

B'reishit Bet

[Genesis]

(4)1:The man knew Chavah his wife. She conceived, and gave birth to Kayin, and said, "I have gotten a man with the LORD's help.

2:Again she gave birth, to his brother Hevel. Hevel was a keeper of sheep, but Kayin was a tiller of the ground.

3:As time passed, it happened that Kayin brought an offering to the LORD from the fruit of the ground.

4:Hevel also brought some of the firstborn of his flock and of the fat of it. The LORD respected Hevel and his offering,

5:but He didn't respect Kayin and his offering. Kayin was very angry, and the expression on his face fell.

6:The LORD said to Kayin, "Why are you angry? Why has the expression of your face fallen?"

7:If you do well, will it not be lifted up? If you don't do well, sin crouches at the door. Its desire is for you, but you are to rule over it.

8:Kayin said to Hevel, his brother. It happened, when they were in the field, that Kayin rose up against Hevel, his brother, and killed him.

9:The LORD said to Kayin, "Where is Hevel, your brother?" He said, "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

10:He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries to Me from the ground.

11:Now you are cursed because of the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

12:From now on, when you till the ground, it won't yield its strength to you. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth.

13:Kayin said to the LORD, "My punishment is greater than I can bear.

14:Behold, You have driven me out this day from the surface of the ground. I will be hidden from Your face, and I will be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth. It will happen that whoever finds me will kill me.

15:The LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever slays Kayin, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." The LORD appointed a sign for Kayin, lest anyone finding him should strike him.

(4)וַיֵּדַע אָדָם יָדַע אֶת-חַוָּה

אֶשְׁתּוֹ וַתְּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת-קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת-יְהוָה: וַתִּסֹּף לָלֶדֶת אֶת-אָחִיו אֶת-הֵבֶל וַיְהִי-הֵבֶל

רֹעֵה צֹאן וְקַיִן הָיָה עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה: וַיְהִי מִקְצֵי יָמִים וַיָּבֵא קַיִן מִפְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה מִנְחָה לַיהוָה: וַהֲבֵל הֵבִיא

גַּם-הוּא מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנוֹ וּמִחֲלֵבֶהֶן וַיִּשַׁע יְהוָה אֶל-הֵבֶל וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ: וְאֶל-קַיִן וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה

וַיִּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד וַיִּפְּלוּ פָּנָיו: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-קַיִן לָמָּה חָרָה לָךְ וְלָמָּה נָפְלוּ פָּנֶיךָ: הֲלוֹא אִם-תֵּיטִיב

שְׂאֵת וְאִם לֹא תֵיטִיב לַפֶּתַח חַטָּאת רֹבֵץ וְאֵלֶיךָ תִּשְׁוֹקֶתוּ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל-בּוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל-הֵבֶל

אָחִיו וַיְהִי בִּהְיוֹתָם בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּקָּם קַיִן אֶל-הֵבֶל אָחִיו וַיַּהַרְגֵהוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-קַיִן אֵי הֵבֶל אָחֶיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר

לֹא יָדַעְתִּי הֲשֹׁמֵר אָחִי אָנֹכִי: וַיֹּאמֶר מַה עָשִׂיתָ קוֹל דְּמֵי אָחֶיךָ צֹעֲקִים אֵלַי מִן-הָאֲדָמָה: וַעֲתָה אָרֹר

אֶתְּךָ מִן-הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר פָּצְתָה אֶת-פִּיהָ לְקַחַת אֶת-דְּמֵי אָחֶיךָ מִיָּדְךָ: כִּי תֵעָבֵד אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה לֹא-

תִּסֹּף תִּתֶּן-כֹּחָהּ לָךְ נֶעַ וְנָד תִּהְיֶה בְּאָרְצְךָ: וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל-יְהוָה גְּדוֹל עֲוֹנִי מִנְּשׂוּאָה: הֵן גִּרְשִׁית אֹתִי הַיּוֹם

מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וּמִפְּנֵיךָ אֶסְתָּר וְהִיִּיתִי נֶעַ וְנָד בְּאָרְץ וַיְהִי כָל-מִצְאָי יַהַרְגֵנִי: וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יְהוָה לְכוּ

כָּל-הַרְגֵי קַיִן שִׁבְעָתַיִם יִקָּם וַיִּשֶׂם יְהוָה לְקַיִן אוֹת

16:Kayin went out from the LORD's presence, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.

