

Rabbi Hayyim Angel's review of Rabbi Yonatan Grossman's new book on Genesis

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Rabbi Hayyim Angel

Rabbi Hayyim Angel recently published a book review in the Fall, 2019 issue of Tradition (the journal of the Rabbinical Council of America) on Rabbi Yonatan Grossman's new book on Genesis chapters 1-11. He combines classical commentary with modern literary analysis.

Review Essay

Where Literary Analysis Leads to the Fear of God[\[1\]](#)

Jonathan Grossman, *Creation: The Story of Beginnings*, trans. Sara Daniel (Maggid, 2019), 439 pages.

It always is a welcome moment when Rabbi Dr. Yonatan (Jonathan) Grossman publishes a new book. As one of the exceptional young scholars of our generation, his prolific output bridges the best of traditional *Tanakh* learning with contemporary literary methodology. A faculty member at both Herzog College of Yeshivat Har Etzion and Bar-Ilan University, Grossman moves seamlessly between traditional and academic scholarship, demonstrating how both modern literary analysis and our classical commentators contribute to our understanding of the Torah. Most importantly, he remains focused on deriving the religious messages from the text.

Grossman analyzes texts carefully and methodically, interpreting individual words, the flow of passages, and the overall structure and meaning of broader sections. He frequently cites possible options, and offers transparent and oftentimes compelling reasoning why he adopts the readings he prefers. Like his 2014 volume on Abraham, Grossman's new book on Genesis chapters 1-11 reads as a systematic commentary. In this essay, we will consider several of Grossman's critical methodological positions, and then explore his central thesis regarding the content of Genesis chapters 1-11.[\[2\]](#)

Methodology

In his introduction (1-10), Grossman addresses the fact that life in chapters 1-11 is markedly different from our reality, and even different from the reality of the rest of *Tanakh* beginning with Abraham and Sarah in chapter 12. The snake in Eden speaks without the Torah noting that its speaking was a miracle, unlike God's "opening the mouth" of Balaam's donkey (Num. 22:28). Other extraordinary elements include the longevity of the first ten generations (chapter 5), and the "sons of God" who marry the "daughters of men" (6:1-4, see discussion below).

Grossman quotes Sforno (on 3:1), who interprets the talking snake as a metaphorical embodiment of Eve's evil inclination. Although that allegorical interpretation is conceptually appealing, Ibn Ezra (on 3:1) rejects it since God's curse on the snake (3:14-15) refers to real snakes that slither on the ground.

Grossman maintains that we should read the Eden story and the rest of chapters 1-11 as a symbol, not an allegory. With a symbolic reading, the literal reading is meaningful, but the symbolic message is paramount. With an allegory, the true meaning lies exclusively in the inner meaning. The literal meaning of the Eden narrative is relevant, as noted by Ibn Ezra. At the same time, the inner meaning is the primary intended purpose of the story, so we should understand the snake as also symbolizing Eve's evil inclination. At the literal level, the story of Eden is a one-time event. On a symbolic level, it is lived out in each generation and by every individual. These chapters are a pre-history that present eternal lessons for the world we live in. Grossman thus remains focused on the Torah's eternal religious lessons, and does not get bogged down in the rationalist questions that inevitably arise when reading these chapters.[\[3\]](#)

Grossman (24-29) addresses the potential parallels between the Torah and ancient Near Eastern texts. There are very few compelling literary parallels between Genesis 1-11 and such texts, with the notable exception of the Babylonian flood narrative.[\[4\]](#) There also is relevance in comparing and

contrasting the broader ideas found in ancient Near Eastern texts with those of the Torah. That said, our primary goal is to understand the Torah on its own terms to derive its eternal messages.

Even in the case of the flood, Grossman briefly mentions the primary ideological contrasts and then devotes the overwhelming majority of his analysis to understanding the Torah's account of the flood and its nuanced messages. Overall, Grossman strikes an excellent balance of considering potential Near Eastern parallels as ancillary learning aids, while never allowing them to replace the careful analysis of the biblical text and its messages.

A recurring assumption Grossman makes is that when there are two textually compelling sides of an argument, the text must intend a dual meaning. He uses this approach both for local interpretations of individual verses and for entire passages. Sometimes Grossman makes a convincing case for the dual meaning. On other occasions his analysis is less compelling, both because it is unclear that the text intends a dual meaning and, even if it does, it is unclear how one should interpret that dual meaning.

