Immanuel Shalev: Yeah, I mostly agree. I think that there are some other great questions that are going to help flesh this out a little bit more and maybe we can kind of return to it.

Did you take a crack at the second half of the question? Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, well remind me the second half again.

Immanuel Shalev: So what about all the little things in life, should I consider meaning of life when I go to school or go to work, in my marriage, or my relationship with my parents?

Rabbi Fohrman: So yeah, I mean I think, again it's a good barometer for little things and big things. Where when you go to school, again, the issues are what do I want to get out of school? How do I want to build my skills? How do I want to build my creative power? That's one issue of in school, but the other issue in school is, what kind of relationship am I developing with my classmates, with my teacher? The relationship issues in school are very important also, no man is an island. So I think you've got to somehow balance those and really ask the same kinds of things, which is, is this a primarily world 1 experience? Is this a primarily world 2 experience? Just so you can have a sense of how you're investing your energy in the relationship.

I think it's true with friends also. I would say in developing - as I choose my friends it's primarily a world 2 thing. You could have people who have a kind of somewhat Machiavellian view of friends, where I say my friends are the tools that I use to get ahead in life and to be more creative in life. I think people see them that way, personally - or some people see it that way - personally I think that's a bad way to look at friendships, and I don't think friendships - for me at least is almost a wholly world 2 thing. But to be perfectly frank, a lot of our friendships come from the workplace also, we find ourselves having common ground with those who have similar world 1 interests to us, a lot of times.

So I think - it's hard to give hard and fast rules as to is this a world 1 question or a world 2 question, but I think at the very least we can say, world 1 and world 2 are the issues that we need to contend with, with almost all of these questions.

Immanuel Shalev: I just want to read a submission from [Peggy 16:43] who writes that, I think world 1 and 2 models help, but we need to ask and answer these questions throughout our lives because life shapes us and we change, sometimes evolve. Life has as much meaning as we bring to it, but Rabbi, I would say - and do you agree - that sometimes we feel in our gut what we need to do, we don't have to ask?

Rabbi Fohrman: Oh sure, I mean, I'm not saying that you need to ask all the time, I'm not saying that

you have to have your Rabbi or spiritual advisor on tap all the time to answer these questions. I think yeah, when I talk about asking these questions, I mean asking to ourselves. We do feel in our gut what we need to do. But a lot of times sometimes we're confused and that's when you've got to consult your head and actually sort of think about it a little bit. So I think in thinking about it at least, this model of world 1 and world 2 can be [of 17:31] help.

By the way, that which Peggy says, I think rings true for me about revisiting things later in life. I think that Peggy really has a good point that the answers to these questions probably change over life. For example, if you ask yourself what role do friends play in your life when you're 10, what role do friends play in your life when you're 20, what role do friends play in your life when you're 40, those are different for a lot of people and different people would answer those questions differently. As well as what role does marriage play in my life, or even my job play in my life, that these are different stages. There's a time when a job really offers more world 2 connection for people and somebody who may see themselves as on the creativity express as 20 year olds, may see their job as a way that they can reach out and relate to the world much later in life.

I think that yeah, just because you've made a decision doesn't mean that you shouldn't go back and reevaluate it.

Interestingly, I'll just say the last thing over here on that, a book that I often quote now and then is Mortimer Adler's How to Read a Book. One of the things that he says in How to Read a Book is that his definition of a good book is a book that you will come back to at different stages of life and see different things in it. I think that those are the books that are really worth reading. I think we can say the same thing for life itself. Life itself is worth living because we can come back to it at different points in life and see different things in it and have different answers to these questions, it's dynamic in that kind of way.

Immanuel Shalev: One thing that Peggy said which also kind of rang true for me as well, is that you kind of have a feeling as you go through life as to what is going to give you meaning and what isn't.

Something that I really enjoyed about this course is that in addition to the fact that you were able to look at world 1 and world 2 in Genesis and find all kinds of great meaning, is that it really rang true with my experience of life, and with what so many other people kind of say meaning of life is - which was kind of startling for me. Because we're so used to at Aleph Beta all the evidence and the text has to be there for you to make a particular argument, but here when the evidence in the text is leading towards meaning of life it also has some internal resonance.

I think it also reminds me of something that we talked a lot about in the office with this course, which was the concept of a midlife crisis, which has a really cool and unique place kind of in the transition from world 1 to world 2. But it's this really interesting feeling that here you are working so hard - and if you're following your feeling when you're young, maybe in your 20s and you're starting your first job and you're working really, really hard, you feel like that's what you should be doing. You're trying to build your life, you're trying to build and provide for your family. Then you might hit this [midlife 20:33] crisis, which is this other feeling as life changes, that kind of says, hey wait a second, why am I

doing this? Maybe it pushes you into world 2 a little bit - which is just a really, really interesting way of…

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, I [don't know, when 20:48] you shared the concept with me at first a couple of days ago, it really hit me between the eyes, because that, I think, it's just a great, great definition for what a midlife crisis is. Midlife crisis is where you feel the rug is pulled out from you because your own values start to change. You say to yourself, why do my values start to change? You think there's something wrong with me, what the heck is happening with my values, they're starting to change? And you question yourself, does this mean I was wrong this whole time, it just doesn't feel important. The answer is no, it's a natural thing, your values are supposed to change. It means because you're actually proceeding through life, you're going through a natural kind of progression from world 1 to world 2.

The greatest example of it is G-d Himself, who goes through that exact evolution, so to speak, with respect to the world. At the beginning in world 1, if you think about - yeah, in world 1 G-d is up there front and center and building a world and that's what the world is about, it's about building for G-d, and that's a great thing. When you're done with the world; Vayar Elokim ki tov, over and over again, and the very last thing is; V'hinei tov me'od - and it was very good. Well what does that mean? To me that means it was ultimately valuable, so G-d looks back at the world of creating and says that's ultimately valuable.

But then guess what? It wasn't ultimately valuable because G-d transitioned from that into world 2 which is the world of okay, I've built the world, but ultimately the world is a vehicle. Even though I can say that alone was worth something, it was such a great accomplishment, but it's also a vehicle that opens up world 2.

\tTo me that [is 22:30] really something.

I'm drawn also to this comment by [Adam] here, if you scroll over to Adam's comment, you guys can do it. My favorite part of the course, Adam says, was the concept of world 2 building on or coming on the heels of world 1. That rings true, Adam says, when I think about how I've experienced in life so far. I think Adam is really speaking to this exact same point of midlife crisis.

To me, one way to crystallize it, is thinking about Shabbos. To me, Shabbos is like the coolest thing in the course. I don't think we actually phrased it like this or used this language in the course itself, but - maybe we did, maybe we didn't, but let me come back to it. It's almost like Shabbos looks different depending upon whether you're looking at it from the perspective of world 1 or whether you're looking at it from the perspective of world 2. It's really a transition point.

From the perspective of world 1, which is all about creativity, Shabbos is the end of world 1, it's the apex of creativity. What's the final creative act - and we talked about this in - I don't know if we talked about this in our Parsha videos. But - probably in our Shabbos videos we talked about - in our Shabbos series. But the final creative act ironically is stopping to create. Because when you stop to create you let go, you grant your thing independence, and it's separate from you and that's wonderful. Now I've created the

most amazing thing in the world, it's not just my marionette, but it has some sort of separate existence. So that's one way of looking at Shabbos.

But it's a world 1 perspective on Shabbos. So from world 1's perspective, Shabbos is actually the culmination of world 1. But when you look at it from world 2, Shabbos is actually a beginning of world

2. Why? What is world 2?

World 2 is relationship, but it's relationship in a context. So the first context you might say is the Garden, because G-d makes this Garden for people and it's this wonderful, enclosed environment, which is G-d's place, which He invites man into, and it's a special place where they can enjoy each other together. But when you really think about it, there's an environment even before the Garden, and the environment before the Garden is Shabbos. The Garden really is a special place in space and Shabbos is a special place in time. And G-d sort of created that special place in time which is this place where He as creator is no longer creating and where He can invite little creator to stop creating, and they can both share this time together. Of course time is the most valuable commodity, when you can just spend time together and to set aside that time together as the most wonderful and loving thing.

So it's almost like that's where world 2 starts, it starts with time, with the precious resource of time, even before space. I don't know, to me that was a very, very delightful thing.

By the way, one last thing, while we're at it, is that it struck me as just - even today thinking about it, it's just very cool. What is man's job in world 2? So man's job in world 2 is he's there to take care of this special place, to honor this special place. This special place is this precious place where he and G-d kind of hang out together, in the Garden, so he's there; Le'ovdah u'le'shomrah - which is to serve the Garden and to watch over it. Now think about G-d's own relationship to Shabbat, so what does it say? It says that when G-d made Shabbat so; Vayevarech Elokim et yom hashevi'i vayekadesh oto - so G-d set it apart, which means that G-d guarded it, but He also blessed it, which is really about cultivating it and trying to pour some of your energy into it.

So the same relationship that man has to the Garden - which is this special place in space - G-d has to Shabbat. We're just following Him, which is guarding and cultivating.

So, I don't know, to me that was one of the - I don't know, it's just - it's an elegant thing and I agree with you Adam, that's one my favorite pieces. So yep?

Immanuel Shalev: Let's get to a couple more questions, because there are some amazing ones here. [Orah 26:44] asks can an atheist attain meaning in life?

Rabbi Fohrman: Yes, so it's a good question, it's - to me it's one of those possible trick questions. Because you look at this question and you think, well any Rabbi worth his salt would have to say, an atheist, what

- how much meaning could an atheist have in life? Again it really goes back to the question of what is your arbiter for meaning of life? What's your barometer for meaning of life? So if really - if you didn't look at this course so you can come up with any barometer for meaning of life, you would say, meaning

of life is whether you do G-d's will. So I guess if that's what it is then you're not really getting there, I suppose, if you're an atheist, you might say.

But, conceived this way, I think the answer is really much more nuanced. You can give a world 1 answer to it or a world 2 answer to it, or some sort of merger between them. I think if you say - let's talk about it from world 1, one way to think about it is look, either G-d exists or G-d doesn't exist. So if G-d doesn't exist so as much meaning as you can get out of life by believing in G-d or you can get meaning of life with not believing in G-d, there's no Mitzvah to believe in fictions if G-d doesn't exist.

But if G-d does exist and G-d is really there, and the meaning of life in world 1 is to be creative and in so doing imitating your creator who is creative, so you can have some of that meaning in life. But you're missing at least some piece of the essence of it, of the marrow of it, if you're ignoring the connection that you get to creator by virtue of imitating creator. Because that's one way that we connect to creator.

In world 2, if you say meaning of life is connection and love and relationships so there's no doubt that an atheist can have a meaningful life because he could have connections in all sorts of relationships.

My feeling is that it's - one way to see world 2, which I reject personally, and I'm just going to lay my cards on the table, is that in world 2 all the relationships are practise for G-d. So no relationship is meaningful in and of itself, it's all just practise. So all of my relationships with human beings is practise for G-d, so they really don't count, my only relationship is G-d. Well if that were true, then if I was an atheist I would have no meaning in life.

But personally I think that that's not true, I think that world 2 says all relationships are meaningful. Whatever happens in world 2 is meaningful. My relationship with land is meaningful, my relationship with a woman is meaningful, my relationship with other people is meaningful, my relationship with G-d is meaningful. G-d Himself seems to attest to that, just it's there.

It is true that through our relationships with more tangible things we're able to conceptualize and understand and build bridges and construct relationships with more abstract phenomena, such as G-d, that's true, but I don't think that takes away from the inherent meaning of our other relationships.

So I would just say that in answer to that there is something that you miss by being an atheist if G-d in fact exists - as I believe He does - and that is, that one of your important relationships is with your creator. So the analogy I would give to it is if you imagine that a person is a very loving person, and he's a loving husband and he's loving to his kids and he's a great employee and he's just wonderful to little old ladies, he helps them cross the street. He only has one problem which he has this sense of amnesia and he thinks that he doesn't have parents. And his parents are very frustrated because his parents are there and they gave birth to him and they get a lot of Nachas out of him and they keep on trying to call but whenever he answers the phone he just is - blanks out - and just thinks that they have no connection to him and it causes his parents a great deal of grief.

So you might say that there's a hole in this person's relationships. It doesn't mean he has no meaning in

life, he's still getting all the world 2 benefit from his other relationships, but there's something tragic about a particular relationship which is going uncultivated.

So kind of that's what I would say in response to the atheist question.