17:Kayin knew his wife. She conceived, and gave birth to Chanoch. He built a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Chanoch.

לְבִלְתִּי הַכּוֹת־אֹתוֹ כָּל־מִצְאוֹ׃¹⁶ וַיֵּצֵא קַיִן מִלְּפָנֵי יְהוָה
וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶרֶץ־נוֹד קִדְמַת־עֵדֶן׃¹⁷ וַיֵּדַע קַיִן אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ
וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־חֲנוֹךְ וַיְהִי
הָעִיר כְּשֵׁם בְּנוֹ חֲנוֹךְ׃

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(4)1:וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת-חַוָּה
אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתְּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת-קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת-
יְהוָה: וַתִּסֶּף לָלֶדֶת אֶת-אָחִיו וַיְהִי-הֶבֶל
רֹעֵה צֹאן וְקַיִן הָיָה עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה: וַיְהִי מִקְצֵי יָמִים
וַיָּבֵא קַיִן מִפְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה מִנְחָה לַיהוָה: וְהֶבֶל הֵבִיא
גַּם-הוּא מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנוֹ וּמִחֲלִבְהֵן וַיִּשַׁע יְהוָה אֶל-
הֶבֶל וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ: וְאֶל-קַיִן וְאֶל-מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה
וַיִּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד וַיִּפְּלוּ פָּנָיו: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-קַיִן
לָמָּה חָרָה לָךְ וְלָמָּה נָפְלוּ פָּנֶיךָ: הֲלוֹא אִם-תֵּיטִיב
שְׂאֵת וְאִם לֹא תֵיטִיב לַפֶּתַח חַטָּאת רֹבֵץ וְאֵלֶיךָ
תִּשׁוּקָתוֹ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל-בּוֹ: וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל-הֶבֶל
אָחִיו וַיְהִי בִּהְיוֹתָם בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּקָּם קַיִן אֶל-הֶבֶל אָחִיו
וַיַּהַרְגֵהוּ: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-קַיִן אֵי הֶבֶל אָחִיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר
לֹא יָדַעְתִּי הֲשֹׁמֵר אָחִי אָנֹכִי: וַיֹּאמֶר מַה עָשִׂיתָ קוֹל
דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ צֹעֲקִים אֵלַי מִן-הָאֲדָמָה: וַעֲתָה אָרוּר
אַתָּה מִן-הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר פָּצְתָה אֶת-פִּיהָ לְקַחַת
אֶת-דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ מִיְדֶךָ: כִּי תֵעָבֵד אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה לֹא-
תִסֶּף תֵּת-כֹּחָהּ לָךְ נָע וָנָד תִּהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ: וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן
אֶל-יְהוָה גָּדוֹל עֲוֹנִי מִנְשׂוּאָה: הֵן גֵּרֶשְׁתָּ אֹתִי הַיּוֹם
מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וּמִפְּנֵיךָ אֶסְתָּר וְהָיִיתִי נָע וָנָד
בָּאָרֶץ וַיְהִי כָל-מִצְאָי יַהַרְגֵנִי: וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יְהוָה
לְכוּ
כָל-הָרֶג קַיִן שִׁבְעָתַיִם יִקָּם וַיִּשֶׂם יְהוָה לְקַיִן אוֹת

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וַיֵּצֵא	קַיִן	מִלְּפָנֵי	יְהוָה	:	כָּל־	מֵצְאוֹ:	הִכּוֹת־	אֶת־	לְבַלְתִּי	
וַיֵּדַע	קַיִן	אֶת־	אִשְׁתּוֹ	:	קִדְמַת־	עֵדוֹן:	בְּאֶרֶץ־	נוֹד	וַיָּשֶׁב	
וַיִּבְנֶה	עִיר	וַיִּקְרָא	שֵׁם	וַיְהִי	אֶת־	חֲנוֹךְ	וַתֵּלֶד	וַתֵּהָר	וַתֵּהָר	
							כְּשֵׁם	בְּנוֹ	חֲנוֹךְ:	הָעִיר

וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת־חַוָּה
 אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתְּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־
 יְהוָה׃² וַתִּסָּף לָלֶדֶת אֶת־אָחִיו וַיְהִי־הֶבֶל
 רֹעֵה צֹאן וְקַיִן הָיָה עֹבֵד אֲדָמָה׃³ וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ יָמִים
 וַיָּבֵא קַיִן מִפְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה מִנְחָה לַיהוָה׃⁴ וְהֶבֶל הֵבִיא
 גַּם־הוּא מִבְּכֹרוֹת צֹאנוֹ וּמִחֲלִבְהֵן וַיִּשַׁע יְהוָה אֶל־
 הֶבֶל וְאֶל־מִנְחָתוֹ׃⁵ וְאֶל־קַיִן וְאֶל־מִנְחָתוֹ לֹא שָׁעָה
 וַיִּחַר לְקַיִן מְאֹד וַיִּפְּלוּ פָּנָיו׃⁶ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־קַיִן
 לָמָּה חָרָה לָךְ וְלָמָּה נָפְלוּ פָּנֶיךָ׃⁷ הֲלוֹא אִם־תֵּיטִיב
 שְׂאֵת וְאִם לֹא תֵיטִיב לִפְתַּח חַטָּאת רֹבֵץ וְאֵלֶיךָ
 תִּשׁוּקָתוֹ וְאַתָּה תִּמְשָׁל־בּוֹ׃⁸ וַיֹּאמֶר קַיִן אֶל־הֶבֶל
 אָחִיו וַיְהִי בִּהְיוֹתָם בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיִּקָּם קַיִן אֶל־הֶבֶל אָחִיו
 וַיַּהַרְגֵהוּ׃⁹ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־קַיִן אַי הֶבֶל אָחֶיךָ וַיֹּאמֶר
 לֹא יָדַעְתִּי הֲשֹׁמֵר אָחִי אָנֹכִי׃¹⁰ וַיֹּאמֶר מַה עָשִׂיתָ קוֹל
 דְּמֵי אָחֶיךָ צֹעֲקִים אֵלַי מִן־הָאֲדָמָה׃¹¹ וַעֲתָה אָרוּר

אֶתְּהָ מִן־הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר פָּצַתָּה אֶת־פִּיהָ לְקַחַת
אֶת־דְּמֵי אַחִיךָ מִיָּדְךָ׃ כִּי¹² תַעֲבֹד אֶת־הָאָדָמָה לֹא־
תִסָּף תִּת־כֹּחַהּ לָךְ נֶעַ וְנָד תִּהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ׃ **וַיֹּאמֶר** קַיִן
אֶל־יְהוָה גָּדוֹל עֲוֹנִי מִנְּשׂוֹא׃ ¹⁴הֵן גַּרְשֵׁת אֶתִּי הַיּוֹם
מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָדָמָה וּמִפְּנֵיךָ אֶסְתָּר וְהֵייתִי נֶעַ וְנָד
בָּאָרֶץ וְהִיא כָל־מִצְאֵי יְהִרְגֵנִי׃ **וַיֹּאמֶר** לוֹ יְהוָה לִכֹּן
כָּל־הֵרֶג קַיִן שְׁבַע־עֲתִים יִקָּם וַיֵּשֶׁם יְהוָה לְקַיִן אוֹת
לְבִלְתִּי הַכּוֹת־אֹתוֹ כָּל־מִצְאוֹ׃ ¹⁶וַיֵּצֵא קַיִן מִלְּפָנֵי יְהוָה
וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶרֶץ־נֹד קְדַמ־תְּעֹדֹן׃ ¹⁷וַיֵּדַע קַיִן אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ
וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־חֲנוֹךְ וַיְהִי בְנֵה עֵיר וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם
הָעֵיר כְּשֵׁם בְּנוֹ חֲנוֹךְ׃

והאדם ידע את חוה
אשתו ותהר ותכל את קין ותאמר קניתי איש את
יהוה ותסף כלדות את אחיו את הבל ויהי הבל
רעה צאן וקין היה עבד אדמה ויהי מקץ ימים
ויבא קין מפרי האדמה מגוה ליהוה והבל הביא
גם הוא מבכרות צאנו ומזלבהן וישע יהוה אל
הבל ואל מגוזתו ואל קין ואל מגוזתו לא שעה
ויזר לקין מאד ויפלו פגיו ויאמר יהוה אל קין
למה זרה כך ולמה גפלו פגך הלא אם תיטיב
שאת ואם לא תיטיב לפתח חטאת רבץ ואליך
תשוקתו ואתה תמשל בו ויאמר קין אל הבל
אחיו ויהי בהיותם בשדה ויקם קין אל הבל אחיו
ויהרגהו ויאמר יהוה אל קין אי הבל אחיך ויאמר
לא ידעתי השמר אחי אנכי ויאמר מה עשית קול
דמי אחיך צעקים אלי מן האדמה ועתה ארור

