TORAH VEHA'ARETZ
INSTITUTE

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The Institute for Torah and the Land of Israel

"Each According To Its Species"
Why Is Kila'im Forbidden? (Part 1)

In the first chapter of *B'reishit* the word מינהו (its species), in its various forms, appears 10 times: three in reference to plants and seven in reference to animals. It is obvious that the Torah purposely emphasizes that in the creation of the world, each species is unique and distinct from others.

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The implications of these verses is the prohibition of *kil'aim*: we may not physically combine two different species: it is forbidden to cross-breed animals (such as a horse and a donkey, producing a mule—*kilei beheimah*). It is similarly forbidden to graft two types of trees together (*kilei ilan*).

Ramban explains that the world was created with different species. When people combine different species, they change and essentially nullify G-d's creation. Sefer Hachinuch writes similarly: *kila'im* is prohibited since the act of combining different species demonstrates that we want to replace G-d's creation. Moreover, it is a statement that G-d's creations are deficient, and we are trying to change them.

Maharal asks: isn't the entire purpose of man's creation to develop G-d's world and improve it? Why, then, would sophistication through *kil'aim* be considered negating G-d's creation?

Maharal's question is further pronounced in light of modern agriculture, where grafting trees is an ever-sophisticating process—to the point that the vast majority of fruit trees today are grafted. While certain trees are grafted onto similar species (not halachically problematic), in many cases dissimilar species are grafted onto one another.

Grafting improves both the quality and quantity of crops, making the Maharal's question all the more relevant: Why not? Does G-d not want us to improve the trees and fruit in His wonderful world? How is this different from other areas, where humans build, develop, invent, and sophisticate the world? Next week we will attempt to tackle this difficult question. ∎