Immanuel Shalev: It's funny, because when we did this course there were a couple of times where I tried to - that bothered me a lot, to not be able to - I tend to be very extreme, so world 2 to me actually seemed like the entire purpose of everything. So I tried to say world 1 brings you to world 2 and really everything is about getting close to G-d. If I could push you, I guess, because I know your answer, but if I could push you for the rest of the audience, as to why you believe there is an inherent meaning in those basic relationships? And it's not all really about this great analogy, or this great connector back to world 2 or back to a relationship with G-d?

Rabbi Fohrman: I mean if you actually push me on that and force me to prove it to you, I don't know, I don't think I can prove it to you, it's just my - the way I see things, it just doesn't ring true to me. I mean, if you think about all the Mitzvot in the world - I mean, I'll give you a couple of examples. What you would have to then tell me is that most of the Mitzvot in the Torah actually have no inherent value, they're just practise stuff. Because the entire realm of Bein Odom L'chaveiro, all the Mitzvot that have to do with relationships to other people, is fake and has no inherent value. Now you can tell me that, you could say it's all practise if you want, but does that ring true to you?

I'll give you another example. Let's say it were true, let's imagine that this is true. Let's pretend that all of our relationships with other people is really fake and that there's no inherent value in it. So if we pretended that that was true, and what, it's just - so in other words, let's just fill it out here, it's just that by connecting with other people we learn how to connect with G-d. Do we really learn how to connect to G-d? No, we don't learn how to connect to G-d, it won't even work. Why? Because it's fake, and you can't learn anything from fake things.

In other words, what I would say is let's say G-d thinks that it makes absolutely no difference in real life how nice I am to Immanuel in the office. Immanuel is my colleague in the office, it makes no difference. Now G-d sort of chuckles because He has this Mitzvah which is called V'ahavta L'rei'acha Kamocha - you should love your neighbor as yourself, but really G-d sees no actual value in me loving my neighbor as myself, it's just practise so that I can learn to love G-d. So how upset should G-d be if I am a jerk to Immanuel and I walk all over him? And let's say I manage to cultivate my relationship with G-d just fine because I'm one of those few people who can manage to understand - but let's say I think it through and I realize, ah, yeah, really it's just a fake so I don't have to be that concerned. It's true, I'll get my Aveiros because technically I didn't do V'ahavta L'rei'acha Kamocha with Immanuel, but as long as I've got my relationship with G-d, I'm really okay.

So it's like what kind of human being do you think I am? Do you really think I'm a good human being? Is G-d really going to be proud of me?

I just think every fiber in our body rebels against that…

Immanuel Shalev: Yeah, this is the story that you had in that first audio where that person - you find out your friend is sick in the hospital and your reaction is yes, I get to do Bikur Cholim. Like that's [unclear 34:26]…

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, and it's a terrible thing ultimately, because I think it's really corrupt and awful, because it ultimately makes people ends to some other means. It's just like they're little tools - they're my Mitzvah tools. Which is narcissistic and awful and it wouldn't even work as a way of cultivating a relationship with G-d because what it would actually teach is narcissism and therefore when I finally get to G-d I'll be narcissistic too. So it would be a self-defeating system.

Immanuel Shalev: Great. Okay, next question - I'm trying to decide if I should move to my next question or I should pick up [Aaron's 34:59] question. I'm going to pick up Aaron's question, because I really liked it.

Rabbi Fohrman: Good, I like Aaron's too. [Aaron Asher's] question? Immanuel Shalev: Yeah. Do you want me to read it?

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, you read it, I'm just - looking at it.

Immanuel Shalev: How do you respond to religious friends - possibly even Rebbeim - who disagree with you - who disagree with what you believe the meaning of life to be, or the decisions you're making?

Especially when you try to express yourself through the Biblical text, like in the course, but their response is that your life should be based on Halacha not inference from Scripture.

Rabbi Fohrman: So one second, I've just - in - if I can ask Aaron to just clarify what he means, if you're still there Aaron. When you say how do you respond, do you mean how do I, Rabbi Fohrman or Immanuel respond, or do you mean how would I suggest that you, Aaron respond? That's a different question. Immanuel, do you know…

Immanuel Shalev: I like the one where you have to respond.

Rabbi Fohrman: Which is that how would I respond, is that what he's saying? I don't think that was the question though…

Immanuel Shalev: We can answer both, they're both interesting questions. Oh both - yeah Aaron says both, great.

Rabbi Fohrman: Both, okay fine, [unclear 36:00]. All right, I'm going to give my little answer, but Immanuel, I'm going to pump this off to you too. And I'll throw this out to the audience by the way, you guys - there's 36 of you here, feel free to give your response to Aaron, what do you think about this? How would respond to religious friends, possibly even Rebbeim, who disagree with what you believe

the meaning of your life to be, or the decisions you're making? Especially when you try to express yourself through the Biblical text like in the course, but their response is that your life should be based on Halacha and not inferences from Scripture.

I mean, this is a loaded question for me. [Laughs] I can spend the rest of the webinar just talking about this. So Immanuel, you're going to have to cut me off if I just sit on soapbox and just talk. But I would say first of all, if we live in a world in which the Torah is not supposed to tell us anything, that's a pretty sad world. In other words, what are we really saying, that the Bible is not actually there to teach us something - right?

And I had an awful experience with that, I remember being in a Yeshiva, which I will not name right now, and giving a class - a weekly class at this Yeshiva. Then - and I was giving it during Mussar Seder actually, which is the time when you're supposed to be working on ethical stuff and things. So there were a lot of people in the class and [we went through pretty well 37:25], we were doing the same kinds of things we do in Aleph Beta. Then one of the Rabbis came over to me and said, you can't give this class during Mussar Seder. So I said to myself, well why can't I give the class during Mussar Seder? I said to him, why can't I give the class during Mussar Seder? He said, it's not Mussar.

Now think about that for a moment. In other words, Mussar is learning things that ethically refine you. So just think about that, what you're saying is, studying Bible deeply in the text, trying to understand what G-d Himself in this Book is trying to tell you at the basic Pshat, simple level, in terms of how you should [define/refine 37:59] your life, does not count for how to actually ethically refine your life and to study that? It only works if you study somebody who lived in the sixteenth century and tells you what he thinks? I have great respect for the Ramchal and Mesillas Yesharim and Rabbeinu Yonah and all of that, but it should be there in G-d's Book too.

So I think that sometimes when you have Rebbeim that suggest that you shouldn't be making inferences from the Biblical text, what you really have to ask is, are my values in line with that or not? I mean, ultimately, no matter who gives you advice it doesn't matter about the length of their beard and it doesn't matter how old they are and it doesn't matter where they learn. You really just at some level have to ask yourself, do the values that this person has ring true for me? I understand the idea for having a mentor in your life and somebody that you ask questions, but there's different possible mentors and - at different times of life we choose different mentors. Maybe at some point when you say my values aren't aligning with that, so maybe you ask different mentors.

So that's kind of one thing I would say.

The other thing is, is that the questions about meaning of life are ultimately personal questions. You can't just delegate the answers to these questions to any mentor ultimately. Mentors are good - I remember Rabbi Weinberg Zatzal used to say that the role of a Rebbi in life - he was my Rosh Yeshiva - he said, the role of a Rebbi in life is to be an objective sounding board for you. To be able to listen to what you're saying, and to be able to point out any hidden biases that you may have, any lies that you may be telling yourself, any logical inconsistencies in what you're saying. Basically - in the words of Aleph Beta

- to be an Eitz Hada'as monitor in your life, to make sure that your desires aren't creeping in and skewing your judgment, so that your view of good and evil is [just 40:07] a product of your desires.

That is the role of a Rebbi. Period. Sof Pasuk. Gamarnu.

That's the kind of advice you need in life, and that's the kind of mentor you need, somebody who keeps you honest basically and keeps you internally consistent.

But the great questions of value, of how you organize your life, those are questions that - I hate to say this to you guys - but those are lonely questions that you have to make alone and wrestle with and come to terms with and live with. It has to ring true to you. The reason why you should believe anything in this course is not by the length of my beard or even how long it is that I've studied, but the question you have to ask yourself is, does this ring true for you? Does this seem like what the Torah is saying? And you may say yes, 100 per cent, and you may say no, 100 per cent, you may say mostly, you may say yes, but I see it a little bit differently. That's the work that everybody has to deal with and there's no way to escape that work.

So I guess that's my short answer - and Immanuel, I'm curious as to what you have to say here too.

Immanuel Shalev: Yeah, my - I guess my approach would be much more to try and explain my conception of Halacha. I think for me - a friend of mine gave me a great analogy about Halacha where it's almost like if you conceive of life or religion as a skyscraper, Halacha is like the lobby. It's the way in, you have to use Halacha to get into the skyscraper, but you also have to make sure that you visit the penthouse. So it's - sure, Halacha is going to guide you for how to live your life meaningfully, it's going to tell you the dos and the don'ts, but the real flavor of it all, or the thing that guides you, I think, to some extent is your passion.

One of the first - the first thing that I ever read of yours, Rabbi Fohrman, before I ever met you, was in The Beast That Crouches at the Door, and the real ahah moment for me was the whole piece around [Barati Yetzer Ra'ah Barati Torah Tavlin 42:16]. Where Torah is the Tavlin - it's the spice, which means the Yetzer Harah is the [meat]. Which means that passion is really what drives you and so much of what the Mitzvos are meant to do is to really guide you and to - you have creativity, you have world 1, but you have to discipline that creativity. And you have passion and you have love, and that needs to be channeled in the right ways.

So that's kind of how I would reconcile this overall meaning of life concept with Halacha. I feel - yeah, I'll end there, I'll stop short…

Rabbi Fohrman:\tOne other thing that I'll mention in that, it's true, that - I guess what you're saying is Halacha are legal guides, laws, that help you direct your sense of passion. But really when you're talking about creativity or even love, what you're actually talking about is the passions themselves; what are the things that we are actually passionate about in life? So it's actually almost like a - it's - I don't know how to phrase it, it's - what Halacha is, is the thing that guides this, and what this course is talking about is not

the stuff that guides it but the thing itself.

In other words, the great passions in life that Jewish law seeks to direct are these passions - and maybe that's really another answer to the question here, which is what is Halacha trying to do? Let's talk about what Halacha does. What Halacha does is takes our two most basic passions and says, here are the legal guidelines you need to use when going about life and exercising these passions in the world. So in other words, when you're creative here are the things that are regulations that you need to adhere to so your creativity doesn't go off the cliff.

So there's Shabbos, which is a break on creativity and you have to stop it. There's Shemitah which is a break on creativity. There's all the Mo'adim - which we'll eventually get to - which are also examples of regulating creativity in various different kinds of ways. There's love and there's the laws of Araiyot - of who you can love and what's fair game in love and how do you do it and how you can betray in love, and all of those things. So yes, the Torah is trying to take those things and Halacha is trying to guide it.

Halacha, by the way, is one way of guiding it but it's not the only way of guiding it either. The famous Ramban who talks about - I think Immanuel we lost you here, I don't know if you're still there, but your…

Immanuel Shalev: [Unclear 45:09]…

Rabbi Fohrman: Your web cam has gone, oh now it's back.

But the Ramban famously says that there's an idea of [Minavel 45:19] B'reshut HaTorah, which is that you can punctiliously keep to all the laws of the Torah and you can also be an evil person. You can find ways to evade the spirit of the Torah that's there. So Halacha is no guarantee, it's a guide, but it's a guide that you have to use some Seichel with also because you can still be evil even while following the laws.

Which, I think, gets to a point which we made earlier also, back in our Parsha video on Noach, which is when you think about the kind of book the Torah is as a whole, it's a guidebook, and the guidebook is composed of different parts, and one of those parts is law, but it's not the only part. The Torah itself - Torah Shebichtav, includes law but it also includes stories, and those stories are meant to guide us too.

The reason why those stories are there - you can imagine being in Yeshiva and thinking, well why do we even bother having a Torah Shebichtav? Why don't we just have Gemara? Why don't we have Mishna? Why did G-d waste His time writing these Five Books of Moses that don't offer any guidance anyway, it's just a waste of time G-d?

The answer is no, there's stuff in there that's actually supposed to guide you too. There's a Pshat level of the laws which is different than the Halachic level of the laws, and that's part of the story that G-d is telling. Then there's stories that you learn ethical values from that can't be translated into the world of law and that's why they're there, because that's what you need to guide you. So really being guided, law plays an exceedingly important part but if it's the only part, you are - then (a) you're not being completely guided properly and (b) the passion which the purpose of the law is to guide, it's the stuff that

is guided, is missing, so what do you have? You have a legal life that's meant to constrain this big engine called passion, but you have no engine there that you're working with.