אתה מן האדמה אשר פצתה את פיה לַקְחוּת
את דמי אוזיך מידך כי תעבד את האדמה לא
תסוף תת כוחה כך גַע וְגַד תהיה בארץ ויאמר קיין
אל יהוה גדול עוֹנִי מַעֲשׂוֹא הֵן גִּרְשֵׁת אֶתִי הַיּוֹם
מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וּמִפְּנִיךָ אֶסְתֵּר וְהִיִּיתִי גַע וְגַד
בְּאֶרֶץ וְהִיָּה כֹל מַעֲשֵׂי יְהִרְגֵנִי וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יְהוָה לִכֹּן
כֹּל הָרֶגֶץ קִיין שְׁבַעֲתִים יִקָּם וַיֵּשֶׂם יְהוָה לִקִּין אֹת
לְבַלְתִּי הַכּוֹת אֶתוֹ כֹּל מַעֲשָׂו וַיֵּצֵא קִיין מִכַּפְּנֵי יְהוָה
וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּד קִדְמַת עֵדֶן וַיִּדַע קִיין אֶת אֵשֶׁתוֹ
וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּלֵד אֶת הַזָּנוּךְ וַיְהִי בְּגֵה עֵיר וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם
הָעֵיר כַּשֵּׁם בְּגֵו הַזָּנוּךְ

Beresheet Haftarah

[Isaiah]

(42)5:Thus says the Almighty, the LORD, He who created the heavens, and stretched them forth; He who spread the earth and that which comes out of it; He who gives a soul to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk therein:

6:1, the LORD, have called you in righteousness, and will hold your hand, and will keep you, and give you for a covenant of the people, for a light of the nations;
7:to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and those who sit in darkness out of the prison house.
8:I am the LORD, that is My name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images.

9:Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.
10:Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth; you who go down to the sea, and all that is therein, the isles, and the inhabitants of it.

11:Let the wilderness and the cities of it lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar does inhabit; let the inhabitants of Sela sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains.
12:Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare His praise in the islands.

כָּה־אָמַר הָאֱלֹהִים | יְהוָה בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנוֹטִיָּהֶם רִקְעַת
הָאָרֶץ וְצִאֲצָאֶיהָ נִתַּן נְשֻׁמָּה לְעַם עָלֶיהָ וְרוּחַ לְהִלְכֵיהֶם
בָּהּ: ⁶אֲנִי יְהוָה קָרָאתִיךָ בְּצַדִּיק וְאַחֲזִק בְּיַדְךָ וְאַצְרִיךָ
וְאַתְּנֶנְךָ לְבְרִית עִם לְאוּר גּוֹיִם: ⁷לְפַקֵּחַ עֵינַיִם עוֹרוֹת
לְהוֹצִיא מִמַּסְגָּר אֲסִיר מִבַּיִת כָּלֵא יֹשְׁבֵי חֶשֶׁךְ: ⁸אֲנִי
יְהוָה הוּא שְׁמִי וְכְבוֹדִי לְאַחַר לֹא־אֶתֶן וְתִהְיֶה לִּי
לְפִסְיָלִים: ⁹הִרְאֵשׁנוֹת הַנְּהַר־בָּאוּ וְחִדְּשׁוֹת אֲנִי מַגִּיד
בְּטָרָם תְּצַמְחָנָה אֲשַׁמְיעַ אֶתְכֶם: ¹⁰שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר
חֲדָשׁ תִּהְלְתוּ מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ יוֹרְדֵי הַיָּם וּמִלְאוֹ אֲיִים
וְיֹשְׁבֵיהֶם: ¹¹יִשְׂאוּ מִדְּבַר וְעָרְיוּ חֲצֵרִים תִּשְׁבַּב קִדְר
יִרְנוּ יֹשְׁבֵי סֹלַע מִרְאֵשׁ הָרִים יִצְוּחוּ: ¹²יִשְׁיִמוּ לַיהוָה
כְּבוֹד וְתִהְלְתוּ בְּאֲיִים יִגִּידוּ:

Beresheet Haftarah

[Isaiah]