For example, Grossman advances a convincing dual reading of the Garden of Eden narrative (102-111). On the one hand, the narrative is about sin and punishment. Had Adam and Eve not eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, they would have remained in Eden. On the other hand, the story opens by stating that the earth needed people to work the land:

When the Lord God made earth and heaven—when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil (2:4-5).

This opening generates the expectation that God will create human beings who will then work the entire earth. From this perspective, Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden resolves the problem of an otherwise barren earth. The final two verses of the narrative capture these two aspects:

So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he was taken. He drove the man out, and stationed east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the Tree of Life (3:23-24).

In 3:23, Adam leaves Eden with a mission to work the land, thereby resolving the problem of the earth's barrenness from 2:5. In 3:24, Adam's banishment from Eden is a punishment for his sin, and there is no positive dimension. Although Adam and Eve sinned and lost Eden, humanity was intended to fill the earth and work the land.

Grossman further extends this dual thesis to the effects of the Tree of Knowledge (111-137). The process of maturation into adulthood brings work, sexuality, children, and awareness of death. God punishes Adam and Eve for their sin, but their punishment also contains all the elements of human adulthood. The text thereby presents a story of sin-punishment, while it simultaneously sets the stage for adult human life and the development of the earth. This point derives further support from the fact that both childbearing (1:28) and marriage (2:18-24) are ideal components of creation prior to the sin of Adam and Eve. Both dimensions are well-attested in the text.

On other occasions, the dual analysis appears less convincing. For example, Grossman surveys the arguments for reading the flood story as one continuous harmonious narrative, and the arguments for reading it with multiple aspects, given the contradictions and redundancies in the narrative.^[5] He finds both arguments sufficiently convincing, and therefore concludes the Torah intends both layers of meaning, suggesting that the Torah presents this dual reading in order to raise the question of how the post-flood world will be different. The story is not just about the destruction of the world, but rather its destruction and renewal (233-252).

It is fair to maintain that the flood narrative contains elements of both destruction and renewal. However, it may be facile to assume that the text is intended to be read as a continuous narrative as well as a complex account. Moreover, even if Grossman's assumption were correct, why specifically would an intertwined complex and harmonious narrative suggest the conclusion that the flood narrative contains elements of both destruction and renewal? We should pursue the question of how God will build a better world, regardless. Sometimes, Grossman appears to want to have it both ways without having to decide or to remain unsure.

Needless to say what one reader finds compelling, another may not. Regardless of where one may draw the line between *peshat* and *derash* in each instance, Grossman does an admirable job of summarizing and evaluating each argument, and offers a reasonable interpretation of the evidence.

The Book's Central Thesis

Perhaps the most valuable and impressive feature of the book is how Grossman offers a sustained verse-by-verse analysis, and then combines all of his local analyses into a global thesis. However, there is one modification that should be made to his central thesis; namely that God's commanding laws to Noah is a vital element of God's project to build a better world after the flood. Adding this point to Grossman's analysis enables him to emerge with a compelling explanation of Genesis chapters 1-11.

From the beginning, the Torah sets out its ideal vision for humanity and its role in the world:

And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." And God *created* man in His image, in the image of God He *created* him; male and female He *created* them. God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth" (1:26-28).

The verb *b-r-'* (created)—used uniquely with divine acts of creation—appears three times in 1:27 (italicized above). God creates humanity in His image and gives humanity rulership over the animal kingdom. People rule the animals, but do not eat them (1:28-30). The Garden of Eden furthers the Torah's ideal picture by presenting absolute harmony in creation.

Coupled with the exalted position of humanity, there are also allusions to the potential hazards of human free will. Addressing the plural form in "let *us* make man," (1:26), Grossman cites two related verses that also employ this plural form: God's reaction to Adam and Eve's sin in Eden, and to the builders of the Tower of Babel:

And the Lord God said, "Now that the man has become like one of *us*, knowing good and bad, what if he should stretch out his hand and take also from the Tree of Life and eat, and live forever!" (3:22).

Let *us*, then, go down and confound their speech there, so that they shall not understand one another's speech" (11:7).

