



## Parasha B'reshith / In the Beginning

B'reshith / Genesis 1:1-6:8

Beit Emet ~ Vancouver, WA

Ben Ehrhardt, Shamash

24 Tishrei, 5774 ~ September 28, 2013

[www.hearoisrael.org](http://www.hearoisrael.org)

This week, we begin a new Torah cycle with **Parasha B'reshith**. Each year I am amazed anew; because the first two parashot (**B'reshith** and **Noach**), which hold so much information and things to contemplate, each five plus chapters long, seem to be studied and dealt with rather quickly. But, it is indeed up to us how deeply we dig in and study. As you have no doubt learned about me; I highly regard and appreciate the depth of study and resulting understanding of the rabbis. Now, while I am a Jew, I am not a member of Chabad. However, the Jewish rabbis and sages have inspired me to seek what the acronym "**ChaBaD**" means: "**Chochmah = Wisdom**", "**Binah = Understanding**" and "**Da'at = Knowledge**".

I don't think we should start this year's Torah cycle without reading what Rabbi Jonathon Sacks (the Chief Rabbi of England) has to share. In his article this week, "[A Living Book](#)", Rabbi Sacks writes, "*It is the most famous, majestic and influential opening of any book in literature: 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.'* What is surpassingly strange is the way Rashi - most beloved of all Jewish commentators - begins his commentary: *Rabbi Isaac said: The Torah should have begun with the verse (Ex. 12:1): 'This month shall be to you the first of the months', which was the first commandment given to Israel.*

*Can we really take this at face value? Did Rabbi Isaac, or for that matter Rashi, seriously suggest that the Book of books might have begun in the middle - a third of the way into Exodus? That it might have passed by in silence the creation of the universe - which is, after all, one of the fundamentals of Jewish faith?*

*Could we understand the history of Israel without its prehistory, the stories of Abraham and Sarah and their children? Could we have understood those narratives without knowing what preceded them: God's repeated disappointment with Adam and Eve, Cain, the generation of the Flood and the builders of the Tower of Babel?*

*The fifty chapters of Genesis together with the opening of Exodus are the source- book of biblical faith. They are as near as we get to an exposition of the philosophy of Judaism. What then did Rabbi Isaac mean? He meant something profound, which we often forget. To understand a book, we need to know to what genre it belongs. Is it history or legend, chronicle*

or myth? To what question is it an answer? A history book answers the question: what happened? A book of cosmology - be it science or myth - answers the question: how did it happen?

What Rabbi Isaac is telling us is that if we seek to understand the Torah, we must read it as Torah, which is to say: law, instruction, teaching, guidance. Torah is an answer to the question: how shall we live? That is why he raises the question as to why it does not begin with the first command given to Israel.

Torah is not a book of history, even though it includes history. It is not a book of science, even though the first chapter of Genesis - as the 19th-century sociologist Max Weber pointed out - is the necessary prelude to science, because it represents the first time people saw the universe as the product of a single creative will, and therefore as intelligible rather than capricious and mysterious. It is, first and last, a book about how to live. Everything it contains - not only commandments but also narratives, including the narrative of creation itself - is there solely for the sake of ethical and spiritual instruction. It moves from the minutest details to the most majestic visions of the universe and our place within it. But it never deviates from its intense focus on the questions: What shall I do? How shall I live? What kind of person should I strive to become? It begins, in Genesis 1, with the most fundamental question of all. As the Psalm (8:4) puts it: "What is man that You are mindful of him?"

So, we open our study this week with the very first word of the Torah, "**B'reshith**" (Beit-reish-aleph-shin-yud-tav), "**In the beginning...**". And, this very first word of Torah, "**B'reshith**" tells a story. The letter "**beit**" as a prefix here means "**in**", "**into**", "**in the**" or "**in a**". Of course, "**beit**" is "**house**" or "**dwelling**". So, with the very first letter of Torah, HaShem draws us "**into**" the "**dwelling**", "**into**" the "**beginning**", "**into**" His "**Word**", a place in which we can and should live. Next is "**reish = beginning**", "**aleph = Master**", "**shin = El Shaddai**", "**yud = hand**" and "**tav = mark or sign**". So, in this opening word "**B'reshith**" we read "**In the beginning, in the Master El Shaddai's Hand is our sign.**" HaShem's Hand is active in our lives and in the world He created. The Creator is active in, and with, His creation. And, that involvement, His hand, is a sign to us that He is our "**El Shaddai**" (Elohim Sufficient) in all life's circumstances. How many times in Scripture does HaShem say that He will provide for us, deliver us and protect us, all the days of our lives?