כֹּה־אָמַר הָאֵל | יְהוָה בּוֹרֵא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנוֹטִיָּהֶם רִקְעַת הָאָרֶץ
וְצִאצְאִיהָ נִתְּן נְשָׁמָה לְעַם עֲלִיָּה וְרוּחַ לְהִלְכִים בָּהּ: ⁶אֲנִי יְהוָה
קִרְאתֶיךָ בְּצֶדֶק וְאַחֲזֶק בְּיָדְךָ וְאַצְרֶכָּה וְאַתְּנֶנֶה לְבְרִית עִם לְאוֹר
גּוֹיִם: ⁷לְפָקֹחַ עֵינַיִם עוֹרוֹת לְהוֹצִיא מִמִּסְגָּר אֲסִיר מִבַּיִת כָּלֵא
יִשְׁבִּי חֶשֶׁךְ: ⁸אֲנִי יְהוָה הוּא שְׁמִי וְכְבוֹדִי לְאַחַר לֹא־אֶתֵּן
וְתִהְלֹתִי לְפָסִילִים: ⁹הֲרֵאֲשָׁנוֹת הִנֵּה־בָאוּ וְחַדְשׁוֹת אֲנִי מַגִּיד
בְּטָרָם תִּצְמַחְנָה אֲשִׁמִּיעַ אֶתְכֶם: ¹⁰שִׁירוּ לַיהוָה שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ
תִּהְלֹתוּ מִקְצֵה הָאָרֶץ יוֹרְדֵי הַיָּם וּמְלֹאוּ אַיִם וַיִּשְׁבְּיָהֶם:
¹¹יִשְׂאוּ מִדְּבַר וְעָרְיוּ חֲצֵרִים תִּשָּׁב קִדְרַיְנוּ יִשְׁבִּי סֶלַע
מִרֵּאשׁ הַרִים יִצְוָחוּ: ¹²יִשְׁיִמוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְתִהְלֹתוּ בְּאֵיִם
יִגִּידוּ:

Parashat B'reishit

Genesis 1:1-6:8

Introductionⁱ

This is how it all starts-with a Torah portion that poses a lot of questions. God creates the world in six days (right, but how long was a day?). God rests on the seventh day, which is how Shabbat gets started. God then creates Adam and Eve and places them in the Garden of Eden. Things are going great until Adam and Eve disobey God by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God kicks them out of the garden. Just when you think things are bad enough, Cain kills his brother, Abel. As punishment, Cain is condemned to wander the earth. And over the next several generations, humanity increasingly descends into violence. Maybe the whole "humanity" project isn't working out as well as God had planned. Stay tuned for God's solution to the problem.

Summary

- ▶ God creates the universe as we know it in a series of six days. (1:1-29)
- ▶ Human beings are created in the image of God. (1:26-28)
- ▶ The seventh day of creation is a day of rest-Shabbat-and God declares it holy. (2:1-3)
- ▶ Human beings had a special role in the Garden of Eden, and God commands them not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The snake convinces Adam and Eve to disobey God's command, with severe consequences that include expulsion from the garden. (2:4-3:24)
- ▶ Cain kills his brother, Abel, and God confronts him. From there, things go downhill fast and humanity increasingly descends into violence. (4:1-6:8)

The Big Ideas

- ▶ The story of creation in Genesis is a moral story, about the nature of the world and of humanity itself. It contains ethical teachings about the pattern of creation and the meaning of the world itself.
- ▶ God created order out of chaos. We don't know how long a day was, but the most important thing is that there is a rhythm and pattern to creation, and that things do not simply happen in a random way.
- ▶ Language is a tool of creation. That is precisely how God uses language: "Let there be ..." The words that we say have the power to create worlds, or, if we use words irresponsibly, they can destroy worlds-and people-as well.
- ▶ Nature must be respected. We are not free to do whatever we want to the earth, its living things, and its resources. Because the earth is God's creation, we must respect it and take care of it, which was one of God's commandments to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.
- ▶ Special times can be holy. The first thing declared holy in the Torah is not a place nor a person, but a time. The seventh day is holy and set apart because God rested on that day. When we rest on Shabbat we too make it a holy-a special-day.
- ▶ Human beings are responsible for one another. The Torah tells us that humanity is made in God's image, and one way of interpreting this is that there is a piece of God within us all. In some deep way, we are all connected to each other and to God, and we should treat one other as we want to be treated, and as God would want to be treated.