So those are some of the answers that I would suggest, along with Immanuel, to that question. Immanuel Shalev: Great, which it kind of also answered a different question that was asked, so that -

[unclear 47:20] - someone asked about - a pretty much similar question about Mitzvot [unclear] - I guess

we conflated the two, but hopefully we answered both of them.

I want to ask this question - this is going to be something that we didn't prepare for, but something that I think is a good and important question, and my wife would like for me to ask it too. Is a question by [Deborah 47:42] who asks, do women traditionally focus more on world 2 - relationships, and men more on world 1? Is that connected to the way women are created separately in world 2?

Rabbi Fohrman: Oh, whoa, is that connected to the way woman are created separately in world 2? What

- I don't understand that, can you explain it?

Immanuel Shalev: I think that means men and women are separated - woman was created on her own in world 2, whereas man and woman were created together in world 1.

Rabbi Fohrman: Oh I see, in other words does that - would that affect why woman is created separately in world 2 rather than together in world 1? You know, look I don't know - I can answer this question in one of two ways. I can answer it in terms of a gut level answer of what I suspect, or I can answer this question in terms of what the evidence suggests to me from the Biblical text, from looking at world 1 and world 2.

As far as evidence is concerned I don't know if I would say that there is evidence that woman comes across as a more inherently world 2 being than man. I know that a lot of people think that, I know that that's one of our traditional concepts of femininity, that femininity is more relationship based and less creativity based, and that men are more creativity based and less relationship based. I know that that's out there. I just don't know if I see evidence for it in world 1 or world 2.

In other words, just to play it out a little bit, in world 1 - both world 1 and world 2 include men and women. In world 1 each one views the other in world 1 terms. So in world 1 Zachar u'nekeiva barah otom - male and female are created. Interestingly the word for their being created is male and female, rather than man and woman. So male and female - Zachar u'nekeiva, actually functions like a laser on their reproductive capability, on how it is that they reproduce. Almost like - because that's actually how they view each other in world 1. If I'm a pure world 1 being, devoted to creativity, then again, if I'm a man how do I look at woman? Here's my chance to create, because it takes two to tango and I can't create on my own. If I'm a woman, and I'm a pure world 1 person, again, how do I look at man? I can't create without him.

That was really the point that I was making, by the way, in, I think, Audio 5, for those of you who got

up to it, which is the tragedy of Eve after being banished from the Garden. Landing in world 1 alienated from world 2 values. So the tragedy of both Adam and Eve is intimacy without the currency of world 2, and then it just becomes I use you in order to be able to create. So; V'ha'Adam yadah et Chava ishto - so man is using woman almost as a thing, and she's an it - the word Et is usually the connector between a subject and the direct object. So man is the subject but using her sort of as an object. Then she turns around and it's; Kaniti ish et Hashem, when she talks about her ability to create this child, and there is that Et for direct object used with G-d and man is just left out entirely. Almost as if she used him and doesn't even have to relate to him and has this child.

So there is a - I think there's a tragedy there, but it seems to me that the evidence is that both - certainly if you look at the Cain and Hevel story, both man and woman in that story are very capable of being world 1 beings. I would say though, that if you're a world 1 being, man may express being a world 1 being in a different way than woman may express [being 52:10] a world 1 being.

For example, a man doesn't have the ability to biologically have a child, so Cain is a very world 1 being, but how does he express it? So he expresses it in terms of agriculture. He can plant, he's a farmer, so he's got these vegetables that he's created that he doesn't want to let go [to/of 52:30], because he's obsessively attached to this produce that he's made. Because this is the meaning of his life, he's produced this, he's the creator. I talk about this in The Beast That Crouches at the Door in part 2 of it. So that's how he expresses being a world 1 creature.

Chava expresses being a world 1 creature in terms of her biological ability to create, but it's the same thing. So Chava is a world 1 creature because; Kaniti ish et Hashem - I've acquired this man with G-d. Again, this is my meaning of life and it's this overly obsessive - it's mine, acquisitive way of seeing it.

So I think both men and women can be subject to the folly of world 1 issues and leaving world 2 behind, and probably both men and women can also get lost in world 2 without focusing on world 1 creative things. But, in as much as women can have children and men can't, the way you look like when you are failing or succeeding in each of these things is different.

Again - and I go to Cain and Chava are both struggling with the same world 1 issues but they're looking very different in it. So it's [unclear 53:43]…

Immanuel Shalev: I think [unclear] in the curses themselves; you know Odom gets different curses than Chava does.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, Odom's curses are in terms of his relationship with land, and Chava's curses are in terms of a relationship with children. So it's true, but it's the same curse. It's a struggle with creativity. So I think both men and women have the same fundamental issue, which is, how do I balance my drive to create with my drive to relate? That's the same issue for both of them, you don't get a pass just because you're a woman and now, oh, so I'm more relationship-focused so everything is good. No, you're also more child-focused and you can relate in pure world 1 terms to that, and then you're stuck.

So - I don't know, that would be my answer to her.

Immanuel Shalev: I think we're in a good place to handle [Yehuda's 54:32] question who asks how is Adam and Eve's broken relationship improved as they leave the Garden as intimate enemies? Is there a lesson for us in the aftermath?

Rabbi Fohrman: One more time, what's the question? How is…

Immanuel Shalev: How is Adam and Eve's broken relationship improved as they leave the Garden as intimate enemies? Is there a lesson for us in the aftermath?

Rabbi Fohrman: Oh, well, I don't know how much time we have to answer that. But one of these days I hope to write a book on this or do a - maybe we'll get to it in Aleph Beta too. But to me this is the continuing story of the Keruvim. To me, history opens with the great tragedy of the tree of knowledge story and the banishment from Eden, and the rest of history or the rest of Biblical history, is that attempt to improve that relationship. Adam and Eve die, but the legacy continues and the challenge is that after you've eaten from the tree and after you - and the tree kind of spills its - infects you with its poison. And the poison is that idea that I can be the determinant of good and evil and that this is the way things look like to me and I can't along with you anymore and I can become an intimate enemy with you.

So THE challenge of mankind after that is how do I repair that? How do I repair that?

You can look at the rest of Biblical history through that lens as a continuing effort to repair that. Look at all the sibling rivalry relationships that so plague Genesis, which is Yosef and his brothers, Yaakov and Eisav, all of those issues, Yishmael and Avraham, are really going to be…

Immanuel Shalev: Rachel and Leah…

Rabbi Fohrman: What? Rachel and Leah - go to our Tisha B'Av course, where if you're reading between the lines you'll see the tree of knowledge issues really, really there. We didn't talk about tree of knowledge in the course, but it's there in the background. This is the issue.

The beautiful thing is, is that the same way that the Keruvim become the symbol of it, with Adam and Eve the Keruvim continue to become the symbol. Of course the next time we meet the Keruvim is where? We meet it on the Ark, in the Mishkan. Well what's the Mishkan? The Mishkan is supposed to be a kind of successful culmination to that quest, a Mikdash is a successful culmination of the quest.

(A) How do you build a Mikdash? The one thing you can't have is - you can't use hewn stone, why? Ki charbecha hanafta aleha va'techalleleha - you can't use the sword. Well what's the sword? The sword is the corrupted Kruv - remember that, how do you spell Kruv? Chaf, Reish, Beis. How do you spell sword? Chet, Reish, Beis. It's just the corrupted Kruv. It's that sword between the two angels, and that's the one thing that you can't bring into the abode of the angels. Metaphorically what that means is that in the Mikdash, war and conflict as a way of solving human issues, just doesn't really cut it. You have to

somehow figure out a different way to get along with those you need to get along with.

It's too much to do in this webinar, but the - I believe that there is a hidden journey of the Keruvim - these angels, throughout Genesis, moving all the way into the story of the Mishkan. I'll just tease it a very little bit, which is I mentioned to you that Kruv gets corrupted into Cherev - into sword, but there's other interesting corruptions of Kruv, or other versions of Kruv. Think about the things that people in love fight over, brothers fight over, colleagues fight over. What is it that they fight over in Genesis? So they actually fight over two different things. They fight over Berachot - which are blessings, think about Yaakov and Eisav and the blessings and all of the wealth and all of that, [so it's going to come down 58:42] from G-d and from parents. They also fight over who is firstborn, and that's one of those themes and who is seen as the child leader in the family.

So if you think about that, how do you spell Bechor? Beit, Chaf, Reish. How do spell Beracha? Beis, Reish, Chaf. How do spell Kruv? So the Keruvim are the symbols of these people who can get along but the two things that get in the way are the various permutations of that word, which is how do you manage the shoals? How do you row through the river and avert the shoals of Beracha and Bechor along the way? That's the great story of Yosef and his brothers, and Yaakov and Eisav.

If you look - the kind of homework question I'll give you for the advance students who want to look at this in Hebrew and see, is look at the story of the construction of the Ark in Terumah - in the beginning of Parshat Terumah. Look at the Keruvim there, and you will find language parallels that will take you over and over again back to the great stories of conflict between people who should have been in love with each other in Genesis. The story of Yosef and his brothers, and the story of Yaakov and Eisav.

Those intertextual parallels seem to be suggesting that those stories need to find some sort of happy culmination in order for the Aron with its Keruvim to do its work.

So those are my thoughts there.

Immanuel Shalev: Great. Okay this question I really, really liked, and I was struggling with it personally, this is [Jonah's 60:31] question. Where do you believe one's moral compass fits in the vastness of all this? Moral compass presumably comes from inside us just like our desires. Morals are clearly not the same as G-d's - I'm sorry - morals are clearly not the same as G-d's will, otherwise we wouldn't need the Torah, can we rely on it at all or do we abandon it and focus solely on the Torah?

Rabbi Fohrman: Okay, so this is actually something you and I have discussed Immanuel, so this is a very interesting question. Let me just kind of think about this. The issue which - who is it Jonah, is raising this? Who is this…

Immanuel Shalev: Jonah, yeah.

Rabbi Fohrman:\t[Unclear 61:22] interesting - the question that Jonah is raising is what role does our own moral intuition play in all of this? That's a question both in terms of, I guess, meaning of life and it's also a question really in terms of the Torah itself. The question is should we be the kind of people that

can just rely on our moral compass, or should we be the kind of people that look blindly to the Torah and ignore our moral compass because we just take direction from the Torah?

It's a very good question. It's a question which for me, I think at different stages of my life, I had seen differently. I can tell you how I see it now. Again, I don't know if I can - I wonder if I could prove it to you, it's a good question, I don't know if I can prove it to you. I'll let Immanuel answer it while I mull over whether I can prove it to you. But certainly in the olden days - the real truth is it's a question that has preoccupied me for many years. Back in the late '80s I wrote a paper on this which I don't know if I ever - still have, in philosophical terms it's another version of Euthyphro question which is one of Plato's dialogues. It's a little complicated to get into here so I'm not going to throw that in, but if you want to read up on the Euthyphro question, you can look at it, it's another way of phrasing the question.

But certainly in the olden days I kind of thought that our moral intuitions are not to be trusted and that's the whole point of the Torah, it's to - we're not good arbiters of good and evil, and if anything - again, the Etz Hada'as seems to suggest that we're not good arbiters of good and evil. Yet, I would say one thing about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which is that I think it's too sweeping a statement to make that we're not good arbiters of good and evil. We're not good arbiters of whether or not we ourselves are good or evil, but we're sort of good arbiters of whether other people are good and evil, assuming that we know that we know their inner world.

Or let me actually pull back and put it to you this way. When we judge ourselves we face a certain challenge and when we judge others we face another challenge, and both are real challenges but they're opposite challenges. When we judge our own lives and we say, so what does good and evil mean? Is it good for me to leave a note on that car that I smashed in, or not and nobody will know the difference? I rationalize to myself - like we talked about in the course - of why really it's good for me not to leave the note. I may convince myself of that. If I convince myself of that let's look at the situation - so I've convinced myself of this but most objective people can look at me and say, he's just creating a rationalization. It's something which I can't see because I'm blinded by my own desires, but other people who aren't blinded by those desires can see that for what it is.

So getting back to Jonah's question, would we say that others can trust their intuition about my situation, the answer is yes. Going back to Rabbi Weinberg's idea of what a Rebbi is there for, what's a Rebbi there for? A Rebbi is there to be that objective voice, who doesn't have a horse in the race, who doesn't have the same desires as you, who can go and say, hey, what you're saying makes sense to me, or I think you're lying to yourself. So there is a kind of intuition that another person could have.