The common element of these three verses is a central theme in chapters 1-11: God exalts humanity as rulers of the world, but remains concerned that people should not overstep their boundaries in the God-human relationship. When human beings attempt to be all-powerful, God restricts their powers to restore the proper equilibrium (91-93). Grossman views the primary problem of the builders of the Tower of Babel as overconfidence in their technological prowess, attempting to make for themselves a name and eliminating God from their lives (365-400). Alternatively, many scholars suggest that the Tower was a ziggurat, specifically the Temple of Marduk, the protector god of Babylon. The story would then represent a lapse of humanity to idolatry.^[6] Either way, the builders of the Tower are not rebelling actively against God, but their actions display a lack of fear of God and therefore require divine action to restrict them.

Additionally, human beings are not said to be “good” as opposed to the description of nearly every other creation. Grossman interprets this conspicuous omission as an emphasis on human free will. Since people can make good or bad choices, they cannot definitively be called “good”.^[7] Immediately preceding the flood, God saw the opposite outcome of what He had hoped: “The Lord saw how great was man’s wickedness on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil (*rak ra*) all the time” (6:5).

There are three interrelated ways for people to overstep their bounds. They might disobey God in an attempt to be godlike, as Adam and Eve did (3:5, 22). They might act immorally, against God’s expectation of all humanity, as Cain did by murdering Abel. A subtler but critical hazard is when people do not yet sin, but they eschew a relationship with God. This lack of fear of God inevitably leads to immorality. After his punishment, Cain leaves God’s presence (4:16), and his family subsequently produces Lamekh whose murderous tendency suggests a culture of murder within Cain’s line (4:23-24) (187-196). As noted above, the builders of the Tower of Babel likewise severed their relationship with God as a result of their arrogance (and likely also idolatry).

One of the most productive discussions in this volume is Grossman’s analysis of 6:1-4 (211-231):

When men began to increase on earth and daughters were born to them, the divine beings (*benei ha-Elohim*) saw how beautiful the daughters of men (*benot ha-adam*) were and took wives from among those that pleased them. The Lord said, “My breath shall not abide in man forever, since he too is flesh; let the days allowed him be one hundred and twenty years.” It was then, and later too, that the Nephilim appeared on earth—when the divine beings cohabited with the daughters of men, who bore them offspring. They were the heroes of old, the men of renown (6:1-4).

Grossman surveys various explanations of these unions, ranging from interbreeding of angels and humans, to nobles exploiting the poorer classes, to intermarriages between the families of Seth and Cain. Grossman maintains that *benei ha-Elohim* and *benot ha-adam* sound like two types of beings, rather than different social classes or families. It also is unlikely that the Torah is describing sexual unions between angels and humans, given that there is no other such reference to angels behaving this way in the rest of *Tanakh*.

Grossman observes that despite the widespread assumption that the Nephilim were the offspring of these relationships, the text does not say this. The Nephilim were already (*hayu*) on earth at that time (6:4), suggesting that this closing verse provides the backdrop for the story. The Nephilim *are* the *benei ha-Elohim*, who were there at that time. The “heroes of old, the men of renown” were the offspring of the unions between these giants and regular human beings. Grossman observes that the word *elohim* sometimes means exceptionally large, like Nineveh being an *ir gedolah le-elohim*, an enormously large city (Jon. 3:3, see Radak *ad loc.*). Thus, the *benei ha-elohim* were incredibly large people, namely the giants (cf. Ralbag).

If this interpretation is correct, why are these marriages problematic, and how do they set the stage for the rampant human immorality and flood which immediately follow (6:5-8)? Grossman offers the following speculative interpretation: the offspring of these unions are *anshei shem*, men of renown (6:4). There is no inherent sin in the marriages of “giants among men” and “regular” human beings, but excessive human power often contributes to an absence of the fear of God, creating the environment for the sin that overtook humanity. The fear of God is required to build a moral society, and lack of that fear inevitably leads to moral disaster.

Abraham later recognized this correlation and told Abimelech that he assumed Philistine immorality was a given, since it was not a God-fearing society:

“What, then,” Abimelech demanded of Abraham, “was your purpose in doing this thing?” “I thought,” said Abraham, “surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife” (20:10-11).[\[8\]](#)

Despite the sins of Adam-Eve and Cain, the Torah never loses sight of its ideals. Seth’s genealogy picks up right where God’s pristine creation left off (209-210):

And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (1:27).