ⁱ Rabbi Jeffrey K. Salkin, *JPS B'nai Mitzvah Torah Commentary* (Jewish Publication Society: New York, 2017), 3-4. The introduction, summary, and big ideas all come from Rabbi Salkin's wonderful commentary, which we recommend for every family. This wonderful guide contains themes, D'var Torah ideas, and discussions on the parashah and haftorah that are accessible to teenagers.

Genesis

Beresheet 1:1-6:8 בְּרֵאשִׁית



SYNOPSIS

Beresheet begins with a description of the creation of the world. Creation is described in two accounts. The first account lists the acts of creation day-by-day as follows:

First day: Day and night.

Second day: Sky, earth, and seas.

Third day: Plants, trees, vegetation.

Fourth day: Sun, moon, stars.

Fifth day: Fish, water creatures, birds.

Sixth day: Animals, Adam and Eve.

Seventh day: God rests.

In the second description of creation, Adam is created from the dust of the earth and placed by God in the Garden of Eden. The vegetation blooms, God creates the animals, and Adam names them. God commands Adam not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

In order to create a helper for Adam, God causes him to fall into a deep sleep. Eve is created from one of his ribs.

A serpent in the garden persuades Eve to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve also gives Adam the fruit to eat. As punishment, God banishes them from the Garden of Eden, proclaiming that henceforth they will get their food by hard toil and that women will bear children in pain.

Following their expulsion, Adam and Eve have two sons: Cain and Abel. Cain becomes a farmer and Abel a shepherd. The two brothers bring offerings to God. The offering of Abel is accepted, while the offering of Cain is rejected. In his anger and jealousy, Cain kills Abel. God punishes Cain by making him a ceaseless wanderer. Adam and Eve bear a third son, Seth, from whom Noah descends.

As the portion closes, God expresses dismay at the evil that humanity has perpetrated upon the earth and promises to blot out everything created. Noah, however, finds favor with God.

INSIGHTS FROM THE TRADITION

A *Beresheet* (in the beginning) recounts the creation of the world and the genesis of humanity. On the sixth and final day of creation, God creates the first human being.

Chapter 1:26 reads, "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.'" Why is God speaking in the plural? Rashi explains that it was plural because God consulted the angels, asking them if people should be created. The lesson of this verse, says Rashi, is to teach proper conduct and the virtue of humbleness, namely that the greater should consult with and ask permission from the lesser.

What does it mean to be created in the image of God?

Is it pretentious or boastful of us to think that we are created in the divine image?

In terms of Jewish tradition, what is problematic about referring to God in the plural?

God's actions, according to Rashi, model a democratic style of leadership. In what ways could this work in an office or factory, in a family, in a school, in an organization?

B With the creation of each component of the world, God comments on the goodness of the handiwork. Only with the creation of Adam does God withhold the comment "It is good." Why would the creation of Adam not merit this compliment? Rambam in the *Mishneh Torah*, provides an explanation based on the concept of free will: "Free will is granted to every human being. If a man wants to follow the good path and be good, he has the power to do so; if he wants to follow the evil way and be wicked, he is free to do so The Creator does not decree that a man shall be either good or evil" (*The Book of Knowledge* 5:1-2).

To what extent do you agree with Rambam's statement?

Each of us is responsible for choosing our own behaviors. What influences those choices for you?

C The Talmud points out that in Genesis 2:7, when God formed Adam, the Hebrew word for "created" (*vayitzer*) is spelled with a double *yud*. When God formed the animals,

vayitzer is spelled with only one *yud*. This is to show that people have two inclinations: an inclination to do good (*yetzer ha-tov*) and an inclination to do evil (*yetzer ha-ra*) (*Berachot* 61a).

What are the similarities between the *yetzer ha-tov* and one's conscience?

Of what significance to you is the whole discussion about an extra *yud*?

In what way would you be different if you did not have a *yetzer ha-tov* and a *yetzer ha-ra*?

D In this portion, the goodness of God's creation is juxtaposed with the evil of humanity's deeds — e.g., the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Cain killing Abel, and the corruption of the world in Noah's generation.

What have been some of humanity's good deeds? In what ways has humanity suffered for its evil deeds (such as wars, pollution, crime, lack of education)?

E In *Midrash Tadsheh*, the question is put forth: "Why did the Holy One blessed be He ordain that [Adam] might eat of all the trees of the garden and withhold from him just one of them? So that he should continually remember his Creator and be conscious of the yoke of Him who fashioned him . . ."

What is meant by God's yoke?

Are there elements in your life that remind you daily of your relationship to God?

When do you have to exercise self-control?