On the other hand, another - the person from the outside is missing a different kind of thing, which only I have access to, which is that they're missing the information of my inner world. All they see is my outer actions, they don't really see what my intentions are, they don't really see what my long term goals are, they don't really see the reasons why I might be doing what I'm doing. So they're not really in a position to judge either.

So to me the real answer - what feels right to me - and Jonah's answer - is that it's difficult to judge

questions of good and evil in this world. We have limitations. We have limitations in judging ourselves, and we have limitations of judging others, limitations which G-d Himself doesn't have. Nevertheless, I believe that one of the things that Tzelem Elokim means - or - I can't say I believe one of the things it means. But I suspect - let me put it to you - that one of the things that Tzelem Elokim implies is that part of being created in the image of G-d is probably not just that we are - well let me put it to you this way. We're creative like G-d, we value relationships - we seek relationships as G-d does, we are created as G- d is. To some extent that means that we have values that are similar to G-d, because G-d has those values too. G-d actualizes those values in G-d's own Mind, He made the world, He seeks out a relationship with us.

So I think what that means is that on some level we're on the same page as G-d, where our core values are similar to G-d and that's our basis to some extent for trusting our intuitions about what matters and what's good and what's not good. Yet, we face terrible roadblocks in actually applying this in our lives and that's one of the things that the Torah can help us with, which is being some sort of objective measure that we can hold ourselves to in trying to negotiate that.

So what do you think?

Immanuel Shalev: Yeah, I'm going to jump in with my own take. I think very similarly to you as well, but for me a lot of it - the approach I think that a lot of people try to encourage me to do is to surrender completely to Torah. Whereas - as if to say like you can't determine good and evil, you can't determine - that's the Etz Hada'as issue, you kind of just have to surrender, pick a Rabbi, do what he says. That, I think, is a bit of a false surrender.

But a different Rebbi of mine in Israel when I approached him with this particular issue said to me - he's like, Immanuel, you only have these tools. Like you have the tools of your intellect, you have the tools of your own choices, there's nothing else, you can't really go outside of yourself and completely hand back over your freewill over to G-d and say, no thank you. It's all up to you.

Because there are so many different people who are going to tell you what the Torah says - like we had that question earlier tonight, what do you do if this Rabbi tells you it's all Halacha, don't worry about what the Torah says. Then you have Rabbi Fohrman who is telling you that the meaning of life is some other thing. So you're kind of always going to have to judge to some extent what is most compelling to you, you're never going to be able to get away from that.

But at the same time just to reference the Tisha B'Av course that we did recently, because I think most people here probably have seen it. But Rachel when she reconciles with Leah - when Rachel saw Leah's - when Rachel saw things only from her perspective and Leah kind of presented hers and Rachel responded; Lachen yishkav imach ha'lailah - I finally see your perspective. She didn't consult her Rabbi and she didn't find a particular verse to tell her to see things that way. I think the Torah guides us to be able to kind of step outside ourselves and to step outside of our desires, to try and see the larger, truer picture. And so many Mitzvot and Halachot are all about trying to help you to do that properly, to discipline your creativity, to make sure that you are not only looking at it in tunnel vision, but that you

can see things from a wider perspective.

But I think no matter what, you're going to have to make certain choices and your moral compass has to guide you.

I also think that the moral compass helps us interpret - it helps us to decide what's the compelling way to read a particular verse and also helps us to reconcile. Like if we have - if we're reading a really difficult part of Torah, let's say we're reading about female servitude, you kind of have to take a second look and say well what's going on here? I think some of the best material that you've done, Rabbi Fohrman, has been in confronting your own moral compass and aligning it with the text. Saying, but what is the Torah teaching you?

At the same time you also have to be really, really careful not to contort the Torah's interpretation. So you're kind of - it's a really scary path and a very - you have to kind of walk this narrow, scary path.

But the only thing you really can be guided by is intellectual honesty, I think, or emotional honesty, or - something with the word honesty in it.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, and when push comes to shove I guess the real question is when the Torah seems to leave you in a place where your own moral intuition wouldn't take you - those are the real hard times in life. What greater example of that than the Akeidah itself - for Avraham. So those are the really scary parts of life.

I want to call your attention if I can, Immanuel and the rest of you, to a question that Deborah has - I'm going to put this question to Immanuel since he can actually talk and the rest of you can't. But you can write in, the rest of you, your thoughts, at the bottom. So Deborah says, can't the desire for relationships be just as distracting and cause just as much trouble as the desire for physical creativity? What do you say to that? One more time. Can't the desire for relationships be just as distracting and cause just as much trouble as the desire for physical creativity?

Any by the way, you see my bias over here, right, because earlier on I really presented it the other way, which is that - in terms of how world number 1 can get in the way of world number 2 in so many ways. In the course itself I presented that. But Deborah fearlessly comes back and says, one second, sometimes maybe world 1 trumps world 2 and world 2 can be a distraction? I actually put this out to you, can you see any examples in which Deborah's point might be true? What are the real world examples or are there any, in which the desire for relationships is just as distracting and causes just as much trouble as the desire for physical creativity?

Immanuel, what do you say?

Immanuel Shalev: Yeah, I think it's very compelling. I don't know if I can give you this amazing, fantastic example, but to me it reminds me of being a teenager. Just like you want to hang out with your friends all the time, you're not all that interested in studying for your SATs and in building up your own

career. Yeah, that's my brief example.

But I think that world 1 and world 2 - just to go back…

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah, but - and it's - the great example is the - when the desire to become accepted becomes so overwhelming, is a kind of perversion of world 2 desire to connect and become whole with. Again, this gets to really some of the points which were making even in the audios, which is that if you go into world 2 without a basis of world 1, so world 2 can be problematic when that's all you have. It sort of self-destructs. Which is like, if I don't have any sense of identity and all I'm trying to do is fit in with the crowd because I'm obsessively focused on my world 2 relationship world and my social media world and all of that, so I have nothing to contribute to the world any more, is one kind of example.

Immanuel Shalev: Do you hear that? Rabbi Fohrman says, get off Facebook.

Rabbi Fohrman: [Laughs]. [That I can smile - if you are addicted to it 73:58]. But I guess another question is if you think about in a work environment, I think this is something which companies struggle with. Because companies are essentially world 1 beasts. A company exists for world 1. It tolerates world 2 in order to exist, but it kind of inverts normal relationships, a company. Because in a normal person, world 1 more serves world 2, but in a company, world 2 serves world 1. The company is there to bring something to the world, so the values in a company may - I'm wondering what does Deborah's point mean within the context of a company? I just think it's an interesting kind of thing. Can the desire for relationships be distracting and cause just as much trouble as the desire for your creativity, what does that mean in the world of work?

In particular, imagine a law firm, or imagine a technology company that's developing a new kind of touch screen and is on the cusp of putting this out into the world. But they have software developer that everyone loves to pieces but can't do - can't write a decent line of code, just doesn't have that ability and they're having trouble bringing that thing to market. The question is do you fire the person that everybody loves to pieces? What's the right answer for that company? I think that's the point Deborah's making.

So it's complicated stuff.

Immanuel Shalev: Great. Okay, next question. This is from…

Rabbi Fohrman: By the way, I don't know if we let anybody know, do we have a - what's our timeframe by the way for this webinar? Do we have a timeframe on the webinar?

Immanuel Shalev: We're technically two hours, do you want to go all two hours? Rabbi Fohrman: Whatever you like, so I'm good, as long as know. Okay, go ahead. Immanuel Shalev: People are still here, it seems like they haven't left us.

Rabbi Fohrman: You guys, if we bore you, feel free to [wake out 76:16] on us, but we'll stay with you as long as you stay with us. Okay, go ahead.

Immanuel Shalev: [Jack] writes, Rabbi Fohrman, I'm a hardworking businessman who has been working in the financial sector for the past 20 years. I have very much related to the aspects of meaning of life that had to do with world 1, but I was very uncomfortable with the parts of world 2. I feel like I work very hard to support my wife and children and to provide them with every opportunity I can. Is that enough to fulfill my world 2 obligations?

Rabbi Fohrman: Um, you know what, before I answer that - I mean the fellow is pretty anonymous right? We just have a first name here right? So I'm interested in polling the audience here. I'll give you my answer to this but I'm curious as to what you guys say. Immanuel, can you read our question for our audience again and if you guys could just give me a - you can either give a yes or a no answer, or you can give a - you can qualify your answer in some kind of way. Immanuel, how would phrase the question? I would invite others to respond in your answer box below…

Immanuel Shalev: You mean just repeat the question? Rabbi Fohrman: What's our name, Joe?

Immanuel Shalev: It's Jack.

Rabbi Fohrman: Jack. So you can just say, Jack Cohen and Jack - nothing personal for you, we're just using your idea here as kind of as a sounding board, but I'm curious as to what you guys say. Read it again.

Immanuel Shalev: Rabbi Fohrman, I'm a hardworking businessman who has been working in the financial sector for the past 20 years. I have very much related to the aspects of meaning of life that had to do with world 1, but I was very uncomfortable with the parts about world 2. I feel like I work very hard to support my wife and children and to provide them with every opportunity I can. Is that enough to fulfill my world 2 obligations?

Rabbi Fohrman: Okay. So what do you guys say? Is that enough to fulfill world 2 obligations or not? I'll give you guys five more seconds and then I'll just jump in here. I'm not even looking so I don't want to be biased by what you say, but I'm going to look at your responses later.

Immanuel Shalev: Oh wow, you're going to like one of them. Rabbi Fohrman: Oh yeah?

Immanuel Shalev: Yeah, it's an idea that you referenced many times before. Rabbi Fohrman: Oh really?

Yeah, so I see it, just quickly looking - I had to give in, I couldn't bear to [unclear 78:46] the response to. I mean, my short answer would be no, that you can't take that shortcut. Now that's not to say that what you do in world 1 isn't valuable because of world 2, it is valuable. In other words, your world 1 stuff is important in world 1 and it's a great contribution for world 2, but ultimately I don't think the creation of an environment for a relationship is the substitute for engaging in the relationship itself. And again, I think I mentioned Cat's in the Cradle and Harry Chapin which I think was there in the comments…

Immanuel Shalev: The comment, yeah.

Rabbi Fohrman: Which is that all you have to do is listen to Cat's in the Cradle and I think that's the answer, which is our Cat's in the Cradle guy thinks that world 1 stuff is the most important thing and certainly would say I'm providing for my wife and my kids. But at some point in life when your kid grows up and doesn't have the time for you, and you realize my boy was just like me, Dad, my boy was just like me. There's that pit in your stomach and it's awful, it's just awful.

I'm reminded of Emily Dickinson in one of her beautiful poems about remorse - and you can look it up online, I don't have it in front of me. But remorse is like the past set on fire, like with a match, and it burns and it stings and there's just no way to take it back. Those are the really awful things in life when you look back and you say, what have I done, I have cheated myself out of world 2.

Again, before the midlife crisis it feels like okay, it feels like I can live on this - and by the way, I'm not just speaking with Jack, I'm speaking with myself too. I mean, I'm a very world 1 guy also and all sorts of world 1 things I'm doing; Aleph Beta and the company and putting all this together and coming up with stuff and writing books and all of this. It's very easy to get drunk on world 1, very, very easy, and to get so much feeling of goodness out of it and then - and you're providing things to the world. But to what extent do you cheat yourself if you don't nurture those relationships? You could say, yeah, I'm the kind of person that feels more comfortable playing in world 1, but I think what the Torah is telling you is there is another world and there's a natural evolution. If you cut yourself short you're just cheating yourself and [shallowing 81:27] out your natural experience of life.

Now that having been said, which might sound like a downer to Jack, what I would ask Jack is, are you really sure that you're as derelict in world 2 as you think you are? Because maybe you don't spend as much time in world 2 as you like, maybe you don't spend as much time in world 2 as in world 1, but again, the currency of world 2, are you sure that you're not making any deposits in that currency? Do you ever tuck your kids into bed? When you come home - even if you come home late - do you make eye contact with your child? Do you smile with them? Do you ever ask them about their day? Are there moments of connection where you can delight in your child, where you can delight in your wife, or she senses that you're taking care of her in some way?

Again, there's - love is something which we convey in all sorts of different ways, it's a very personal thing, some people - Gary Chapman, in his book The Five Love Languages, talks about different ways that we convey love. So it's not - you may say, oh I don't feel like I convey love because I don't do x, y and z but different people have different ways of conveying love. For some people the way you convey

love is through gifts, through - other people the way you convey love is through touch. For other people the way you convey love is by spending time with each other. There's different love languages and sometimes you might say, well I'm not good with - I'm lacking with my wife because I don't do x, y, and z, but it may be that you're conveying love in a different kind of language.

