

# PARASHAT NOACH



שני רבדים בשם ה'

## G-d's Name in Two Tiers

### ■ Hashem is G-d

The Torah gives us various keys by which to understand its hidden meanings. One of the most important of these keys is the specific Name of G-d that appears in a given Torah portion or passage. Let us clarify the difference between the Divine Name that is pronounced *Elokim*, and the Name that is spelled *yud, keh (heh), vuv* and *heh* – the *Havayah* Name that we pronounce in prayer as “Ado-nai” and otherwise as “Hashem.” (Its sanctity is so great that we do not even pronounce its letters consecutively.)

The Name *Elokim* is a more general term, and is based on the word for judge or leader. On the other hand, the *Havayah* Name is the specific term for the G-d of Israel. This is why we proclaim on Yom Kippur and on other solemn occasions, *Hashem, Hu* [He is] *HaElokim* - Israel's announcement to the world that the true *Elokim* is Hashem, the G-d of Israel.

There is also another well-known difference between these two Divine Names: *Elokim* refers to the Divine trait of strict justice, while *Havayah* refers to His mercy and compassion. This distinction can be clearly seen in the listing of the Thirteen Traits of Mercy, which begin as follows:

ה' ה' אל רחום וחנון...

*Hashem, Hashem, merciful and compassionate G-d...* (Sh'mot 34,6)

The Name *Elokim* is not mentioned in this list of traits of compassion - only Hashem, the merciful Name of *Havayah*.

Less well-known, but more profound, is the distinction between these two Names appearing in the weekly Torah portions of B'reshit and Noach, as follows: When the Creator dictates to the world absolute commands that permit no room whatsoever for resistance or maneuvering, the Torah uses *Elokim*. But when a choice is given, the *Havayah* Name is used.

*Elokim* is used, for instance, when referring to G-d's desire that the world run and be conducted according to the laws He created – those which we know as “natural law.” These laws, of course, cannot be changed, and they allow for no deviation. For example, the law of gravity operates at all times and in all weather conditions; it cannot be blocked. The Torah uses *Elokim* in the context of these laws.

But when G-d issues a command that involves free choice – such as the *mitzvot* of the Torah, fulfilled only when the one who is commanded chooses to do so – then the Torah uses the *Havayah* Name, Hashem. Free Will is a perfect example of man's ability to resist a Divine command, despite the punishment he can expect, and so the *Havayah* Name is used when referring to it.

Another “division of labor” between the two Divine Names pertains to the human body. The involuntary activities of a person, such as the pumping of his heart, the impulses of his brain, the filtering and exchange actions of the lungs and kidneys, are controlled by “*Elokim*.” But what we do with our hands and legs, what we say, where we choose to look, etc. – these are under the rubric of “Hashem.”

There is, of course, a direct connection between these distinctions: People who violate G-d's commands can expect to be punished, and therefore require compassion; when Hashem then treats them with mercy, this is an expression of the *Havayah* Name. This explains why this Name is used for His commands to man. On the other hand, universal matter, which has no choice but to give in to the Creator's will in the form of the unchanging laws of nature, does not require compassion or mercy. The stuff of the universe has no ability to resist, but instead acts robotically and can do nothing “wrong.” Here, therefore, *Elokim* is appropriate.

### ■ The Double Command to Noach

A striking example instance of the two tiers of G-d's Name can be found in Parashat Noach. In G-d's first command to Noach, He says that He intends to deluge the world, and that Noach should build an Ark and save at least two of each animal. The command both begins and ends with the Divine Name of *Elokim*:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְנֹחַ קֵץ כָּל בָּשָׂר בָּא לִפְנֵי...

*Elokim said to Noach, The end of all flesh has come before Me...* (B'reshit 6,13)

וַיַּעַשׂ נֹחַ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹהִים בְּכֹל עֲשָׂה.

*Noach did all that Elokim had commanded him.* (verse 22)

The next passage, five verses long, describes G-d's additional command to take animals into the Ark. It both begins and ends with the *Havayah* Name:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לְנֹחַ בֹּא אַתָּה וְכָל בֵּיתְךָ אֶל הַתֵּבָה...

*Hashem said to Noach, come you and your family into the Ark...* (7,1)

וַיַּעַשׂ נֹחַ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּהוּ ה'.

