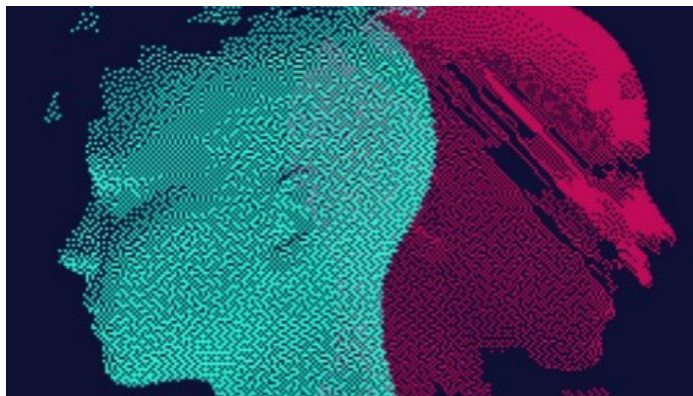


## Spiritual Insight For The Week

with Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz

# God Is ONE — Not Two or Three



During the long years of exile, the Jewish people lost the Land of Israel, the Temple, the priesthood, the Davidic kingship, and sacrifices.

We survived despite these temporary losses because we never abandoned the Torah with its moral, legal, and spiritual teachings.

The word Torah means more than just “the law” or “Bible.” The root of the word Torah is “horah,” which means “instruction.” As it says,

*“to instruct [להורת—l’horot] the children of Israel”* (Leviticus 10:11).

The Torah is a transformative instruction that affects our body and soul.

In this week’s Torah portion, *Bereishis* (Genesis 1:1–6:8), there is a valuable spiritual lesson derived from two words used to describe the creation of man. The verse reads, *“Let us [plural] make man in our [plural] image”* (Genesis 1:26).

Once, while I was visiting a college campus, a missionary confronted me and claimed the plural words “us” and “our” prove that a “plural” God created man.

I refuted this familiar Christian argument by demonstrating that the Torah affirms the oneness and absolute unity of God with verses including, *“there is nothing else besides God”* (Deuteronomy 4:35) and *“I am the first, and I am the last; besides Me, there is no God”* (Isaiah 44:6).

These verses teach that God is not a plurality, because God’s essence transcends the limitations of time and space. Therefore, God does not have divisions or parts that can exist only within the framework of created time and space.

This is the spiritual message contained in the most recognized Jewish prayer, *“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One”* (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Furthermore, the Torah reaffirms the oneness of God — during the creation of man — by stating in the singular that *“God created man in His [singular] image”* (Genesis 1:27).

**The Torah is a transformative instruction that affects our body and soul.**

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So why did the Torah, in the previous verse, use the plural “us” and “our” (Genesis 1:26)?

In the biblical account of creation, God creates the material universe in a manner described as “something from nothing.” After this initial creation, we observe an interesting pattern as God creates specific living items such as plants, fish, birds, and animals. With each of these creations, God engages the material world in the process of creation.

For example, God addresses the earth and water in these two verses, “*Let the earth bring forth vegetation*” (Genesis 1:11) and “*Let the waters teem with living creatures*” (Genesis 1:19).

So too, when God says, “*let us make man,*” God is addressing the material earth to participate, so to speak, in the creation of man. The earth’s contribution is highlighted by the first man’s name “Adam” which is derived from the Hebrew word “אֲדָמָה–*Adamah*” which means “earth.”

## The Torah reaffirms the oneness of God.

Therefore, Adam’s name indicates man’s physical dimension, as it says, “*God formed man of dust from the ground [adamah]*” (Genesis 2:7).

The second part of this verse, “*And God breathed into his nostrils the soul [נִשְׁמַת–nishmat] of life,*” indicates man’s spiritual dimension.

Our sages explain that the Torah’s use of the words “*our image*” highlights that God created man with this dual nature, a physical body [אֲדָמָה–*adamah*], and a spiritual soul [נִשְׁמַת–*nishamah*]. It is this Godly soul that endows man with freedom of choice and distinguishes man from animals.

King Solomon reiterated this dual makeup of man when he said that upon the death of a person, “*the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit [soul] will return to God Who gave it*” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

The dual nature of mankind teaches that we have the responsibility and potential to sanctify the material world with the transcendent power of our spiritual soul. We do this by using our physical bodies to fulfill the Torah and its commandments.

May this Shabbos empower us to proclaim the truth of the Torah and reaffirm the words of King Solomon, “יֵשׁ אֱהָד וְאֵין שְׁנַי – *There is one and not two*” (Ecclesiastes 4:8).

Shabbat Shalom,

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