It's no coincidence, that we read in **Debarim / Deuteronomy 6:8, 11:18**, as well as **Shemot / Exodus 13:9 and 13:16** that the Word of Adonai shall also be a "**sign on our hand**" as well as "**frontlets between our eyes**". I don't want to get too far afield here; but, if we look at just **Debarim 6:6-13**, we'll understand better what Torah is talking about; "**And these Words which I am commanding you today shall be in your heart, and you shall impress them upon your children, and shall speak of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up (in other words, morning, afternoon and night), and shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts (mezuzot) of your house and on your gates. And it shall be, when HaShem your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Avraham, to Yitzaq, and to Ya'aqob, to give you great and good cities which you did not build, and houses filled with all kinds of goods, which you did not fill, and wells dug which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied – be on guard, lest you forget HaShem who brought you out of the land of Mitsrayim, from the house of**

***bondage. Fear HaShem your God (regard Him with Awe) and serve Him, and swear by His Name."***

Also, the numeric value of the letters in "**B'reshith**" is 913 which equals "**totza'tiv**" (tav-vav-tzadee-aleph-tav-yud-vav), or "**the end**". "**Totza'tiv**" appears in the Torah only in **B'midbar / Numbers 34**, and describes the "**end of the borders**" of the inheritance of the Children of Yisra'el. So, also in the beginning, as you read **B'midbar 34**, you see that HaShem set the "**end of the borders**" of Yisra'el.

But, remember too that He did indeed declare another "**end**" in **Yeshayahu / Isaiah 46:9-10**; "**Remember the former events of old, for I am El, and there is no one else – God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end (acharith) from the beginning, and from of old that which has not been done, saying, 'My purpose (etzah) does stand, and all My pleasure (chefetz) I do,' ....**" That really shouldn't surprise us.

Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum, in his lesson this week, "[In the Beginning](#)", points out, "*The Rabbis taught that Teshuvah (coming back to G-d) was created even before the world. This means that the world is not merely random. Everything that exists in the entire universe is part of a vast, unfathomable system serving a purpose that goes way beyond the system itself, a purpose that existed before the system itself in the 'mind' and 'will' of the One Who created it. The (etzah) purpose of the system is to bestow good on all G-d's creatures. We can receive this good only when we 'return' to G-d -- by seeking out and following the wisdom of G-d's teaching to mankind: the Torah. Teshuvah!*"

OK, let's begin at the beginning, with **B'reshith / Genesis 1:1-10**; ***In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth came to be a formless and empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was moving on the face of the waters. And God said, "Let light come to be," and light came to be. And God saw the light, that it was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. And God called the light 'day' and the darkness He called 'night.' And there came to be evening and there came to be morning, the first day. And God said, "Let an expanse come to be in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were under the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse. And it came to be so. And God called the expanse 'heavens.' And there came to be evening and there came to be morning, the second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it came to be so. And God called the dry land 'earth,' and the collection of the waters He called 'seas.' And God saw that it was good.***

In studying these verses over the past few years, I've come to see something I have to share with you. It has to do with Israel's connection to the Land. As we've learned throughout His Word, HaShem created all that He created according to His plan. In the Hebrew, the very first verse of Scripture, and our *parasha*, reads; "**B'reshit bara Elohim et ha'shamayim v'et ha'erezt**". In English this reads; "**In a beginning created God the heavens and the earth (or land)**". The word translated as "**earth**" is "**ha'erezt**", which is also "**the land**", as in "*the Land of Israel*". It's a specific Land. While there are several Hebrew words translated as earth, including "**adamah**"; HaShem chose to use "**erezt**" here in these specific creation verses of **B'reshith**. Interestingly, in the King James Version, "**ha'erezt**" is translated as "**the Land**" nearly 1,800 times; which is 3 times as often as "**earth**". I'm not trying to say that HaShem meant something

different here; but, I think we need to consider that the *Land of Israel* is the focal point of all history.

While there are a number of secular authors and teachers who would have us believe that Gan Eden was in Babylon, or Africa, or some other strange place; the Scriptures seem to indicate that it was in Israel, and more specifically in the area of Yerushalayim. I don't want to belabor the point here. However, I need to point out that the very meaning of the Hebrew word "**eden**" (*ayin-dalet-nun*), or "**aden**" is "**pleasant**" or "**delightful**". And HaShem refers to Israel as the "**Pleasant Land**" five times in Scripture (**B'reshith 49:15, Tehillim 106:24, Yirmeyahu 3:19, Dani'el 8:9 and Zekaryah 7:14**).

