

SHABBAT LEARNING MATERIAL

PARSHAT BEREISHIT

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29 TISHREI 5787



YESHIVA MIZRACHI
ישיבה מזרחי



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Bereishit in a Nutshell (Chabad.org)

The name of the Parshah, "Bereishit," means "In the beginning" and it is found in Genesis 1:1.

G-d creates the world in six days. On the first day He makes darkness and light. On the second day He forms the heavens, dividing the "upper waters" from the "lower waters." On the third day He sets the boundaries of land and sea, and calls forth trees and greenery from the earth. On the fourth day He fixes the position of the sun, moon and stars as timekeepers and illuminators of the earth. Fish, birds and reptiles are created on the fifth day; land animals, and then the human being, on the sixth. G-d ceases work on the seventh day, and sanctifies it as a day of rest.

G-d forms the human body from the dust of the earth, and blows into his nostrils a "living soul." Originally Man is a single person, but deciding that "it is not good that man be alone," G-d takes a "side" from the man, forms it into a woman, and marries them to each other.

Adam and Eve are placed in the Garden of Eden, and commanded not to eat from the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." The serpent persuades Eve to violate the command, and she shares the forbidden fruit with her husband. Because of their sin, it is decreed that man will experience death, returning to the soil from which he was formed, and that all gain will come only through struggle and hardship. Man is banished from the Garden.

Eve gives birth to two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain quarrels with Abel and murders him, and becomes a rootless wanderer. A third son, Seth, is born to Adam; Seth's eighth-generation descendant, Noah, is the only righteous man in a corrupt world.

Organize and Prioritize (Aish.com)

by Rabbi Eli Scheller

In the beginning of God's creating... (1:1)

God began the Torah with the word *Bereishis* – in the beginning – which starts with the Hebrew letter *Beis*. The Midrash teaches that the first Hebrew letter *Aleph* was dissatisfied that it had been passed over. It complained, "I am the very first letter and yet I was left out at the beginning of the Torah!" God promised the *Aleph*, "You will see justice done. When I give the Torah to my children at Mount Sinai, I shall commence with the letter *Aleph*." When God gave the Ten Commandments to the Jewish people He placed an *Aleph* at the beginning: *Anochi* – I am the Lord your God...

Why did God ignore the *Aleph* at the beginning of the Torah, only reinstating it to its proper position when giving the Torah to the Jewish nation?

Living in the created physical world, we tend to give priority to our physical needs. We make sure to find a good job, a nice home, and as many conveniences as possible. Only once these points are settled, we try to find a shul or yeshiva in which to learn Torah and pray, regardless of our actual standards – near where we live. We attach the "*Aleph*" – the primary concern – to the attainment of a satisfactory material standard of living. The Torah is relegated to "*Beis*", secondary rank. However, as the Mishnah states: learning Torah must be man's primary occupation. One's work schedule should be designed to accommodate one's Torah learning, not vice versa. God therefore left out the *Aleph*, and deliberately prefaced the count of the six days of creation of the physical world with a *Beis*. The "*Aleph*", our primary concern, must be for the Torah.

The God of Creation and the Land of Israel

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ZT"l

There are times when an ancient text seems to speak more directly to where we are now than to the time when it was first written. Rarely has that been truer than in the case of the famous first comment of Rashi to the Torah, to the words: "In the beginning, God created..."[1] Let us listen to it in its entirety:

Rabbi Isaac said: The Torah should have begun with the verse, "This month shall be to you the first of months" (Exodus 12:2) which was the first commandment given to all of Israel. Why then did it begin with, "In the beginning"? It began thus because it wished to convey the idea contained in the verse (Psalm 111:6), "The power of His acts He told to His people, in order to give them the estate of the nations." So that if the nations of the world will say to Israel, "You are robbers because you took by force the land of the seven nations," Israel might reply to them, "The whole earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He. He created it and gave it to them, and by His will He took it from them and gave it to us." (Rashi Bereishit 1:1)

Rashi might have been speaking directly to us today, in our age of anti-Zionism, boycotts, sanctions, and divestments against Israel (BDS), and even a growing questioning of the State's right to exist.

Rashi (1040-1105) lived in Troyes, Northern France, at a time when the position of Jews under Christian rule was beginning to worsen severely. He lived through the most traumatic event of that period, the massacre of Jewish communities in the Lorraine at the beginning of the First Crusade in 1096. Jews in his day were persecuted and powerless. They had no realistic hope of imminent return to the land.

As to the logic of Rabbi Isaac's interpretation, it seems strained. Why did the Torah begin with Creation? Because that is a fundamental of Jewish faith. Rabbi Isaac seems to be arguing that since the Torah is primarily a book of commandments, it should begin with the first command – at least the first given to the Israelites as a collective entity. But clearly not everything in the Torah is command. Much of it is narrative. So Rabbi Isaac's question is odd.