F The tree in the Garden of Eden tested the self-discipline of Adam and Eve, a test which they failed. Once Adam and Eve ate of the tree, they had to accept the consequences of their actions: God decreed that Adam and Eve must leave the Garden of Eden, that women would bear children in pain yet still desire their husbands, and that men would have to provide food by hard toil.

God delivers the remedy before the curse. Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden, yet from that time on, they had the ability to procreate and share in the completion of the world (*Genesis Rabbah* 9:7).

Did the punishment (leaving Eden) fit the crime (disobeying God)?

Why would God want to withhold the knowledge of good and evil from people?

In light of the Eden story, how do you view God's relationship to humanity's problems?

G Several commentators have tried to pinpoint the cause of Cain and Abel's argument. A *Midrash (Bereshheet Rabbah)* offers three possibilities:

1. Cain and Abel had divided the world between them and they argued over material possessions.
2. Each brother desired to have the Temple built in his own domain.
3. The brothers were arguing over their mother Eve.

According to Ibn Ezra, when Cain's sacrifice was not accepted, he blamed Abel. The quarrel between the brothers resulted in murder. Rambam felt that the bloodshed was prompted by Cain's desire that the world be built up through his seed.

In one of the most familiar passages in the Bible, God asks Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" And he says, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" Rashi points out that God, of course, knew Abel's fate, yet He entered into conversation with Cain to give him a chance to confess his guilt.

Is there any justification for what Cain did? Can there be greater and lesser sins? If so, whose sin was more severe — Cain's wrongdoing against his brother or Adam's wrongdoing against God?

Are there times when you ask a question to which you already know the answer? Why?

H The text tells us that God regretted creating humankind (*Genesis* 6:6). The Rabbis commented extensively on this verse.

Rabbi Judah said: God created man out of earthly elements, for had God created man out of heavenly elements, he would not have rebelled against God. Rabbi Nehemiah argued that had man been created out of heavenly elements, he would have incited the celestial creatures to revolt just as he has incited the terrestrial beings to revolt.

Rabbi Levi interpreted: God was pleased that man was created from earthly elements so that he will remain in the earth, mortal and subject to burial (*Genesis Rabbah* 27:1).

Do any of these Rabbis think God made a mistake creating humanity? What do you think?

1 For two and a half years, Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel disputed whether God should have created humankind (*Eruvin* 13b). Bet Shammai said it would have been better for people not to have been created, while Bet Hillel held the opposite view. Finally, they took a vote and decided it would have been better had people not been created, but since they were, each person is responsible for examining his/her past and future deeds. (For another *Midrash* on this subject, see #7 below.)

The Talmud does not report the arguments that were used by Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel. What are some of the reasons that might have been used for and against the creation of humanity?

STRATEGIES

ANALYZING THE TEXT

1 Role play various scenes from *Beresheet*. This may help you understand the dilemmas and issues which faced our ancient ancestors.

a. Eve and the Serpent.

Two participants: Eve, serpent.

Reference: Genesis 2:25-3:6.

b. Cain and Abel.

Three participants: Cain, Abel, God.

Reference: Genesis 4:8-16.

c. Adam and Eve after eating the forbidden fruit.

Three participants: Adam, Eve, God.

Reference: Genesis 3:7-24.

General guidelines: Follow the story line as presented in the biblical text, but improvise private reactions and thoughts and share these with the audience. The leader can stop the action at crucial moments to open up group discussion and to assess the characters and their actions.

2 Compare the two accounts of the creation of human beings in Genesis 1:24-31 and Genesis 2:4-24. Identify the similarities and differences. How would you explain the fact that there are two accounts of creation? Do the two accounts answer different questions regarding (a) the nature(s) of the first human beings and/or (b) their relationship to the divine?

3 *Beresheet* tells of humanity's beginnings in a paradise, then depicts its decline. There are four episodes which show this decline: Adam and Eve, Genesis 3; Cain and Abel, Genesis 4; Lemech, Genesis 4:17-22; humanity in general, Genesis 6:1-4. Examine each episode closely. What was the sin in each case? Which sins are most severe? How so? Why would only the wickedness detailed in Genesis 6:5 cause God to regret making people?

4 Make your own list of behaviors which would show the decline of humanity. Include the sins detailed in *Beresheet*. Rank order the sins from least to most severe. If you were God (*kevzyachol*) judging your creation, which actions would cause you to regret making people? Why? (For a related activity, see Genesis, *Noah* #20.)