So you may not be as derelict as you think you are in world 2. But as far as the principle of the thing, I think that it's a dangerous thing to feel that I can use world 1 currency to fulfill my debts in world 2. It just doesn't work. It can set up world number 2, and it can make world number 2 more comfortable, it can provide an environment for world number 2, but world number 2 at some level still needs to happen

- is my intuition on that.

Immanuel Shalev: I think that that's a key there also. I think that [Cherie 83:53] pointed this out as well about - that really screamed out to me in the question was that Jack says is that enough to fulfill my world 2 obligations? And to me that's a little bit like the concept of world 1 currency in world 2, exactly as you're saying. I don't - world 2 shouldn't really be an obligation, I think. It has inherent meaning as well, and I would encourage Jack to explore some of that meaning in world 2.

But maybe - so it's funny, because a lot of people [unclear 84:28] on Jack in the comments, but… Rabbi Fohrman: They what?

Immanuel Shalev: No, a lot of people were critical of Jack, but I think this reminds me a lot of the beginning of the fourth podcast episode where you kind of said - when you put that very scientific poll out, who is going to choose just world 1 or who is going to choose just world 2? Most people say they're going to choose world 2, they would choose world 2 over world 1 if they had to make that choice, but most people act, most people focus, on their world 1. Even though they…

Rabbi Fohrman: Yeah that was a sobering thing. I remember when somebody in our office made that point, and it was like, oh my gosh, that's true, and how awful, but it's true. You know, I was listening to

- I guess [unclear 85:15] the worse kind of data is surveys, because people give the answer that they think is acceptable to the survey provider. So you can say you believe that world 2 is really important but it doesn't mean you don't invest primarily in world 1, which is a scary thing.

Immanuel Shalev: Yeah. I guess maybe I'd ask this question - and it looks like some people are heading to [bed 85:39], so we should wrap up an hour and a half in. But my question is, is how do you find that balance? How do you find the balance between world 1 and world 2? My cheat/answer/suggestion to you is - does Shabbos play a role? Because if Shabbos is the transition from world 1 to world 2, it's interesting that Shabbos repeats every seven days. So…

Rabbi Fohrman: Mhmm hmm. Yeah, it almost seems like the Torah is giving you that thing, which is that maybe you don't need to spend as much time in world number 2 as in world number 1, I wonder if it's a one [unclear 86:16] show, at some level. Maybe that works even in our day, can you spend one- seventh of your day in world number 2? The truth is I think if most of us spent one-seventh of our day

in world number 2 we'd be doing pretty good. If you can spend one-seventh of your day, of your waking hours, focused on your family, focused on your wife, focused on your kids, really present and there with them and be able to shut out world number 1, I think we'd - it doesn't seem like a lot, but maybe that - I wonder? Maybe that works? That's an interesting kind of thing.

And also there's another thing which is that to some extent this world is built to tantalize us towards world number 1, there's a lot of world number 1 incentives. I don't just mean money, I just mean in terms of - this is something which we talked about last year in the Game course, which we really shouldn't get into now. But there's something about this world, in as much as it's a world of change and it's a world of flux and it's a world of developing, that leads itself towards work and development and creativity. The joy of relationships is something which is there but it's like dessert, it's hard to - it's like you can't sit and just eat your whole meal as dessert, if you just sit and try to spend months on end just enjoying the wonderfulness of connection it doesn't work. Connection is something that requires almost separation from and then connection and separation and connection, in order for it to remain dynamic and powerful. So that's an intriguing thought, Immanuel, that notion of the ratio of Shabbos to the workweek.

Immanuel Shalev: I was thinking that the other day, I was thinking like, when am I going to tell Rabbi Fohrman that I'm going to take a Sabbatical year, and I expect to be paid. [Laughs]

Rabbi Fohrman: That's right.

Immanuel Shalev: Okay, well thank you everyone for joining us, I think that's all the time we have - well that's the time that you guys have, I think. Maybe we should ask one final question of the audience, I don't know if there's anything that you want to know, Rabbi Fohrman before we…

Rabbi Fohrman: Well did you enjoy the course? It was a little bit different for us in Aleph Beta where we focus more on 10-minute things, and on MEALS, which are [accrual 88:57] of 10-minute videos. So first of all, I'm curious to hear, this was AUDIO did that work for you? The second thing is this was longer than our 10-minute things, this was five and a half/six hours and maybe you didn't get through all of it yet, it's going to be going away soon and hopefully coming back in some kind of video form. But would you like to do more podcasts of this? Is this a style that you'd like us to continue to invest our limited resources here in Aleph Beta? Or would you prefer specifically investing them in different areas, such as our videos, or even books?

So if you guys want to vote for more podcasts, less podcasts, more videos, more books and written material, I'm interested in the thoroughly unscientific survey data that we would get from your…

Immanuel Shalev: I should tell you guys also we read everything you write - it's sad that we don't have all the time in the world to respond to everything but everything that you write us we read. So if you want to share thoughts and opinions with us, it means so much to us and it also really helps us to create material for you better. So if you'd like to share thoughts here or probably, so we can save them, you should feel free to email [info@alephbeta.org.](mailto:info@alephbeta.org) As I said, we read everything, we don't necessarily get to

respond to everything, but everything you write we read.

Rabbi Fohrman: Yes, and I do appreciate that feedback very much, it makes a big difference. We're in it here for you and it makes a big difference how what we're doing speaks to you, so please do let us know.

So thanks for coming to this - thanks for putting up with all the hours in the podcast, I hope that you found it meaningful, the investment of time that you made. It was an honor to spend the time with you and to get a chance to kind of schmooze with you here in this webcam. I hope it's a project that we can do again in some way, shape or form soon.

Immanuel Shalev: Great. Thank you guys…

Rabbi Fohrman: Please email us and very much looking forward to hearing any further thoughts you might have. Have a good night guys.

Immanuel Shalev: Good night.

Okay, hey folks, this is Rabbi David Fohrman, and welcome to this weekly podcast. Today I want to talk to you about something ridiculously large, ridiculously overarching, the question of meaning of life itself. It's a question that eventually hits us between the eyes at some point in our life, we're just, what exactly are we doing here? We did not actually get any manual attached to our ankle when we were born telling us this is the mission statement, the overarching meaning. We live life trying to figure it out and strangely, the greatest mystery of all, is there's no big billboard right in front of our eyes saying, here is your mission of life, go out there and achieve it. So when we start thinking about those big questions, which is what exactly are we doing here, how do we measure success in our lives, how is it possible to even try to measure success in your life if you don't exactly know what it is you're doing here, how would you figure it out?

# Can Life?

Philosophy

# Or Religion Answer What Is Our Meaning In

To that end I would like to begin with a story, a story of Susie Soccer Mom, or Freddie Soccer Dad. Their story begins when that meaning of life question begins to hit them between the eyes and it's like, what exactly am I doing here and how is it that I would figure it out? So Susie Soccer Mom or Freddie Soccer Dad they live in reasonable driving distance from Columbia University, so they enroll in Columbia University's summer seminar; philosophy. It's a course for adults going back to school, they figure it's just the perfect thing, where else would you find the meaning of life other than in Columbia University's philosophy class?

And you get there and there's a survey of modern existentialist philosophers, and reading about Heidegger and Kierkegaard, but then the professor on the very first day of class goes around the room asking people to raise their hands and talk about why they are here on the course. Susie Soccer Mom or Freddie Soccer Dad raises their hands and rather sort of naively says, you know I'll tell you why I'm here, I'm here to actually discover the meaning of life. And then there's this sort of awkward silence or there's some faint giggles, and then the professor gently explains you're really not going to get much of a clear- cut answer about the meaning of life, you've actually come to the wrong place. Susie and Freddie very distressed, hurry out of class and go to the registrar's office and try to bargain for their money back. But they're not going to get the answer there and rather distressed at this turn of events, try to think where else would I go if I'm not going to go to the academy?

Then Susie Soccer Mom is hit with a revelation and Freddie Soccer Dad is hit with a revelation, religion! Right? I mean that's what religion get paid for, right? Figuring out stuff like this. So again, they plunge in to a systematic review of world religions and to this end Susie and Freddie start meeting people of different faiths and kind of interviewing them about what their faith has to say about the meaning of life. But unfortunately, on these long plane rides Susie and Freddie are also meeting with some disappointment, because somehow it's just not feeling, I don't know, all that compelling.

Let me give you an example. Susie was in a chat with religious leader A, who said it's all about doing G- d's will on earth. Which you know seems, I suppose, fair enough. But somehow it left Susie a little cold.

Like, all right, fine, if that's what I have to do, so I'll guess I'll do that, better than nothing, but like you know I want to wake up really fired up with what I'm doing in life, and doing G-d's will on earth, I mean, okay, fine, I get that. But one of the things also that's bothering Susie and bothering Freddie about this is it's not just seeming to take into account all the rest of the stuff that Susie and Freddie do. Like soccer practice for their kids and violin practice and Susie is starting a startup internet company and how does all that fit into this doing the will of G-d notion which seems so very straightjacket into a traditional religious kind of thing? Maybe it's something you would do in the inside of a Synagogue or a Church or a Mosque or something like that, but how do the seemingly secular parts of life, if at all, relate to that all?

Anyway, so Susie and Freddie have met with some disappointment here and that is where our story turns to you. Here you are, you're on the first leg of a flight to London and Susie shows up in the chair right next to you and says, say, let me ask you a question – she sort of comes out with this, I know this sounds strange but this meaning of life question. And you are from the people of Israel and you're trying to give her your take on this, what would you say to Susie or to Freddie?

So that is kind of the opening story I want to begin with, what would we say and how would we say it?

# What

Does

# The Bible Say

About

# Our Life's Meaning?

So I want to sort of play out a possible conversation with Susie and Freddie for the purposes of making this easier. We're going to introduce another character into our little story, he's going to be - let's call him Bob, who is sitting to the immediate right of Susie or Freddie and you are on the left of them. Bob says, oh I couldn't help overhearing this conversation, I too are from the tribes of Israel and I have an answer that I'd like to give to you. It's really, very simple. The meaning of life, he says rather triumphantly, is to be found in the next world, your job is to get there. Well that's pretty succinct. Susie's face brightens up, that's fantastic, how do I get there? Where is the road paved to the world to come?

The world to come sounds wonderful, it's a great world. So the fellow says, easy, that's what we have the Bible's commands for. There are 613 of these commands. Susie says, gee, those are a lot of commands.

Bob says, yeah, you aint seen nothing yet. Actually there are subcommands underneath each one of those, there's really lots of commands and definitely keep you busy. Your job is to do as many of these commands as you possibly can, and avoid as many of these transgressions as you possibly can, and you know, when you add it all up, at the end of the day, the person who dies with the most laws kept wins. And, as a matter of fact, I have this little scorecard I keep with me – and he pulls out this little scorecard, looks like one of those golf little things that they give you in mini-golf, with the pencil, and he's able to keep track of all of his commandments and transgressions of the day. And it's like, the more the better and rack up the points until you get to the next world.

So if you're Susie, what do you say to this? Does this work for you? So if I'm Susie it wouldn't quite work for me. At the risk of sounding a little bit heretical over here, let me sort of detail my issues if I was in Susie's seat right over here. If it's really just a matter of racking up heavenly brownie points and the more of these transgressions you stay away form, the more of these Mitzvos that you keep, the more heavenly brownie points you get to put in your big shopping cart over here on earth, I don't know, it almost seems on some ways - first of all it could lead to a kind of perversion of keeping these Mitzvot.

Here I'm just working with my intuition but the famous Mussar masters would talk about something like this, which is when you go visit the sick, what are you really thinking about? One possibility is the purpose of visiting the sick is so that I can rack up my brownie point and I'm very happy when I go home because I've just gotten another heavenly brownie point. Ultimately it seems to me there's something vaguely – or maybe not so vaguely – narcissistic about this. At the end of the end of the day I'm just using the sick guy to end up doing my Mitzvah, he's just a tool for my little command fulfillment, is that really the way it's supposed to be?

That's one possible problem I have with this. Another possible problem is it just seems very one dimensional, it's like none of these Mitzvos or Aveiros, so to speak, necessarily have any character to them, it's like Candy Land, and I'm picking up things as I go along the board and no difference between one thing and the next thing, I'm just shoving it into my shopping cart. And it just seems one- dimensional, it seems like there's no inherent value to the stuff that I'm doing, it's almost random. It's just that G-d said you get a point for this, you get a point for that, you get a point for this, and it just seems, I guess, meaningless, and I hate to use that word if that's really all it is, this brownie point thing.