So too is his answer. Why relate creation to a challenge to the Israelites' right to the Land? Why, if Rabbi Isaac's interest is solely in commandments, not give the obvious halachic answer: the story of Creation is told to explain the command to keep Shabbat. Considered thus, it is all highly perplexing.

In fact, however, Rabbi Isaac is making a very cogent point indeed. Some years ago a secular scholar, David Clines, wrote a book entitled *The Theme of the Pentateuch*. His conclusion was that the single overarching theme of the Five Books of Moses is the promise of the land. That is surely the case. There are sub-themes, but this dominates all others.

Seven times in Bereishit God promises the land to Abraham, once to Isaac, and three times to Jacob. The rest of the Mosaic books, from the beginning of Exodus when Moses hears about "the land flowing with milk and honey," to the end of Deuteronomy, when he sees it from afar, is about Israel, the destination of the Jewish journey.

There is a fundamental rule of literary form. Chekhov said: if there is a gun on stage in the first act of a play, it must be part of the plot or it should not be there at all. If the central theme of the Mosaic books is the promise of the Land, the beginning must in some way be related to it. Hence Rabbi Isaac's point: the Creation narrative must have to do with the Land of Israel. What could this be if not to signal that the promise in virtue of which the Jewish people holds title to the land comes from the highest conceivable source, the sovereign of the universe, the Author of all.

No sooner have we said this than an obvious question arises. Why should a religion be tied to a land? It sounds absurd, especially in the context of monotheism. Surely the God of everywhere can be served anywhere.

Here too Rabbi Isaac steers us in the right direction. He reminds us of the first commandment given to the Israelites as a people, as they were about to leave Egypt:

"This month shall be to you the first of months. it shall be the first of the months of the year for you." (Exodus 12:2)

Judaism is not primarily about personal salvation, the relationship between the individual and God in the inner recesses of the soul. It is about collective redemption, about what it is to create a society that is the opposite of Egypt, where the strong enslave the weak. The Torah is the architectonic of a society in which my freedom is not purchased at the cost of yours, in which justice rules, and each individual is recognised as bearing the image of God. It is about the truths Thomas Jefferson called self-evident, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." It is about what John F Kennedy meant when he spoke of "the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God."

We are social animals. Therefore we find God in society. That is what we discover when we reflect on the basic structure of the Torah's many commands. They include laws about the administration of justice, the conduct of war, ownership of land, employer-employee relationships, the welfare of the poor, the periodic cancellation of debts, in short, an entire legislative structure for the creation of what Rav Aaron Lichtenstein called 'societal beatitude'.

Laws shape a society, and a society needs space. A sacred society needs sacred space, a holy land. Hence Jews and Judaism need their own land.

In four thousand years, for much of which Jews lived in exile, the people of the covenant were scattered over the face of the earth. There is no land in which Jews have never lived. Yet in all those centuries, there was only one land where they were able to do what almost every other nation takes for granted: create their own society in accordance with their own beliefs.

The premise of the Torah is that God must be found somewhere in particular if He is to be found everywhere in general. Just as, in the Creation narrative, Shabbat is holy time, so in the Torah as a whole, Israel is holy space. That is why, in Judaism, religion is tied to a land, and a land is linked to a religion.

But now we come to the most perplexing part of Rabbi Isaac's comment. Recall what he said: *Should anyone call into question the Jewish people's right to the land of Israel, the Jewish people can reply, "God created the universe. He divided earth into many lands, languages, and landscapes. But one small land He gave to the Jewish people. That is our title to the Land."*

How on earth could Rabbi Isaac think of this as a compelling answer? Almost inevitably, someone who challenges the Jewish people's right to the Land of Israel will not believe in the God of Israel. So how will a reference to Israel's God make Israel's case?

Ironically, we know the answer to that question. Today the overwhelming majority of those who challenge Israel's right to exist believe in Israel's God, that is to say, the God of Abraham. They belong to the large family of faith known as the Abrahamic monotheisms.

To them, we must humbly say: when it comes to political conflict, let us search for a political solution. Let us work together in pursuit of peace. But when it comes to religion, let us not forget that without Judaism, there would be no Christianity and no Islam. Unlike Christianity and Islam, Judaism never sought to convert the world and never created an empire. All it sought was one tiny land, promised to the Children of Israel by the Creator of the universe, in whom Jews, Christians, and Muslims all believe.

Sadly, Rabbi Isaac was right, and Rashi was right to quote him at the beginning of his Torah commentary. The Jewish people would be challenged on their right to the land, by people who claimed to worship the same God. That same God summons us today to the dignity of the human person, the sanctity of human life, and the imperative of peace. And that same God tells us that in a world of 82 Christian nations and 56 Muslim ones, there *is* room for one small Jewish State.