This is the record of Adam's line. When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God; male and female He created them. And when they were created, He blessed them and called them Man (5:1-2).

The Seth line also prays to God (4:26, see Ibn Ezra, Sforno), and sets the stage for exceptional figures to arise, most notably Enoch and Noah. The goodness of Seth's line carries beyond the flood primarily through Shem. Abraham then continues on this ideal path, invoking God by name (197-198):

And to Seth, in turn, a son was born, and he named him Enosh. It was then that men began to invoke the Lord by name (4:26).

From there he moved on to the hill country east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and he built there an altar to the Lord and invoked the Lord by name (12:8).

The pre-flood attempt to create an ideal humanity failed. God destroyed the old world and began a process of renewal with Noah and his family. However, God did not simply attempt to rebuild a new world that would be identical to the pre-flood world. A careful comparison and contrast of the two halves of chapters 1-11 suggests several fundamental differences that serve as concessions to human weakness, but that simultaneously keep the doors to Eden open for the ideal future.

Post-flood, God permits humanity to eat meat (9:2-4). This change represents a lowering of the standing of humanity. People no longer rule over the animals after the flood, but rather are predators at the top of the food chain (253-270).[\[9\]](#)

God's concession that human beings have great weaknesses also helps ensure that God will never flood the world again:

The Lord smelled the pleasing odor, and the Lord said to Himself: "Never again will I doom the earth because of man, since the devisings of man's mind are evil from his youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living being, as I have done" (8:21).

Human nature has not changed, but the lowered standing of humanity prompts God to judge them with greater mercy (266-268).

Grossman also understands God's choosing of Abraham as a necessary element of this post-flood project. The division of nations sets the stage for God's choosing Abraham's nation that can provide the religious vision to lead humanity back to Eden (268-269). Grossman derives support from the fact that Noah curses Canaan and blesses Shem who will lord over Canaan. Additionally, only Canaan's borders are delineated in the chapter pertaining to the division of humanity into 70 nations:

He said, "Cursed be Canaan; the lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers." And he said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem; let Canaan be a slave to them" (9:25-26).

The [original] Canaanite territory extended from Sidon as far as Gerar, near Gaza, and as far as Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, near Lasha (10:19).

These references foreshadow Abraham's nation, descending from Shem, who will displace the Canaanites (325-336).

Moreover, Ham's sexual depravity foreshadows that of his Canaanite (and Egyptian) descendants, and the Canaanites were dispossessed from their land because of this depravity. If Israel wants to retain its land, it must live a God-fearing, modest lifestyle, like their ancestors Shem and Abraham:

You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, or of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you; nor shall you follow their laws... So let not the land spew you out for defiling it, as it spewed out the nation that came before you (Lev. 18:3, 28).

Although this thesis is cogent, there is one gaping hole: Grossman does not include God's revelation of the Noahide laws to all humanity as an essential ingredient of the post-flood world. To Grossman, the responsibility of post-flood humanity is simply to procreate, whereas God charges Abraham's family with the religious-ethical mission to guide the rest of humanity.

Additionally, while the division of humanity into nations does foreshadow the displacement of the Canaanites with the Abrahamic descendants of Shem, God does not choose one family immediately after the flood. It seems as if God's command of religious-ethical laws to Noah and his descendants gives another chance for all humanity to succeed, but then the Tower of Babel ruins this project. At that point, God scatters humanity into nations and chooses Abraham. Grossman's downplaying of the Noahide laws affects several aspects of his analysis of chapters 9-11, which we will consider presently.

God speaks to Noah and his sons after the flood, blessing humanity and commanding several rules:

God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fertile and increase, and fill the earth. The fear and the dread of you shall be upon all the beasts of the earth and upon all the birds of the sky—everything with which the earth is astir—and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hand. Every creature that lives shall be yours to eat; as with the green grasses, I give you all these. You must not, however, eat flesh with its life-blood in it. But for your own life-blood I will require a reckoning: I will require it of every beast; of man, too, will I require a reckoning for human life, of every man for that of his fellow man! Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in His image did God make man. Be fertile, then, and increase; abound on the earth and increase on it" (9:1-7).