*Noach did all that Hashem had commanded him.* (verse 5)

### ■ Commanded by Elokim

What message is hiding for us behind these two double commands, each with its own different Name of G-d? According to the key we have been given, we understand that the first command is absolute, unchangeable, and unchallengeable. The second command, on the other hand, is given to Noach as a test of his free choice.

In the first command, G-d tells Noach that the upcoming flood is a fait accompli and cannot be reversed. However, it is clear that afterwards, the world must be rebuilt; this is part of G-d's natural law, imbued in Creation. It is therefore absolutely required that two of every animal enter the Ark to be saved. Noach and his sons and their wives, representing the human race, must enter the Ark as well. And what will happen if Noach refuses to bring animals to the Ark? The answer is in verse 20:

שְׁנַיִם מִכָּל יָבֹאוּ אֵלֶיךָ לְהַחְיֹת.

*Two of each animal will come to you, to be kept alive.*

That is, they will come no matter what, by Divine command, regardless of whether Noach "agrees."

If it is sufficient to have one pair of each animal, why must four pairs of humans – Noah and his three sons and their wives – be saved in the Ark? Wouldn't one pair be enough to give the human race the jump-start it needs? The answer is that we have seen that the world of animal life is divided into three: Fowl, animals, and ground-crawlers:

מִהָעוֹף לְמִינֵהוּ וּמִן הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ, מִכָּל רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינֵהוּ...

*Of the fowl after its kind, and of the animals after their kind,  
of every creeping thing upon the ground after its kind...* (6,20)

Similarly, Noah's three sons Shem, Cham and Yefet represent three totally different approaches, each of which is necessary for the world to function. One pair, man and woman, is required in order to perpetuate each approach. Why, then, did Noah and his wife also have to be saved? Their three sons, and the entire world, would be able to carry on without Noah and his wife! It must be that Noah was destined to sire a fourth son, after the Flood. Let us look at the verses.

Before they entered the Ark, Hashem was careful to separate the men and women even in His instructions to Noah. For instance, He told Noah, ***"Come to the Ark, you and your sons, and your wife and your sons' wives, with you"*** (6,18). Marital relations were forbidden on the Ark.

However, when they left the Ark, G-d said: ***"Leave the Ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives, with you"*** (8,16). In other words, relations were once again permitted. Not only that, but following the Seven Noachide Commandments, the Torah states clearly: ***"And you, be fruitful and multiply, swarm upon the earth and multiply thereon."*** (9,7)

In other words, Noah was kept alive because he was supposed to have a fourth son. However, he did not merit it; Rashi explains (9,22 and 25) that it was because of his son Cham. In the end, Noah cursed Cham's fourth son, Canaan, and Rashi explains that Noah was actually saying to Cham: "You caused me not to have a fourth son; let your fourth son be cursed."

### ■ **Commanded by Hashem**

We have analyzed the first command to Noah, the irreversible one; let us now consider the second command. It employs the *Havayah* Name and describes a situation in which Noah has free choice. G-d tells him:

בֹּא אִתָּךְ וְכָל בֵּיתְךָ אֶל הַתֵּבָה, כִּי אֶתְּךָ רָאִיתִי צַדִּיק לְפָנַי בְּדוֹר הַזֶּה.

***Come you and your family into the Ark, because I have seen that you are this generation's righteous man before Me.*** (7,1)

Use of the word ***"righteous"*** here is related to the *Havayah* Name, as it implies free will. Natural law, on the other hand, is blind, and does not differentiate between those who are righteous and those who are not. Only here does G-d explain why He chose Noah and his family, of all people, to re-populate the world, even though anyone could have served the same purpose: It was because of his ethical level, higher than that of anyone else alive.

We also see here a new command. G-d tells Noach that some animals are to be represented by more than two:

מכל הבהמה הטהורה תקח לך שבעה שבעה איש ואשתו,  
ומן הבהמה אשר לא טהרה הוא שנים איש ואשתו.

*From every pure animal, take seven of each, male and female,  
and from the animals that are not pure, take two,  
male and female. (7,2)*

The concept of a “pure animal” and offering it as a sacrifice has to do with laws allowing free choice. Noach was instructed to take seven of each animal, including those for future sacrifices; this quantity is not critical for the world’s survival, and it is therefore a command that he can choose to defy, if he wishes. This, as opposed to the first command to take two of each, male and female, which cannot be left to Noach’s choice, since without them, the world cannot be rebuilt. We thus see why this second command begins and ends with the use of the *Havayah* Name.