[1] This essay was originally written by Rabbi Sacks in September 2010. Years later when he began his translation of the entire Torah, he offered a radical new translation of the first phrase of the Torah: *Bereishit bara Elokim...* – “*When God began creating...*”. The full translation by Rabbi Sacks is available in the Koren Tanakh: Magerman edition.



AROUND THE Shabbat Table

1. What can we learn from knowing how God created the world?
2. Do you think there is a difference between Judaism practised in the diaspora compared to Judaism kept by those living in the Land of Israel?
3. Do you think the State of Israel today is “a society that is the opposite of ancient Egypt”?



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הַמִּזְרָחִי HAMIZRACHI

A project of the Mizrahi Schools Department

PARSHA WEEKLY

YOUTH EDITION

PARSHAT BEREISHIT 5787 • 2026

PARSHA SUMMARY

Bereishit opens with Hashem's creation of the world in six days. On Day One, Hashem separated light from darkness. On Day Two, the sky was created. On Day Three, the waters were gathered together, dry land appeared, and plants and trees began to grow. On Day Four, Hashem created the Sun, Moon, and stars to rule over day and night and to mark days, years, and special times. On Day Five, all sea creatures and many different types of birds were created. Finally, on Day Six, Hashem created the land animals and mankind. On Day Seven, Hashem rested from His work of creation.

After forming Adam, Hashem decided that he needed a companion and created Chava. Adam and Chava are placed in the Garden of Eden, where they are given one rule: not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Unfortunately, Chava is persuaded to eat from the tree by the snake, and she gives Adam some of the fruit to eat too. Hashem sees what they have done, and they are banished from the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Chava go on to have two sons, Kayin and Hevel. These are the first siblings we hear about in the Torah. We hear a story about them when they each bring an offering to Hashem. Hashem accepts Hevel's offering, while Kayin becomes extremely angry. His anger eventually leads him to kill his brother.

The Torah then lists ten generations from Adam to Noach, with many people living extraordinarily long lives. By the time of Noach, Hashem sees how deeply wicked mankind has become and is grieved by what humanity has become. He declares that He will wipe out mankind, together with the animals, creeping creatures, and birds of the sky.



MESSAGE FROM ISRAEL

There is room for two stars

During creation the Torah describes the sun and moon as "the two great lights." But soon afterward, the sun is called the "great light" and the moon "the small one." What happened?

Rashi explains that the moon complained that two rulers could not share the same crown – you can't have two big lights in the sky, only one. So, Hashem shrunk the moon.

This contains an important lesson. Sometimes we think that there isn't room for someone else to shine with us – that there isn't room for someone else's ideas and talents. If they shine, we shine less. This is not true. There is room for different people to stand out according to their unique talents – it doesn't take away from us, it adds to us. The combined light is now brighter and better.

May we all find space for each other to be our best and to shine our special light in the world.

Shabbat Shalom
Rabbi Doron Perez
Executive Chairman, World Mizrahi



Test Your Knowledge



Answers to the questions from Kids Corner in the Sukkot HaMizrachi:

1. Coming to/living in Israel and the mikvah!
2. Simchat Beit HaShoeva.
3. We circle the bimah with the Torah scrolls to show our love and joy for the Torah.

Dedicated by the Moshal family to the life and legacy of our family patriarch John Hillel Moshal
יוחנן הלל בן מרדכי ז"ל – a generous lifelong supporter of Jewish education.

QUESTIONS ON THE PARSHA

1. What did Hashem create on Day One, and what did He separate?
2. Who were the first two people Hashem created?
3. On which day of Creation were the sun, moon, and stars created?
4. What were the names of Adam and Chava's two sons?
5. Whose offering did Hashem accept, and how did his brother react afterward?
6. Why did Hashem create Chava as a helper for Adam?
7. What were the different occupations of Kayin and Hevel?
8. Who found favor in Hashem's eyes at the end of the parsha?

LET'S TALK PARSHA

Enjoying the Journey

In this week's parsha, Hashem commands the earth to produce an "עץ פְּרִי" – a "fruit tree." But when the earth actually produces trees, the Torah says "עץ נוֹשֵׂה פְּרִי" – "a tree that produces fruit" (Bereishit 1:11–12). Rashi explains that originally, the tree itself was supposed to taste like its fruit. Rav Kook sees a deeper lesson in this. The tree represents the journey toward a goal, while the fruit represents the goal itself. We often enjoy the "fruit": getting a good grade, winning a game, finishing a project, or finally mastering something difficult. But the "tree" – studying, practicing, training, and working – can feel frustrating. Rav Kook teaches that ideally, we should learn to find meaning and even enjoyment in the journey itself. Reaching the goal matters, but so does everything we become along the way.