It's almost as if G-d could have said, okay, so imagine I'm grinding this millstone and it would be one thing if there was actually some wheat in the millstone that I was grinding, so that it would actually produce something. But imagine there is no wheat, and I know there's no wheat, so I'm futilely grinding this millstone. But G-d says if you grind that millstone enough you're going to live here for 80 years and you should do 75 turns of this great millstone a day, and you know when you do the math it's 375,921 turns of the millstone. And at the end of the day if you turn the millstone enough I will give you all of this wonderful reward, riches beyond imagining in the world to come. I don't know, would that make turning the millstone glorious or would it just be, oh my gosh, I can't believe I have to turn the millstone for 70, 80, 90 years? If there's no inherent value to it, so that at the end of the day am I just turning a millstone?

So maybe this theory could use a little bit of sharpening, can we add some nuance to this theory? Okay so one thing that might help Susie here to try to broaden this theory is yes, there's all these laws you're supposed to keep, but these laws are actually designed to guide you in certain ways, to help inculcate certain values. There are certain ultimate goals that these laws and these stories are designed to somehow express, and if you follow the laws and you understand the stories, somehow you take in those values and the meaning of life just somehow becomes a part of you.

So when Freddie hears this and when Susie hears this their face brightens, they say, yes, I like that idea of overarching goals. If there were some overarching goals and I could define what those are, then maybe I could look back at my life and in addition to asking how many laws did I keep I could also ask, where am I holding in terms of inculcating these values. It sounds like a life well lived – would want to at least reflect back on that and say, well how do I think I'm doing in this overall goal? Overall goal number 1, overall goal number 2, overall goal number 3. Then they turn to me and say, what are those overall goals that G-d seems to want from us? How would you know what they are?

Okay so here is the next twist in our little hypothetical conversation with Freddie or with Susie. Freddie jumps in and says, what a great idea, you know, so where would you find those overall principles, the meaning of life itself, what it's really all about? Then Freddie says, I know, it will probably be in the beginning of your book, right? It's the Bible, the Bible is the great manual about how to achieve the meaning of life. If I was writing that manual, so like very first sentence, chapter 1, verse 1, I would say, hi guys, I am G-d and here's what it's all about. This is what you're trying to achieve in your life and now on to the races. Right? And it should be there, just in a few sentences, right in the beginning. Let's look at the beginning of the book.

And the beginning of the book, unfortunately, is nothing like that. Bereishis barah Elokim et hashomayim v'et ha'aretz - in the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth, and we're off in the creation story. And desperate, and painfully, Susie and Freddie they're searching through the book and they get to the flood and they get to the Abraham story and they get to the Tower of Babel and all of these stories and they get to laws of the Korban Pesach and the laws of Tzara'as and the laws of everything. Where is this mission statement? Where does it say, this is what I want from you, this is what it's all about, here is why I put you here in the first place, here are the overarching things in life that have ultimate value that you're supposed to achieve?

This, I think, is a really good question, why isn't it there? The Torah surely could have been more explicit about this if it really is the great manual for how to live our lives. What excuse could there be for not being just upfront, dead center, explicit about this?

So let me begin to paint a theory.

# Finding Our Life

Purpose:

# An Experience Or A

Goal?

If I am Freddie's seatmate over here sitting to the left of Freddie or Susie or whatever, so here might be what I would say at this point. I would say, look in an odd sort of way, perhaps it would be self-defeating to be so explicit at the beginning of the book as to what it's about. Because that's not actually how meaning of life is achieved through your a priori intellectualization of the meaning of life. That's not actually how you best get there. To kind of illustrate that, let me give you two quick analogies. Analogy 1, from a book, George Orwell, he's writing Animal Farm. So how come Animal Farm doesn't begin with this disclaimer at the very beginning of the book, a paragraph that says, the following is an extended analogy to the idea of communism and why communism is really terrible? Why not say that? If I'm J. R. R. Tolkien why don't I say, the following three books with 15,000 pages of them, called Lord of the Rings, is really an extended meditation upon the notion of power and how power corrupts for its own sake, and that's really what it's all about? Why don't books begin that way? Why do they invite you in to experience them instead?

The answer is because they can teach what they have to teach through the lessons of experience, vicarious experience. When I enter into the book and I feel like I'm in that world, somehow the lessons that I soak up in that world are much more vivid and real and they affect me more deeply than if I just intellectualize it in a sentence or two at the very beginning. That's the way the world works.

Here's another analogy, from experience in the world, you're taking a hike with your kid, you're playing soccer with your kid, so the experience itself is kicking the ball through these uprights. And I've got certain rules and stuff that I do, but the experience itself is walking through the forest. But then there's a larger meaning to that experience which transcends the experience itself. In this case it might be I want to spend time with my kids, I want to bond with my child with this hike, or with this soccer game. But now imagine I'm like really explicit about that. In the beginning, before we go on the hike, I say son, I have to have a talk with you, we are going to spend some cherished father-son time right now. My four year old kid looks at me and doesn't understand what cherished father-son time really is, but if that's what we have to spend, he'll spend it. As long as we go on the hike Dad just keeps on saying, and isn't it great how as we look at these trees our relationship is just budding and building and it's wonderful?

What happens is that in a strange kind of way the over focus on the ultimate goal here actually causes the activity to collapse. Because the kid says to me, if I'm playing soccer with them, Dad just keep your eye on the ball and play the game. Having that experience, if I do it the right way, will allow me to bond with child, but child doesn't have to understand that the goal of all of this is to create that bonding. The parent has to structure the experience in such a way that it could get there, that the parent-child succeed. But the way you get there isn't by just having these billboards all over the place; And remember why you are playing this game, it's so that we can build this great relationship son. The over focus on it actually stops you from having the experience itself. That the way you actually get to that goal is by experiencing the experience in such a way that you just do it right. You play the experience right, you have the right kind of hike, and at the end of the day you'll look back and it's like, oh my gosh, the kid feels a little closer to father than he did. Or they're bonding better than they once did before.

But maybe it doesn't work by being up front and center about the goals. I get that you want to understand those goals, but that's not the way the manual is designed, because it's maybe not the best way to achieve those goals.

So Freddie and Susie say, okay, that kind of makes sense to me, but I still want to know what the goals are. I mean, I just do. At the end of the day it would just help me, I want in my life to periodically be able to check myself, to evaluate myself, to have some standard as to whether or not I'm actually achieving anything or getting anything done in terms of what my meaning is. Then Freddie and Susie ask this question, maybe the manual might not be explicit about it, but maybe it will be there implicitly somehow? Is there any way that I could at least look at the manual and reverse engineer it to get to some of those meaning of life points? If I look at it carefully could I extrapolate what those goals are, just that they'd be like a little bit signposted, [I could keep 17:03] out of corner of my eye?

And to that I might say to Susie and Freddie, yes, there absolutely is. There's a hard way to do it and there's an easy way to do it. Here is the hard way. I could look at the entirety of the 613 commandments in the Torah and all of their sub laws. I could look at the entirety of all the stories that the Torah tells me and I could try to look for the common themes. I could try to say where do these stories seem to be going? What messages over and over again do they seem to be pointing myself to? If I seem to follow the morals of all of these stories what two or three large, overarching things does it seem like these stories

are guiding me towards? What seem to be the kinds of things that these laws are inculcating into me as a person? That is the hard way, a very difficult endeavor indeed.

But there might actually be a way to cheat, a faster approach, as it were. If I am looking for the meaning of it all, for why I was put here, why human kind is put here in the first place, and I want to see it in the book itself, go to the Torah stories about the creation of human kind, about G-d's act of having created humans. Maybe if you read those stories well, you'll find out why G-d bothered in the first place. That is what I would like to do with you in this course. Over the next few weeks I want to look at these stories, Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, the stories of the creation of human kind with an eye toward is the Torah telling me something about the overall goals of humanity in relation to G-d, in relation to themselves, in relation to others? Like what should they be keeping in mind? What exactly are they doing here? When do you know that you're on the right track or on the wrong track if you wanted to get some sort of idea am I doing this thing called life right? What guidance do we get from Genesis 1 and Genesis 2?

What we are going to be doing is we're going to look at these stories in detail, we're actually going to shift away from the agenda that we have, which is meaning in life, because if you come to Biblical text with any agenda you'll end up seeing your agenda everywhere and you won't end up seeing the text. We're going to try to look at the text organically, just try to read the stories and see what stories do they tell us about man. As we begin to understand that story ever more deeply, we will then come back to the question of what does it all mean? What are the overarching goals that humanity is being bidden to try to achieve that seem to emerge from these creation stories at the beginning of the book?

# Understanding

How To

# Study The Biblical Meaning Of Life

Now just to begin to kick us off on this great quest, one of the most troubling things about the Biblical account of the creation of man is that there is not one story, there are two. Genesis 1 tells you one story, Genesis 2 tells you another story and this is a real trip, what is going on? The problem is the stories actually seem contradictory, they seem to be different stories. This by the way has given rise to this idea really called biblical criticism. Julius Wellhausen in Germany with his notion that there must be more than one author to the Torah and there's going to be a J author and an E author, and the greatest proof of all, really the beginning of that whole school of thought came more than anything else from the fact that in Genesis 1 and 2 I have two stories instead of one.

Their answer was there must be two authors and an editor who was kind of asleep at the wheel. There was author number 1, the story of the six days of creation and that's in Genesis 1, but then there was a whole other school of thought and there was another author and there was story number 2, and it goes and tells a whole different creation story. That is story number 2 and the author kind of shmushed them together hoping that you wouldn't notice too much. But if we're really smart, we can go back and we say, oh there is two authors, there's one author over here, and there's a second author over here, and I wonder as we continue in the Torah if we can see the two different authors. That is the approach of biblical criticism.

But it is not the classic Jewish approach. The classic Jewish approach is there was one author, the author

is G-d, and if that's true, how come there are these two different contradictory creation stories?

Okay now here might be a way to begin to attack this. One of the first questions you have to ask, whenever you read the Torah, about anything - indeed, whenever you read any book – is you have to ask the question of genre. This is a point I made back in one of our Parsha videos if you want to take a look, I think it was Parshat Noach where I talked about dinosaurs a little bit. Go back and take a look at what I said there. But the argument I was making is that before you read a book and ask questions about it, you must understand the genre of the book, what kind of book is it? This is an idea that I got from Mortimer Adler in his great book; How to Read a Book. In this book, Mortimer Adler argues - he's a philosopher, most books are not worth reading but there's about 100 great books that are worth reading. And when you read those great books, those books that stretch your mind, that demand more from you than you possibly think that you can give – when you read those books you must ask the question of genre. You have to know what kind of book you are reading or you will misinterpret the book and you will ask the wrong questions about it.

So if you are reading a poetry book and you think you're reading a chemistry book, you will ask the wrong questions. I think in the Noach video I gave you the example of Carl Sandburg's poem; The fog crept in on its little cat feet. If you begin to look at that poem, you say fog can't creep, it's not a cat, it doesn't have feet, I don't understand it, this poem doesn't make sense. There is no answer to that question, the answer is it's the wrong question, you haven't understood the genre, you haven't understood the idea of metaphor, you're reading poetry, you're not reading a chemistry textbook.

Now the funny thing is, is that both chemistry and poetry are both attempts to describe the world as we know it. Poetry is an attempt to describe experience, life; chemistry is an attempt to describe experience, but they're coming from two completely different angles and they see two different things in experience, and you have to understand that, or you will misinterpret the book.

Now the great question is, when we look at the Torah, what kind of genre is it? What sort of book is it? What sorts of questions should we ask about it? Here the answer is not so clear. You might say the Torah has a lot of history in it, so maybe it's a history book? The problem is the Torah has got a lot of laws in it too, so maybe it's a law book? So I say, well too much history for it to be a law book and too much laws for it to be a history book. So maybe it's a philosophy book, because it has some philosophy in it? But then it's got too many laws and history in it to be a philosophy book. So what kind of book is it?

The answer I think is going to be that it is a guidebook, everything it tells you it's going to tell you from the perspective of being a guidebook. It is trying to guide a people, a collective, the people of Israel, in its relationship with G-d, its relationship to others and it is trying to guide the individual in relationship to others around him. It's basically a guidebook, and whatever it tells you it's going to tell you from the perspective of that. So it will tell you some history because you need some history to guide you. It will tell you some laws because you need some laws to guide you. But the laws it's going to tell you from the perspective of guiding you. In other words, even more than legal principles.