This understanding solves another complex problem. The Torah continues:

מן הבהמה הטהורה ומן הבהמה אשר איננה טהרה...  
שנים שנים באו אל נח אל התבה זכר ונקבה כֹּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֱלֹהִים אֶת נֹחַ.

*From among the pure animals and the animals that are not  
pure... two of each came to Noach to the Ark,  
as Elokim commanded him. (7,8-9)*

Something here does not add up. There were supposed to be seven of each pure animal, and not two! In addition, why does the Torah imply that they came on their own, if Noach was commanded to bring them?

It must be that the Torah wishes to emphasize that the minimum, basic number of each type of animal is two – and that this number of each type, even the pure ones, came on their own into the Ark. Noach had no choice; two of each came in. And the verse describing this cites *Elokim*, not Hashem, as the author of this command, because there could be no resistance or refusal.

But the extra five of each pure animal that entered the Ark were dependent on Noach’s free will. He was free to bring them in, or not – in the knowledge that he would be subject to punishment, like any sinner, if he chose not to.

The story of Noach’s building of the Ark and the entry thereof of his family and the animals ends with these words: “*And Hashem closed him inside*” (verse

16). Why is the *Havayah* Name used? It teaches that Noah fulfilled precisely all that G-d had commanded him to do, including those commands that were left up to his free choice. He therefore merited being “closed up” and protected in the Ark by Hashem – the Divine Name representing supernatural forces guided by compassion and mercy.

### ■ The Double Tier of Parashat B'reshit

In addition to the "double command" to Noah, another repetition in the Torah's beginning chapters is the story of the creation of the world, told over twice in the first two chapters of B'reshit. The first account, from 1,1 to 2,3, recounts the Six Days of Creation, and ends with the sanctification of the Sabbath day. The Torah then repeats the story in the rest of Chapter 2 – but with one clear, sharp difference: In the entire first account, the only Divine Name that is mentioned is that of *Elokim*, starting from the very first verse -

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים...

*In the beginning, Elokim created the heavens and the earth...*

and ending with the last one:

אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.

*...that Elokim created for it to function. (2,3)*

But in the second account, the *Havayah* Name is also mentioned, starting in its first verse:

בְּיוֹם עָשָׂה ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם.

*...on the day Hashem Elokim created earth and heaven. (2,4)*

Our renowned teacher and commentator Rashi quotes the Medrash that says that G-d originally thought to create the world in accordance with the trait of strict justice - as implied by the Name *Elokim*. This means there would be no possibility for forgiveness of sins. But when G-d saw that the world could not exist this way, He added the trait of compassion, as in the second account of Creation, which uses the *Havayah* Name.

This explanation, of course, is very difficult to understand. Did G-d not foresee what would be? Why did He not create the world “correctly” the first time? According to what we have explained, this difficulty does not exist. Our Sages in this Medrash meant to intimate that there were two levels, or stages, in designing the creation of the universe: Natural law, and ethical laws given to our free will.



We can now well understand the first verse, which reads: “*In the beginning, Elokim created the heavens and the earth.*” Rashi entertains the possibility that *B’reshit*, the first word of the Torah, means, “*In the beginning of all,*” and that the verse tells us that the first thing “*G-d created [was] the heavens and the earth.*” However, he raises a strong objection to this explanation: “We know that the heavens were *not* created first; they were created on the second day, after the water and the light!” Rashi therefore explains that the first verse is really not a complete sentence, and actually means this: “*In the beginning of G-d’s creation of the heavens and the earth, then...*”

However, according to what we said above, we can explain the verse as emphasizing the “identity” of the Creator: “In the beginning of all, [it was] *Elokim* [Who] created the heavens and the earth.” In other words, the first stage of Creation was when G-d founded the laws of nature, with the Name *Elokim* – and only afterwards did He reveal the laws of ethics and freely-chosen behavior, using the Name of *Havayah*.

The Six Days of Creation exemplify the unchanging and permanent laws of nature, such as gravity, which do not allow for even the slightest deviation. This is what the Sages meant by the term “attribute of justice,” with which the world was originally supposed to be created.