Ari's basketball team has an important tournament coming up. Their coach wants them to spend most practices repeating basic drills. Ari finds them boring and thinks they should spend more time playing full games, which are much more fun. His friend Noam says the drills are exactly what will make them better players. Should Ari simply push through the boring practices because they will help him win, or should he try to change the way the team trains?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
Practice or Play?

TALK ABOUT IT

Tree and Fruit: What do the tree and fruit represent in Rav Kook's explanation?

Only the Result? Is it a problem if Ari cares mainly about winning?

Changing the Journey: Could Ari make the drills more enjoyable without making them less useful?

Worth the Effort: Does every important goal need an enjoyable journey?

Your Own "Tree": What is something you enjoy achieving but do not enjoy preparing for?

A Taste of the Haftarah

מָחָר חֹדֶשׁ וְנוֹפְקֶדֶת כִּי יִפְקֵד מוֹשֶׁכֶּךָ
(שמואל א כ:זח)

"Tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh, and you will be noticed, because your seat will be missing." (Shmuel I 20:18)

Missing – and Remembered

Yonatan knows that when David does not appear at King Shaul's Rosh Chodesh meal, his empty seat will immediately be noticed.

Interestingly, the pasuk uses two forms of the same Hebrew root, פִּקַּד, with different meanings: David will be remembered or noticed because his place is missing. The Haftarah begins with the words מָחָר חֹדֶשׁ, "tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh," which is why it is read this Shabbat, when Rosh Chodesh begins the next day.

TAKE IT WITH YOU

What is one "journey" in your life where you could try to notice more meaning in the process, not only the result?



WORD OF THE WEEK

רַחֲפָן – Rachfan – Drone

וְרוּחַ אֱ-לֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם (Bereshit 1:2)

The Hebrew word רַחֲפָן (rachfan) means “drone.” The root of the word is ר־ח־פ (Resh-Chet-Peh), which relates to hovering or floating above something. In our pasuk, the Torah says that the spirit of Hashem was מְרַחֶפֶת (merachefet) over the water. Modern Hebrew uses the same root for a רַחֲפָן, because a drone can hover in one place in the air. The verb לְרַחֵף is still used today with the same basic meaning.



THIS MONTH IN JEWISH HISTORY

30 Tishrei

Israel's First Computer (5716/1955)

At the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, WEIZAC, Israel's first electronic computer, began operating. It was also one of the earliest computers of its kind in the world. Led by mathematician Prof. Chaim Leib Pekeris, the project gave Israeli scientists a powerful new tool for complex research. For six years, WEIZAC was the only computer operating in Israel, helping researchers in mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Its success became an important early step in Israel's growth as a center of science and technology.



PICTURE THE PASUK!

Look carefully – can you work out which pasuk from this week's parsha is hidden in the picture?

Send us the pasuk reference and the words of the pasuk to hamizrachiyouth@mizrachi.org to be entered into our monthly raffle!



PARSHA ANSWERS

1. Hashem created light and separated the light from the darkness.
2. Adam and Chava.
3. Day Four.
4. Kayin and Hevel.
5. Hevel's offering. Kayin became angry and later killed Hevel.
6. Because Hashem said it was not good for Adam to be alone; Chava was created to be his partner and companion.
7. Kayin worked the land, while Hevel was a shepherd.
8. Noah.

JOURNEY THROUGH ISRAEL



PHOTO: YNHOCKEY/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The name Petach Tikva, meaning “Opening of Hope,” comes from the pasuk וְאֶת־עֵמֶק עֶכּוֹר לְפֶתַח – תִּקְוָה (Hoshea 2:17). The founders originally hoped to establish their community near Emek Achor, mentioned in that very pasuk. When that plan did not work out, they kept the hopeful name for the settlement they eventually founded elsewhere.

Petach Tikva (פֶּתַח תִּקְוָה)

Petach Tikva, just east of Tel Aviv, began in 1878 when a group of observant Jews from Yerushalayim set out to build a farming community in Eretz Yisrael. Among its founders were Yoel Moshe Salomon, Yehoshua Stampfer, and David Gutmann. On 7 Cheshvan 5639, the first settlers ceremonially plowed the first furrow. Life was extremely difficult: malaria struck the settlers, early harvests failed, and for a time they had to leave the area. But they returned and rebuilt the community, and its farms and citrus orchards eventually flourished. Petach Tikva became known as “Em HaMoshavot” – the Mother of the Moshavot, because of its important place in the beginnings of modern Jewish agricultural settlement. The small farming village eventually grew into one of Israel's major cities.

קום התהלך בארץ

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE: CAN YOU FIND 10 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THESE TWO PARSHA PICTURES?



יָבֵא קֵינוּ מִפְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה...וְהִבֵּל הִבֵּי־אֵשׁ... (בראשית ד:ט)