This by the way accounts for some of the difference between what we call Pshat and Drash. The Oral

Law uses a technique of Drash – of expounding, called exegesis, to be able to extrapolate legal principles from the text. But those aren't the legal principles that you would see in a plain reading of the text, if you apply legal principles to the text you will come up with those laws. The plain meaning of the text is to tell you the laws from the perspective of guidance. It's going to tell you some moral truths even though you're going to extrapolate the actual details of law in a completely different sort of way. So for example, when the Torah talks about eating milk and meat together it's going to talk about; Loh tevashel gedi b'chalev imo – seething a kid in its mother milk, which is really very harsh language, really a morally stark picture of what it means to mix together meat and milk. Which is very different from the way that the law in its details actually plays out.

So the simple meaning of whatever is written there, whether it's laws or whether it's history, is always going to be from the perspective of how do I guide you? How is it that I put these truths out there that are going to help guide you in life? That's true for the stories as well. When I tell you the history I'm going to tell you history in a way that guides you. So if I can tell you more in terms of how I guide you, by taking two events that are not actually chronologically next to each other and I juxtapose them in the text, so I'm going to do that. That will lead to this principle; Ein mukdam u'me'uchar ba'Torah – there is no before and after in the Torah. Meaning that of course there more or less are events in chronological order but you can never count on the fact that the Torah is giving you events in chronological order, because the Torah might just be changing around the order. Because if the Torah can teach you more by putting together two events that are thematically related to make a point, the Torah will do that too.

This is one of the great principles of understanding the Torah that the Sages articulate. If it's a history book of course I can trust the chronological order, but it's not, it's a guidebook.

Okay, now let's take this idea of a guidebook one step further and it will lead us to a great theory propounded by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik. Rabbi Soloveitchik has this book called; A Lonely Man of Faith and in the book he tackles this idea, these two creation stories. But what he says is, is that the reason why there are two stories that talk about the creation of man is not because there are two authors in the Torah, but because there are two kinds of man, two sides of mankind, that are ultimately irreconcilable. There is a literary device that the Torah is using to portray this inherent conflict or tension within man. Both of these things are true. To really understand man, Rabbi Soloveitchik argues, you would actually need to sort of triangulate man, to see man from two different perspectives and somehow to merge those perspectives together in your head.

Almost like the way your cell phone works with GPS. How does your cell phone know exactly where you are, you ever wonder that? The answer is, because your cell phone is constantly in touch with cell towers. So how do the cell towers help? So the cell tower knows that if there's a cell tower right over there at 37 degrees, five miles away, the cell tower knows that I'm at a 37-degree angle. It sees that I'm on a line right over here between the cell tower and my phone. But now you just know I'm on this line, you don't know where I am on this line. But if I'm simultaneously in contact with another cell tower somewhere over there, so that cell tower knows I'm on a line between me and it, and I can triangulate those two lines. If I draw those two lines and see where they intersect, that's me, that's where I am.

So if I get two different perspectives on something I can triangulate a position pretty well. If the Torah gives me two different – even conflicting – perspectives on man, it helps me really define who this creature is. Rabbi Soloveitchik argues, in the story of creation of man the Torah uses just such an ingenious literary device in order to be able to tell us something, very economically, very briefly, very quickly, something very profound, about an inherent conflict within man that describes man to a tee.

I recommend you take a look at Lonely Man of Faith, you can read what it is that he says about it, he has these two views of man that he believes emerge from these stories. I'm not going to get into those views in detail right now with you, I just want to kind of end this week's podcast by raising a question on his theory in general. It's a question I always had in looking at Rabbi Soloveitchik's theory and the question basically goes like this. If it is the case that the Torah is telling me about an inherent conflict within man that the Torah wants me to recognize, then why did the Torah have to tell me two different creation stories? It should just tell me two different creation of man stories. Remember in Genesis number 1 I don't just get a story about the creation of man, I get a story about the creation of the universe, and on the sixth day man is created. And, in Genesis Chapter 2, I also don't just get a story about the creation of man, I get this whole long story about the world itself being created and how it all happened and the animals and the trees and man and the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the whole kit and caboodle. If the whole point of these two stories is just to tell me two different kinds of man, so tell me two creation of man stories, much simpler. Don't tell me two different creation stories.

What's the answer to that question? Why are there two different creation stories? I would like to make a proposal to you and follow the implications of this proposal with you next week. In essence, Rabbi Soloveitchik is right, but if I ask a deeper question and I say, why are there two different views of man? Why is there this inherent conflict in the soul of man? How did it get that way? Is it just random that that's the case? Where does that tension come from? There's an answer to that question. The answer is actually provided by the Torah, because there aren't just two creation of man stories, there's two creation of everything stories of which creation of man is a part. What the Torah is telling you is that if you want to understand the two different ways of looking at man, they are a function of two different ways of looking at creation itself.

There are two different ways to tell the creation story itself and depending upon how you tell the story of creation you have a different view of what man is. There's a man creature that is a product of creation 1, of one way of looking at creation, and there's a man creature that's a product of creation 2, a whole other way of looking at creation. Man derives these qualities within him that are in tension from a tension within creation itself, that is evident in creation 1 and creation 2. If we can understand the man of creation 1 and the man of creation 2, the human described in each story, then maybe we can understand the meaning of human existence according to each story. Maybe there's a tension in meaning too? Maybe there's a meaning 1 and a meaning 2?

So here's what I want you to do, you've got a week, read through Genesis Chapter 1 and Genesis Chapter 2, catalog the way these stories are different, and see if you can begin to connect the dots. How does creation 1 differ from creation 2? How does the mankind described in each story differ from one

another? How might their meanings differ as well? I'll see you next week.

Hello fellow questor, after the meaning of life, welcome back to podcast week 2 here with Rabbi David Fohrman. Up today, does the Bible tell us much about the meaning of life itself, what it is that we're here for, what mankind is meant to do in this cosmos of ours? Or more personally, what I'm meant to do in this cosmos of ours.Last week I suggested to you that the answers to those questions from the perspective of the Torah might well be found in the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis. The reason for that is because if you think about the question what meaning is there in my life, another way of rephrasing that question is what am I doing in this world?

Or to put it in the largest possible terms, what is mankind supposed to be doing in the cosmos? So the answer to that question - at least from the Torah's point of view - it would seem logical that it would be found in the Torah's account of creation of the cosmos and the placing of man within that cosmos. In other words, if the Torah is telling us about the creation of this huge, big environment and man being created and placed in there, then it would make sense that the meaning of man's relationship to that large environment, the cosmos, would somehow come in that story. So it would be a good place to look for this thing that we call the meaning of life, in the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis, but where would we find it?

So I mentioned to you last week that the first two chapters of the Book of Genesis actually comprised two different stories. Two different stories that seem to actually tell about the same events but they seem at face value to be contradictory. I suggested that the stories are not really contradictory and they're not really the product of two different authors, but they're actually two perspectives of the same story. The Torah is kind of triangulating things as it were, using a line of sight in this direction and a line of sight in that direction that sort of intersect to give you a view of who man is in the cosmos, in the sharpest possible way. It's a story that needs to be told in two stories, because there really are two legitimate perspectives on this thing. You can see things in this way and you can see things in that way and the truth is in the mysterious merger of these two stories.

So today I want to actually go through these two stories with you and maybe let me just begin by jogging our memories to what actually is in story 1 - what does story 1 look like and what does story 2 look like. Okay, so here's my really quick summary of these two stories. So Genesis story 1 is basically Genesis Chapter 1, and Genesis Chapter 1 pretty much goes through the famous Six Days of Creation. In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was formless and void and there was darkness on the face of the deep, and there was that spirit of G-d that was hovering over the waters.

Then in the very first day G-d says, let there be light, and that's the beginning of this grand creative process that unfolds over these six days, culminating on the sixth day with the creation of animals and the creation of mankind. Mankind is created in G-d's image - B'tzelem Elokim. Zachar u'nekeiva barah otom - G-d creates them both male and female and then gives them a famous blessing, to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue the earth, they're going to be master of fish, of fowl, of animals and they're going to be able to eat of the grasses of the field.

That's pretty much creation story 1. Creation story 1 gets capped off with the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, man is not actually explicitly told to keep the Sabbath now, the commands to keep the Sabbath

occur much later in the Book of Exodus, but [what have we here 3:57], we have this little window into G-d's own world. Actually, it's one of the only windows we have into what it's like to be G-d from almost an emotional standpoint. G-d gets very excited about this day; Vayevarech Elokim et yom hashevi'i vayekadesh oto - G-d blesses the day, G-d sanctifies the day because on this day G-d rested from all of the creative activity that He was involved in. That's basically story number 1. The six days of creation culminating in the seventh day of creation, man gets created at the end and that's pretty much the story.

Okay so, so much for story 1, we'll get into the actual verses and we'll look at it in more detail, let's go to story 2.

Story 2 is much more fragmented, seemingly. I'm going to actually sketch out the story to you, but it's not this nice, sort of orderly, day after day after day of more complex creation, it seems almost fragmented with all these digressions. Here's pretty much the way the story lays itself out. It begins with the phrase; Eileh toldos ha'shamayim veha'aretz behibaram - these are the generations of heaven and earth as they were being created, and that itself already gets things off onto kind of an awkward foot. I mean, what does it even mean, these are the generations of heaven and earth? Later on we get that kind of phraseology when we talk about people; These are the generations of Noah, and then we get to hear about Noah's kids; These are the generations of Isaac, and all that sort of makes sense. But to talk about inanimate objects these ways; These are the generations of heavens and earth, seems strange, shall we say?

But anyway, we hear about this introductory sentence of; These are the generations of heaven and earth. Then we have a few more introductory sentences that there was no vegetation in the land and it hadn't quite rained yet and then there was this mist that rises up from the ground, and then there's some rain.

Then G-d creates man, creates him out of the dust of the earth, or out of the clay, breathes into him breath of life and now you have man.

Next thing that happens is G-d decides He's going to plant Himself a garden, so He plants this Garden of Eden and then places man in this garden. Okay, next thing that happens we hear that G-d makes all these wonderful trees, these beautiful trees, trees that are good to eat, and we hear about these two special trees in the garden, which are going to be the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. We'll talk a little bit more about those later. Next thing that happens is these rivers. There's this river that comes out of Eden and diverges into four headwaters and we hear exactly where they go. The name of the river is Pishon and it goes around the land of Chavilah, and then we hear about the gold over there was really good and there were these nice stones and mineral deposits over there. Then there's another river that goes over here and then there's the Euphrates River that goes over here.

Then we hear again that G-d takes man, puts him in the garden; L'ovdah ul'shomrah - he has a job there, he's supposed to take care of the garden and he's supposed to watch over it. So basically at this point G-d says, look, there are these special trees over here, I need you to not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil because on the day that you eat from it you're going to die.

Now we shift to an entirely different topic in creation story number 2, now we get his female

companion. G-d says it's not good for man to be alone, I'm going to create a helper along with him. G-d decides - He creates all these animals and asks man to sort of see if he's going to find a mate among the animals. So Adam tries them all out; the hippopotamus, the flamingo, nothing really works, man is very despondent, G-d puts man to sleep and then takes a rib from him, builds the rib into Eve, presents this woman to him, and suddenly man is very happy. He joyously proclaims; A bone from my bones, flesh from my flesh, I'm going to call her woman because she's taken from man. In Hebrew the word Isha for woman, literally means from a man. Then we hear that this explains the reason why men leave their parents ultimately; Al kein ya'azav ish et aviv v'et imo, and decide to get married; V'davak b'ishto vehayu l'basar echad - and become one flesh with woman.

Then we transition into the story of the temptation of the tree of knowledge. They're both naked, they're not embarrassed, the snake comes along and tempts them, they eat from this tree. G-d gets very angry with them, they realize they're naked, suddenly they're ashamed that they're naked and basically G-d dispenses a whole bunch of punishments. The woman is told that she's going to have pain in childbirth, the man is told that he's going to have a hard time harvesting produce from the land, everyone is going to die eventually, they're all kicked out of the garden.

Basically these are the two stories. The first story is basically this rollout of the six days of creation in a nice, neat order, culminating with the Sabbath. The second story is this little bit more weaving in and out, complicated story of creation of the heaven and earth, and there's this mist, and then there was man, and then there's vegetation and then there's animals, and there's this tree of knowledge of good and evil, garden, and that whole story. Okay, so those are the two stories, and that pretty much - the way I've described it to you now, is what happens when we read through the stories in a linear kind of way. In other words, you start from Genesis 1 and you read through the creation story 1, and then you get into this second version of creation that seems to be very different. The emphasis on everything is different, the order of everything is different, and most of the time that's how we read it, we just read one and then flowing into another.