Following this statement, God uses the rainbow to symbolize that He never again will destroy the world (9:8-17). Grossman observes that God calls the rainbow a sign of a covenant, *berit*, even though it sounds more like a unilateral promise not to destroy humanity. Assuming that this covenant suggests mutuality, he maintains that people have a responsibility to procreate (9:1, 7), creating a direct parallel with God's oath to preserve humanity. He quotes some contemporary scholars who also include the moral imperative to not eat the life-blood of animals and not to murder (9:4-6), but he rejects this reading since the obligations of the rainbow covenant are primarily on God (285-288).

It is difficult to see why Grossman distinguishes between the blessing to procreate and the obligation to live morally in 9:1-7. One could view God's covenant as unilateral, with no obligations on humanity directly connected to the covenant of the rainbow. Grossman himself (293-298) observes that in 6:18-19 and 9:8-17, the term *le-hakim berit* (to uphold a covenant) is used, rather than *li-khrot berit* (to strike a covenant). *Le-hakim berit* suggests that God is upholding a preexisting covenant to preserve the world from the time of creation. From this point of view, God's blessings and commands to procreate, not to eat an animal's life blood, and not to murder in 9:1-7 are not obligations in a mutual treaty, but rather blessings and obligations for humanity in a post-flood world. Alternatively, if these are mutual covenantal obligations, then all humanity must procreate and live moral lives.

At any rate, God expects human beings to be moral from the time of creation, and holds them accountable when they are not. God's revelation of the Noahide laws following the flood is an essential component of building a better post-flood world. To say that Noah's descendants must only procreate overlooks a central feature of the post-flood narrative.

Grossman (341-356) argues further that the creation of nations is a direct result of the flood. Noah was part of the old-world order that featured one united humanity. Once humanity failed pre-flood, God divided people into nations so that He could choose Abraham's family to correct the world. Once again, Grossman overlooks the fact that the post-flood generation of the Tower of Babel still had a united humanity; "Everyone on earth had the same language and the same words" (11:1). God's dispersion of humanity into nations and the subsequent choosing of Abraham occurs only at that moment, and was not an immediate consequence of the flood. Hypothetically, had Noah's descendants not failed with the Tower of Babel, and remained God fearing, there still would not have been a need to select one family from among the family of nations. Sforzo makes this point in his introduction to Genesis:

It then teaches that when hope for the return of all humanity was removed, as it had successfully destroyed God's constructive intent three times already, God selected the most pious of the species, and chose Abraham and his descendants to achieve His desired purpose for all humanity...[\[10\]](#)

To summarize and modify Grossman's overall position: God made several critical modifications in the post-flood world. God lowered the status of humanity and permitted them to eat meat. God also acknowledged the weaknesses in the human condition as cause for mercy, and He charged all of humanity to procreate and live a religious-moral life. When human beings failed again at the Tower of Babel (whether through idolatry, arrogance, or both), God divided them into

nations and chose one righteous family—that of Abraham—to provide the necessary guidance to humanity to return ultimately to Eden. Abraham’s adhering to the human ideals channeled through Seth, Noah, and Shem, coupled with his commitment to teaching righteousness and justice to his family and household (18:19), made him the ideal choice.

The overall structure of Genesis chapters 1-11 presents the absence of the fear of God at the heart of rebellion and immorality. Those who arrogantly make for themselves a name (the offspring of the giants and regular human beings in 6:4; the builders of the Tower of Babel in 11:4) create the wherewithal for an immoral society. Those who call in God’s name (Seth’s descendants in 4:26; Abraham in 12:8) live up to God’s ideal mission for humanity.

When Abraham’s descendants fulfil their mission, all nations of the world will serve God as good Noahides, and religious morality will prevail (Isa. 2:2-4). There will be harmony between humanity and the animal kingdom (Isa. 11:6-9; 65:25). The scattering of the nations will be replaced by a unified humanity speaking the language of serving God (Zeph. 3:9).

The events of Genesis chapters 1-11 occurred thousands of years ago, but they also set out the Torah’s ideal vision that will yet be experienced in the future. Most importantly, this vision challenges us to live up to the mission for Abraham and his descendants: to live God-fearing lives, teach our children and society about righteousness and justice, and lead all humanity back to Eden.