5 Eve has generally been depicted by a series of negative stereotypes which are commonly applied to women. She is seen as curious, but not very bright, easily influenced, talkative, and having a sort of seductive power over Adam. What basis for this description can you find in the text? Some contemporary feminists are attempting to paint a different picture of Eve based on a modern reading of the same text. According to them, Eve is assertive, inquisitive, honest, and positive (optimistic). Use the text to prove that Eve does or doesn't have these good qualities. Write your own character sketch of Eve.

EXTENDING THE TEXT

6 A lovely *Midrash* on the word *Beresheet* is depicted by Ben Shahn in the book *The Alphabet of Creation: An Ancient Legend from the Zohar*. The *Midrash* recounts how each letter of the Hebrew alphabet unsuccessfully begged to be the first letter of the Torah. Finally, the letter *bet* claims the privilege because all *brachot* (blessings) to God begin with it. Read this *Midrash* aloud from Shahn's book. Use it as a basis for a script and base a dramatic presentation on it. Or, create your own illustrations for the *Midrash*.

7 Should God have made human beings? There are several sources which debate this question. One *Midrash* tells how God took

counsel from the angels before creating human beings. The angels of Truth and Peace opposed the creation, claiming that humanity would be full of lies or would be quarrelsome. The angels of Love and Justice spoke in favor of the creation. They pointed to humanity's loving nature and pursuit of justice. (See *Legends of the Jews* by Ginzberg, Vol. I, pp. 52-54.)

Organize a forensic union to discuss the question, "Should God have made human beings?" Conduct the discussion as follows. Choose two individuals to speak from five to seven minutes for each side of the issue. After these speeches, let members of the audience physically move themselves to the side of the speaker with whom they agree. The sides should then confer for a brief time to prepare a three to five minute rebuttal which is given by the original speaker. After the rebuttal, the participants move to the side with which they now agree. A question period follows in which all the participants from both groups can question each other. After one more move, each group should draft a summary of its point of view which is read aloud. One caution: A discussion format such as this requires people to keep an open mind and allow themselves to be influenced by the speeches.

8 One of the ways in which our sages dealt with questions was to present the answer(s) in a story or parable. Did you ever wonder why animals behave the way they do? Look up the explanations that appear in *The Legends of the Jews* by Ginzberg, pp. 35-41. Using the same format, write your own parable or *Midrash* on the habits or traits of a particular animal (e.g., why an elephant never forgets, why fish make no sound, why chickens can't fly).

9 For an activity about the root word of the name "Adam," see Numbers, *Chukat* #6.

10 In *Beresheet* 2:4, God is called "Adonai Elohim." This is the first place in Torah where these two names of God are used together. Jewish tradition teaches that the name *Elohim* reflects the aspect of divine justice, while the name *Adonai* represents God's merciful qualities. God saw that both qualities are necessary to sustain the world. Make a list of actions which you think make

humanity wicked in God's eyes (see Genesis and Genesis, *Beresheet* #3 and 4). If you were *Elohim* (*kevayachol*) judging your creation, how would you judge these actions you were judging your creation as *Adonai* (*kevayachol*), what would your verdict be? Explain why it was necessary for God to judge the world using the qualities of both mercy and justice — as "Adonai Elohim."

11 The opening paragraph of the *Kiddush* for Friday night comes from Genesis 2:1-3. Do the activity sheet on this blessing in *Hebrew Blessings Ditto Pak*, pp. 12 and 13.

12 Read about various creation stories in *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Testament* by Gaster, pp. 3-7. Create a chart showing the commonalities and differences between these stories. During the discussion bring out the universal questions which the ancients were attempting to answer.

PERSONALIZING THE TEXT

13 *Beresheet* 4:8 begins: "Cain said to his brother Abel . . ." and concludes with the murder of Abel. The conversation that took place between the two brothers and may have led to the murder of Abel is not reported. Imagine you are Cain. Write a diary entry in which you detail this conversation and the motive behind the murder.

14 In Elie Wiesel's book *Messengers of God: Biblical Portraits and Legends*, God speaks to Adam saying, "Look well, Adam! all this immensity was created for your sake alone; be careful, do not destroy anything, for after you there will be no one to repair what you have undone" (p. 9). What human responsibilities are implied by this *Midrash*? How well has humanity fulfilled these responsibilities?

15 Invite a representative from a local conservation group such as Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, Save the Whale, Greenpeace, or a local zoological society to