It was from the "**aphar**" (*dust* or *dry dirt*) of this "**Pleasant Land**" that HaShem created **Adam** (*man*). And from the "**adamah**" (*earth*) of this Garden of Delight, HaShem brought forth every shrub, plant and tree that is good for food; and also, the Tree of Life, as well as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Man and all the animals and plants were inextricably linked to the Land from the moment of their creation. And, when man disobeyed HaShem and sinned, the Land was cursed along with man. And, because of this curse, every animal and creature on the face of the earth has been affected.

Now, **verses 11-19**; ***And God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the plant that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth." And it came to be so. And the earth brought forth grass, the plant that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And there came to be evening and there came to be morning, the third day. And God said, "Let lights come to be in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and appointed times, and for days and years, and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth." And it came to be so. And God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night, and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there came to be evening and there came to be morning, the fourth day.***

And **verses 20-31**; ***And God said, "Let the waters teem with shoals of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth on the face of the expanse of the heavens." And God created great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters teemed, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, "Bear fruit and increase, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." And there came to be evening and there came to be morning, the fifth day. And God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: livestock and creeping creatures and beasts of the earth, according to its kind." And it came to be so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, livestock according to its kind, and all that creep on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. And God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth and over all the creeping creatures that creep on the earth." And God created the man in His image, in the image of God He created him – male and female He created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Bear fruit and increase, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over***

*all creatures moving on the earth.” And God said, “See, I have given you every plant that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed, to you it is for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to every creeping creature on the earth, in which there is life, every green plant is for food.” And it came to be so. And God saw all that He had made, and see, it was very good. And there came to be evening and there came to be morning, the sixth day.*

Here on Day 6, as we come to the end of creating, HaShem creates “**man**”, in Hebrew “**Adam**”. There’s more here than a name. In Hebrew, Adam means simply “**man**”, “**human being**”, even “**mankind**”. Now, while there are deeper meanings beneath the surface of our text; on the surface, this explains why, in **verse 27**, Torah states that HaShem created Adam (*man*) male and female. This also explains why, in **verse 28**, Adam is referred to in the plural by saying, **And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Bear fruit and increase, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over all creatures moving on the earth.”**

Next, we read of the sanctification, or setting apart, of the Shabbat, as we read **B’reshith / Genesis 2:1-4**; **Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their array. And on the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and set it apart, because on it He rested from all His work which God in creating had made. These are the births of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Adonai God made earth and heavens.** And, just as HaShem rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> Day from all His work of creating, He later codifies the 7<sup>th</sup> day Shabbat, through Moshe, as a “**sign forever**” between Him and the Children of Yisrael. We read in **Shemot / Exodus 31:16-17**; **“And the children of Yisra’el shall guard the Shabbat, to observe the Shabbat throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant. Between Me and the children of Yisra’el it is a sign forever. For in six days HaShem made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.”**

Next, we have what some say is a further explanation, or a more detailed account, of part of the “**Creation**”. But, the sages say that this describes the earthly creation of man that followed the creation of his spirit in the heavens. We read in **B’reshith / Genesis 2:4-25**; **These are the births of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that Adonai God made earth and heavens. Now no shrub of the field was yet on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for Adonai God had not sent rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground, but a mist went up from the earth and watered the entire surface of the ground. And Adonai God formed the man out of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils breath of life. And the man became a living being. And Adonai God planted a garden in Eden, to the east, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground Adonai God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, with the tree of life in the midst of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divided and became four riverheads. The name of the first is Pishon, it is the one surrounding the entire land of Hawilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good. Bdelium is there, and the shoham stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one surrounding the entire land of Kush. And the name of the third river is Hiddeqel; it is the one which goes toward the east of Ashshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. And Adonai God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and to guard it. And Adonai God commanded the man, saying, “Eat of every tree of the**

*garden, but do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day that you eat of it you shall certainly die.” And Adonai God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone, I am going to make a helper for him, as his counterpart.” And from the ground Adonai God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all livestock, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field. But for the man there was not found a helper for him, as his counterpart. So Adonai God caused a deep sleep to fall on the man, and he slept. And He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. And the rib which Adonai God had taken from the man He made into a woman (*ishah*), and He brought her to the man. And the man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one is called ‘woman,’ because she was taken out of man.” For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, yet they were not ashamed.*

