

Summary

Points discussed during our learning:

- Two different words *yatzar* and *bara* used to describe creation of man. **(1)**
 - *Yatzar* = creation from pre-existing matter. Man is created from "dust of the earth."
 - *Bara* = creation *ex nihilo*. Man's *tzelem Elokim*, or "image of God" is created *ex nihilo*.
- Rambam defines *tzelem Elokim* as human intellect and abstract perception. **(2, 5)**
 - In this respect, people are made in the "image" of God, and can be similar to him.
 - Our *tzelem Elokim* is apparently similar to God, but not in truth. We need to explore this further.
 - Because our intellect is bound to our physical body, human intellect has a definite limit.
- Man consists of two components: physical matter and the Divine image.
 - Man has the potential to express either side based on actions and choices. **(3, 4)**
- *Hagigah 14b* - Four great *tana'im* and their venture into esoteric study. **(6)**
 - The study of "*pardes*" is the substance of 5 mitvot: knowledge of God, exclusive belief in God, unity of God, love of God, and fear of God.
 - Pre-requisite study is that of Talmud and *halakha*, serving to first "settle the mind."**(7)**
- Moshe is a paradigm for the upper limits of Man's capacity for spiritual achievement. **(10-12)**
 - Rambam understands that if Moshe could not achieve true knowledge of God's essence, it is impossible for Mankind in general. Moshe did achieve the most authentic knowledge of God that is humanly possible.