As mentioned above, man himself – who was created on the sixth day – has many aspects that function on “automatic pilot,” such as his heart, nervous system, lungs, and more, continually and involuntarily. His heart receives the order to start working at the moment of birth, and continues until the day he dies. This is the story of the first account of Creation, based on unchanging, solid laws.

The second story of Creation, on the other hand, refers to man’s ability to choose freely. This is the second tier – that of “voluntary muscles,” the ability to choose and decide – that lies atop the first level and is its purpose. Here, therefore, the Name Hashem also appears, and not just *Elokim*.

This is why the Divine command to man – which can be disobeyed, if man so chooses – appears only in the second account. This account also tells us of Adam’s choice of Chava (Eve) as a wife (as alluded to in 2,20, based on Rashi’s commentary to the verse before it). These points indicate that only on this level - the level of the *Havayah* Name - was the ability formed to voluntarily activate our muscles and mind. If the prohibition against eating from the Tree of Knowledge had appeared in the first account of Creation, it

would have been as inviolable as when G-d said, *“Let there be light!”* There would have been no choice but to obey.

## ■ The Earth's Sin

This explanation also helps us solve one of the great mysteries of the Six Days of Creation: On the third day, G-d commanded one thing, and something else happened! G-d commanded the earth:

תְּדַשָּׂא הָאָרֶץ... עֵץ פֶּרִי עֹשֶׂה פֶּרִי...

*Let the earth... produce a tree of fruit, that makes fruit...* (B'reshit 1,11)

It was commanded to produce a tree that both produced fruit and was itself edible – but in the end, it only produced a fruit-bearing tree that could not be eaten:

וַתּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ... וְעֵץ עֹשֶׂה פֶּרִי...

*the earth produced a tree that makes fruit...* (verse 12)

Rashi explains, based on R. Yehuda ben Shalom in the Medrash (B'reshit Rabba 5,9):

The earth violated the command. For G-d had said, “Just like the fruit is eaten, so too the tree” - but the earth did not do this...

This is truly very difficult. How can the earth violate a command, when it has no free will, no ability to resist, and no independence? How can we say that the earth disobeyed G-d? The answer to this great mystery is found in the second account of Creation, Chapter 2 of B'reshit, where we read:

וְכָל שִׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרָם יִהְיֶה בָּאָרֶץ וְכָל עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרָם יִצְמַח

*All the wild shrubs did not yet exist on the earth,  
and all the wild plants had not yet sprouted*

כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר ה' אֶל־לֵהִים עַל הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אֵין לַעֲבֹד אֶת הָאֲדָמָה.

*because Hashem Elokim had not yet brought rain upon the  
earth, and there was no man to work the ground.* (B'reshit 2,5)

This verse clearly clashes with the one we saw above (1,11), which tells us that the earth *produced a tree that makes fruit*. The Talmudic Sage Rav Asi resolves this contradiction as follows:

This teaches that the growths sprouted up to the surface of the ground, but no further – until Adam came and prayed for them, and rain came, and they grew. This teaches that G-d yearns for the prayers of the righteous. (Hullin 60b)



Studying this explanation carefully, we see that it is very precise. This verse is part of the second account of Creation, in which the *Havayah* Name appears and which is the account of independent will and free choice. That is, the **initial creation** of vegetation on the Third Day was in the framework of natural law – but its **actual growth** is enabled only via voluntary, human prayer, to bring about the rain it requires.

It was as if G-d commanded the earth to produce a “tree that is fruit” with the help of man’s prayers; if man does not pray, the command is suspended. In fact, the grass and trees grew from the earth on the *Sixth* Day, after the first rain brought about by man’s prayers.

However, these prayers were not perfect, and that’s why the trees did not grow in the way that G-d had commanded, and could not be eaten themselves. This was not the failure or sin of the earth, which cannot choose – but of man, who has Free Will. For this reason, when Adam later sinned and violated the clear command not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, G-d said to him: “*The earth is cursed because of you*” (3,17). This tells us clearly that the earth was cursed not because of its own failure, but because of man’s sin.

In sum: The joining of the *Havayah* Name of G-d to that of *Elokim* in Chapter 2 of B’reshit teaches us that the combination of ethical laws and natural law is the exclusive method chosen by Hashem to run His world.