R. Yonatan Grossman’s exceptional literary analysis of each passage, coupled with careful attention to his global thesis, brings the fear of God to the very heart of the purpose and mission of every person created in God’s image, and places that *yirat Shamayim* where it properly belongs—at the forefront of our reading of Genesis.

[1] This article appeared originally in *Tradition* 51:4 (Fall 2019), pp. 181-192.

[2] *Creation* appeared originally in Hebrew as *Bereshit: Sipuran shel Hatalot* (Yediot Aharonot, 2017). Page numbers in this essay refer to the more recent English edition. Grossman’s earlier volume on Abraham appeared first in Hebrew as *Avraham: Sipuro shel Massa* (Yediot Aharonot, 2014), and was translated into English as *Abram to Abraham: A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative* (Peter Lang, 2016).

[3] Gabriel H. Cohn applies a similar approach when navigating the literal and symbolic meanings of the Song of Songs (*Textual Tapestry: Explorations of the Five Megillot*, trans. David Strauss [Jerusalem: Maggid, 2016], 11-26). For further discussion of how traditional interpreters navigate this balance, see Hayyim Angel, “Controversies Over the Historicity of Biblical Passages in Traditional

Commentary,” in *The Keys to the Palace: Essays Exploring the Religious Value of Reading the Bible* (Kodesh Press, 2017), 115-131.

[4] A fragment of the Epic of Gilgamesh dated to the fourteenth century BCE was found near Megiddo in northern Israel. This evidence, and particularly such an early version, increases the likelihood that the Torah’s audience would notice the similarities and differences between the accounts; see A. Goetze and S. Levy, “Fragment of the Gilgamesh Epic from Megiddo,” *Atiqot: Journal of the Israel Department of Antiquities* 2 (1959), 121-128. For recent summaries of the scholarship pertaining to the parallels and the contrasting values of the two texts, see Amnon Bazak, *Ad ha-Yom ha-Zeh: Until This Day: Fundamental Questions in Bible Teaching* [Hebrew], (Yediot Aharonot, 2013), 337-341.

[5] For the latter, see, for example, Mordechai Breuer, *Pirkei Bereshit* 1 (Tevunot, 1999), 136-205; Elhanan Samet, *Iyyunim be-Parashot ha-Shavua*, second series (Ma’aliyot Press, 2004), 20-38. For a position disagreeing with the complex narrative approach, see Joshua Berman, *Inconsistency in the Torah: Ancient Literary Convention and the Limits of Source Criticism* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 236-268.

[6] See Hayyim Angel, “The Tower of Babel: A Case Study in Combining Traditional and Academic Bible Methodologies,” in *Peshat Isn’t So Simple: Essays on Developing a Religious Methodology to Bible Study* (Kodesh Press, 2014), 201-212.

[7] See also R. Yosef Albo, *Sefer ha-Ikkarim* III:2, and further discussion in R. Shmuel Goldin, *Unlocking the Torah Text: Bereishit* (Gefen, 2007), 3-8.

[8] Cf. Deut. 25:17-18, where the Torah ascribes Amalek’s immorality to the absence of their fear of God. On the positive side, Joseph’s fear of God gave him the moral integrity to resist Potiphar’s wife’s immoral advances (Gen. 39:9), and the midwives Shiphrah and Puah feared God and therefore disobeyed Pharaoh’s evil decree to murder Israelite baby boys (Exod. 1:17).

[9] Grossman’s view resembles that of Abarbanel. For surveys and analysis of the views of classical commentators regarding God’s permission to eat meat, see R. Yehuda Nachshoni, *Studies in the Weekly Parashah: Devarim*, trans. Shmuel Himelstein (Mesorah Publications, 1988), 1261-1269; Elhanan Samet, *Iyyunim be-Parashot ha-Shavua*, third series (Yediot Aharonot, 2012), 11-38.

[10] See further discussion in Hayyim Angel, “‘The Chosen People’: An Ethical Challenge,” in *Creating Space Between Peshat and Derash: A Collection of Studies on Tanakh* (Ktav & Sephardic Publication Foundation, 2011).