What I want to do with you right now is a kind of grand experiment. Instead of reading it in a linear kind of way, I want to read these stories in a side-by-side kind of way, almost as if we're comparing them as they develop. At least I want to start out that way. So here's my challenge to you, get ready and you can open your Bible and try to do this with me. Let's take the beginnings of each story, and read them side by side.

And if we do I think we're actually going to find something really pretty remarkable, which is that these aren't two different stories like Cadillac's and apples that have nothing to do with each other, they're actually very related to each other. It's hard to escape the impression that the beginnings - actually the very first three verses of each story are almost like just mirror images of each other. It's almost like if you look at the first one and then you just turn around and look at it from the other side, it just turns into the second one. It's actually marvelous. And to me that's the greatest kind of proof that these stories are not just unrelated bits of text that happens to be one comes before the other, but they are very intimately related to one another, there's just no escaping of it.

Here is where you really begin to see, I think, the same story kind of unfolding with two entirely different perspectives. Let's go to the first three verses of each story and just try to compare them. What we're going to do is read the verse and try to sort of name them. I read verse one, what's the best title for that verse? Verse 2, what's the best title for that verse? Verse 3, what's the best title for that verse? We'll do this in both stories and we're going to find, by the way, that what's happening in each of these verses is very different, but the title for what's happening, that actually is the same.

Let's dive in with creation story number 1. First verse; Bereishis barah Elokim et hashomayim v'et ha'aretz - in the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth. What do you learn about in this verse? Well you learn about who the creator is, right? The creator is G-d. And you learn what He created, He created heavens and earth. So basically the title of this verse is, Who is the Creator and What is the Created? In the beginning, G-d created the heaven and the earth. Okay very good.

Next verse, what would you say the title of this verse is? Veha'aretz haytah tohu vavohu - and the world was completely formless and void, it was utter chaos. V'choshech al pnei tehom - and it was darkness upon the face of the deep. V'ruach Elokim merachephet al pnei hamayim - and the spirit of G-d was hovering over the face of the waters. So basically the way the Bible is portraying this is, is that nothing has really happened yet, this is sort of the pre-creation chaos, so let's call that our title for verse number 2, The Pre-creation Chaos; the way things were before any creator here got involved.

Now verse 3 is what? Vayomer Elokim yehi or - and G-d says, let there be light; Vayehi or - and in fact there was light. So this is the beginning of everything. If you think about it in a cosmological kind of way, that first burst of light and energy in modern scientific terms, maybe you'd call that the big bang, you know, it's the beginning of everything, we're all children of that, everything develops from that. So basically verse 3 is going to be, The First Glimmer of Everything.

So again, verse 1; Who is the Creator, Who is the Created? Verse 2; The Chaos That Was There Before Anything Got Started. Verse number 3 is; The First Glimmer of Creation from which Everything Eventually Flows.

What's fascinating is, leave world 1 behind now and now go to creation story 2 and you're going to find the same titles hold. The description of what's happening under each title, again, very different, but it's the same titles. Listen. Eileh toldos ha'shamayim veha'aretz - these are the generations of heaven and earth; Behibaram - in as much as they themselves were created; B'yom asos Hashem Elokim eretz ve'shamayim - on the day that G-d made heavens and earth.

What happened in that verse? If you look at it carefully you actually learn some information about who the creator was and who the created was. You see the last time around the Torah portrays the creator as G-d; In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth. Here you have the same heavens and earth

- Eretz and Shamayim, that get mentioned, except this time how are they being portrayed? Eileh toldos ha'shamayim veha'aretz - these are the generations of heaven and earth. Almost as if heaven and earth are themselves animate beings, almost as if they themselves are giving birth to something, like they're creators. Because think about, they're being portrayed almost as parents here. There's heaven and there's

earth and there's generations that come from them. Everything that follows is like going to come from them.

So what happens is, if you look at story 1, heaven and earth is the object of creation. In the beginning G- d (the subject) created (verb) heaven and earth. Heaven and earth are the objects of creation. Story number 2, the object becomes the subject. Eileh toldos ha'shamayim veha'aretz behibaram - these are the generations that emerge from heaven and earth. Now look what happens, we get the sort of parenthetical mention of G-d in story 2, as if we're being reminded, oh by the way; Behibaram - these are the generations of heaven and earth, as they were being created; B'yom asos Hashem Elokim eretz ve'shamayim - on the day that G-d happened to make these things. So it's like, oh yeah, don't worry, G- d created them too, but look who is in the spotlight now. The spotlight is heaven and earth themselves.

Just grammatically by the way, you get the first time round; Bereishis barah Elokim - Barah is a very direct verb, G-d created. Look how indirect it is in story 2. These are the generations of heaven and earth; Behibaram - in as much as they were created. Passive. They were created by G-d. But it's almost like G-d is lurking behind this curtain over here and - He's of course the creator of heaven and earth but it's almost like He's saying, hey guys, you take center stage right now, I'm telling your story now. In fact, it really is their story now, the story of heaven and earth.

I want to suggest to you that this is the fundamental difference between these two stories. Two perspectives on the same story. The greatest question you could ask of all possible questions is who is the creator? Story 1 has an unambiguous answer, it is G-d. Story 2 has a much more ambiguous answer, it's heaven and earth in as much as they were created on the day that G-d created them. It's very convoluted, but that's the answer. Almost as if heaven and earth are like proxies for the creator over here. It's like they're front and center, you could see the world developing from them. Of course G-d created them so of course G-d is the creator and G-d is involved and He gets involved in the creation of man we'll see.

It's almost like G-d has this role, He's like sort of midwifing events, but He's sort of sticking His children heaven and earth up there on the stage and saying, this is the story about you guys. What's going to happen is that in the story the Torah is going to emphasize how everything really develops from heaven and earth.

Because think about it, if they are the great parents, how do they interact to create? You see G-d in story number 1 He's a unilateral creator, He creates all by Himself, but heaven and earth by definition are two, they create together, they interact in order to create. What is the great way that heaven interacts with earth? What is the medium of their interaction?

Of course the answer is, rain. You even hear the beginnings of it in terms of rain's absence in the very next verse. The next verse by the way is going to be - what's the title for verse 2? The chaos, the desolation, that was before the creator sort of enters the scene and starts doing stuff. So what is the picture of the desolation that was in world number 2? It's a picture that interestingly enough is a mirror image of the picture that we got of desolation in story 1. Let's just remind ourselves what did desolation look like in story 1, if you had to picture it in your mind what did desolation look like? Veha'aretz

haytah tohu vavohu - back in story 1 - the world, it was formless and void, it was really chaotic. There was darkness - it was darkness everywhere. But darkness over the face of the deep - and that's a water word. So there's water around. Then; Ruach Elokim merachephet al pnei hamayim - the spirit of G-d is hovering over the face of these waters. So there's water everywhere and it's really dark, that's what desolation looks like in world number 1.

But look what desolation looks like in world number 2. If you would look at heaven and earth as creators, what would heaven and earth consider to be a desolate landscape? A landscape devoid of all fertility, devoid of all vegetation, because vegetation is really the children of heaven and earth, the most obvious children; grasses, plants, trees. If you don't have any grasses and trees it's just a parched earth. If you don't have any rain it's just parched. Listen actually to how the verse describes it. Verse 2, the picture of desolation in story 2. V'kol si'ach hasadeh - and this was before all the grasses of the field; Terem yiheye ba'aretz - before they were in the land. V'kol eisev hasadeh terem yitzmach - and before all the vegetation had a chance to grow. It was just parched earth. Why? Ki lo himtir Hashem Elokim al ha'aretz - because G-d had not yet caused it to rain. Plus, just as a kicker; V'Adam ayin la'avod et ha'adamah - man wasn't there yet to till the earth.

Because there's two things that allow ground to be fertile, there's rain and then there's the midwife, in this case there's man who would be the terrestrial midwife and he's going to help till the land and help encourage the fertility of land through his agricultural prowess. But there wasn't any man yet and there wasn't any rain yet, so what was there? Dry, parched earth, baking in the sun. That's desolation from the perspective of world 2 creators, heaven and earth. That's what they would think desolation is.

It's exactly the opposite of desolation in picture 1. Desolation in picture 1 is a dark water world, desolation in picture 2 is a parched earth baking in the sun. Light everywhere but no water.

That leads us to verse 3, the beginnings of life. Verse 3 back in the first story was about light, this great explosion of energy from which the rest of the universe somehow comes into being and gets created over these six days of creation. But that's not the beginnings of creation if you look at heaven and earth as the creators. A heaven interacting with earth, what's the beginning of their children? The beginning of their children, the very first glimmer of life, comes from the interaction between the two. Listen to the third verse; V'eid ya'aleh min ha'aretz - mist came up from the ground and the mist coalesced into clouds. The clouds darkened the rays of the sun, cast a life-giving shadow in the form of clouds over the earth and came down as rain; Vehishkah et kol pnei ha'adamah - and watered all the face of the ground, making it fertile grounds for the life that would come. That is the beginning of life coming into the world in creation world number 2.

So the titles here in both of these worlds, it's all the same. Who is the creator, who is the created, that's verse 1. What did chaos look like, pre-creation chaos, that's verse 2. What's the first glimmer of life, that's verse 3. But everything else is a mirror image. One story is a perspective where you look at G-d the direct creator in charge of it all, and you see it from that point of view. Then there's another point of view that you can see it as, a point of view in which somehow G-d trots out heaven and earth on the

scene and says look at these guys as creating you, and then everything is going to develop from the interaction of heaven and earth. At least everything that happens on our lonely planet earth; man, animals, fish, fowl, vegetation, all the stuff that story 2 is going to be concerned with, is developing right over here out of the interaction of heaven and earth. That's the beginning of these two stories, the first three verses.

The first three verses set the tone for everything that follows. The first three verses of each story launch you on a journey, but the journey is much greater than just those three verses. Everything that happens next is an unfolding of the implications contained in those first verses.

Let me show you just a little bit what I mean by that, in, for example, story 2. If story 2 begins with this idea that heavens and earth are creators, and everything that flows follows from them, look at how that starts to play out in the rest of the story. G-d creates man in story number 2 but how? I don't hear about the Tzelem Elokim stuff - this image of G-d stuff, instead I hear that he is created from the ground; Aphar min ha'adamah - from this fertile ground. It had rained on the ground, now G-d takes this fertile ground and creates man and He blows into him the breath of life. So there's these almost like three partners in creation; there's heaven now, and there's earth now, and there's G-d, and somehow all of that is part of this complicated picture of how man emerges. But it's very clear that part of the story here is ground. He creates man from the ground. It's not the only thing that has to do with ground, everything that follows is going to have to do with the ground.

Next verse; Vayitah Hashem Elokim gan b'Eden, is it a coincidence that G-d decides to go planting in the ground a garden? He's making the summer home for Himself in the world, this garden, that He can be in. The very first agricultural tender of the earth, as it turns out, was not man, surprisingly, the very first tender of the earth turns out to be G-d. G-d takes care of the earth, He's the one who midwifes the earth's fertility and He plants this garden. It's almost as if He's teaching man how to do it. This is what you do with earth to help make it fertile. You see, it's all playing out here, you can't ignore the earth, it's all a function of the earth. Next verse; Vayatzmach Hashem Elokim min ha'adamah - and G-d causes to grow out of the ground all of the trees. So the trees are coming from the ground. These beautiful trees.

Then we have this digression about the rivers, but it's not a digression if you look at it from the perspective of heaven and earth, because if their main interaction is rain, how does that rain get everywhere else in the earth? Well the rain coalesces into rivers, and it's through rivers that the beginnings of life that were localized one place then spread out to the rest of the earth. The rivers are vitally important from the perspective of heaven and earth. The rivers go and they go in these different directions and then we hear about the mineral deposits in the land, the gold over here and the minerals over there, and that's also vitally important from the perspective of earth. If you're earth then the mineral deposits matter. It's how these creators look at the story.

The of course, what's man's role? He's put in the garden; L'ovdah ul'shomrah - to guard it and to work it. Man's goal is to better the earth and to take care of it, but his goal is conceived in reference to the earth. Next thing that happens is out of the earth G-d is going to make all of the animals come. So you

see how everything is flowing from the earth, it's a very heaven-and-earth-perspective thing, they really are the generators - these are the generations that are flowing from them. It's almost as if heaven and earth have a grandchild too, because the next thing that happens is that Eve gets created from Adam. So if Adam is a child of the earth, a grandchild of the earth is going to be Eve, because Eve is taken from Adam. So everything is really flowing - these truly are the generations of heaven and earth.