

Shabbat Shalom
from Rabbi Michael Gold

Candle Lighting Time
Fri. Evening 6:41 pm

Services
Saturday Oct. 10 9:30 am

It is exactly three years today since the horrible Hamas terrorist attack on Israel that killed over 1200 Israelis, with hundreds more taken hostages. Much of the world reacted to these attacks by supporting Hamas and condemning Israel. I wrote this week about humans acting like animals, following their evil inclination. Sadly, three years ago the world saw it directly. May the memories of the victims be for a blessing.

Here is a link for my High Holiday sermons this year. [High Holiday Sermons](#)

PARSHAT BEREISHIT
A SINGLE LETTER

“The Lord God formed out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the human to see what he would call them.” (Genesis 2:19)

Sometimes in the Torah, one single letter makes all the difference, even the smallest letter. We are going to look at a “*yud*,” just a small mark on the page, usually pronounced with a “y” sound. At one spot in the creation story, the Torah uses a single *yud*. At another spot in the creation story, for the same word, the Torah uses two *yuds*. And to quote Robert Frost, “That has made all the difference.”

The Torah teaches that God formed all the animals, using the word *vayitzer*, “and He formed.” The Hebrew word is spelled with one *yud*. The meaning of formed is to make something from the dust of the earth, to give it form and shape. But the word has a second meaning. A *yetzer* is an inclination or appetite. The one *yud* in the spelling shows that animals are formed with one inclination or appetite. Animals simply follow their natural instincts. When we once owned a dog and he jumped on the chair to eat most of a chocolate cake, our dog was not committing an evil act. He was simply doing what dogs do naturally. Of course, we had to rush him to the vet; chocolate is dangerous for dogs. But the fault lay not with our dog but with ourselves, leaving the cake within reach.

Animals are born with a single inclination, what Rabbinic literature would call the *yetzer hara* “the evil inclination.” But for animals the inclination is not evil, it is simply the way animals are made. Human beings also have this evil inclination; in fact, the Rabbis believed it was part of our nature in full force from the moment of birth. Sigmund Freud (a Jewish atheist) took off on this Rabbinic idea, teaching that humans have an

unconscious id or inner appetites, such as eros the sexual appetite and thanatos the death appetite. Unhealthy humans suffer from neuroses or psychoses when the id is out of control.

Now let us turn to the insight of a single letter. The Torah uses the same word *vayitzer*, “and He formed” (Genesis 2:7) for the formation of humanity. But here the word is spelled differently, with two *yuds* instead of one. The second *yud* indicates a second inclination or second appetite. The Rabbis called this second appetite the *yetzer hatov* or good inclination. Its purpose is to channel the evil inclination and train it to do good. The Rabbis admitted that if the evil inclination is there full force at birth, the good inclination is only there in potential. As humans grow up, they have to learn to control and channel this good inclination.

Freud developed a similar idea. He said we need the id or these uncontrolled appetites. But we need to control and channel them in a healthy way. Freud called this sublimation. For Freud, all creative activity by humans begins with properly sublimating and channeling the id onto the proper path. This is the goal of psychoanalysis. (For a Jewish atheist, Freud was extremely Jewish.)

The Torah teaches that in an essential way, humans are different from non-human animals. Perhaps we evolved from common ancestors as Charles Darwin taught. But at some point in that evolution, humans developed an essential difference. Animals have one inclination, simply following their appetites. Humans have two inclinations, a *yetzer hara* or evil inclination and a *yetzer hatov* or good inclination. The evil inclination is when human appetites are out of control, moments when humans act like mere animals. The good inclination is when human appetites are under control, channeled or to use Freud’s term, sublimated to do good.

Non-human animals were formed with one *yud*. They have one inclination. Humans were formed with two *yuds*. They have two inclinations. This little letter teaches a profound lesson on what it means to be a human being.