**Verse 5** tells us that after the days of creation, there were no plants on the earth; because there was no rain. Rain would not appear until No’ach. But, HaShem caused a mist to begin going up from the ground that watered the “**face of the ground**” (*paniyim adamah*). Then, He forms the body of man (**Adam**) from the “**dust of the ground**” (*aphar min adamah*); and breathes into his nostrils “**life**”. Then HaShem plants the “**Garden**” in the east of Eden and places Adam in it. Again, the Hebrew is very intriguing. The word for “**garden**” is “**gan**” which also means “**a place protected**”, and equates with a “**Bridal**” chamber. Then we have the word translated as “**east**” which is “**kedem**”. The Hebrew word for the direction “**east**” is “**mizraq**”. “**Kedem**” literally means “**that which is before**” or “**antiquity**”. “**East**” here is actually a figurative meaning in that “**east**” represents where the sun comes up; thus indicating that this occurred before the rising of the sun. Or, that HaShem intended this from before the beginning. Bear with me here. Now, as we covered before, “**Eden**” means “**delight**” or “**pleasure**”. So, what this is saying is that before the beginning, “**B’reshith**”, HaShem intended to create a protected place of delight, or pleasure to be intimate with Adam, man. Remember, at the start, I mentioned that the first letter of Torah is “**beit**”, which is “**house**” or “**dwelling place**”.... “**Gan Eden**”, “**Paradise**”. Then, He made the trees, within the “**Garden**” to grow; all pleasant and bearing fruit good for food, including the “**Tree of Life**” (**Torah**) and the “**Tree of the Knowledge of Good & Evil**” (the knowledge of sin). Man had to have the ability to choose. As of this point, we still have no mention of growth or creation outside the “**Garden**”.

Then, we read that a river went out of Eden to water the “**Garden**” and from there it divided into four riverheads and went out into the world. So first, this river watered the “**garden**” or “**paradise**” (**PaRDeS** – *another acronym we address in a separate teaching*). It becomes four rivers, perhaps four levels of understanding. The first is named “**Pishon**”, which means “**overflowing**” or “**abundance**”. It surrounded the land of “**Havilah**”, which means “**land of abundant blessing and wealth**”. Torah indicates this is so by mentioning here that this land contains gold, shoham (*onyx*) and bdellium. I should note here that bdellium has two apparent meanings in Scripture; the first is that it looks like the manna in **B’midbar / Numbers 11:7**, and secondly it is used to represent pearls. The second river is called “**Gihon**”, which means “**bursting forth**” as with a “**fountain**”, which indicates knowledge coming forth, as from the depths, or hidden places. It surrounded the land of “**Kush**” or “**Africa**” which is another land wealthy in precious minerals such as gold and diamonds. The third river is called “**Hiddeqel**”, which means “**rapid**” or “**vehemently active**” and it went before Ashshur (*Assyria*), which is one of two of the wealthiest and powerful kingdoms mentioned in the **TaNak**. The fourth river is

called “**Euphrates**”, or “**Perath**” in the Hebrew, which means “**sweet water**” and is a river of Babylon, which is the other of the wealthiest kingdoms mentioned in the TaNaK.

So, these rivers, an allegory perhaps for levels of understanding Torah, all speak of blessing and abundance flowing from “**Gan Eden**”, or the “**Garden of Delight**” out to the world. From HaShem, from His “**Gan**” (*place protected or Bridal Chamber*), **His Garden of Delight** (*Eden*) these rivers went out, and I believe that these rivers brought creation and life to the rest of the world. What do the prophets say will happen at the end of history? In **Yeshayahu / Isaiah 2:3** we read; **And many peoples shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of HaShem, to the House of the God of Ya’aqob, and let Him teach us His ways, and let us walk in His paths, for out of Tzion comes forth the Torah, and the Word of HaShem from Yerushalayim.”** This is echoed in **Mikah 4:2**.

Now, we’ll see together, throughout our study this year, that man was created to rule and reign with HaShem over all creation. Further, we’ll see that Adam’s sin was part of Adonai’s plan, in order for man to learn to cleave to HaShem, exercising his free will to love HaShem and so bring tikkun, or repair into all of creation. Rabbi Greenbaum reminds us, “*Adam was created to rule the entire world, but he cannot even rule over his own heart -- and sins. When a person comes to his senses and understands what he has done by eating the forbidden fruit of evil, he discovers the painful truth. ‘With the sweat of your brow you will eat bread until you return to the earth, for from it you were taken, for you are dust and to dust you will return’ (Gen. 3:19). After Adam’s sin, life is a constant struggle, leading only to the grave. Only with death can sin be finally atoned. ‘To dust you will return’. This is because everything must ‘return’! Everything must come back to G-d! Teshuvah! Man’s task is to return to his destiny, which is to conquer the world and join it back to G-d. ‘Who is mighty? He who conquers his evil inclination (Perkei Avot 4:1).*”

Before we go on, I want to leave you with something to study out. It will really help you in your understanding of something that has caused division between Judah and the rest of Israel. It centers on **Verse 16**, which reads; **And Adonai God commanded the man, saying, “Eat of every tree of the garden...”** The rabbis teach that this positive command to adam/man implies six universal laws, which are alluded to in the Hebrew words and letters of this verse. They are: 1) idolatry is forbidden, 2) blaspheming the Creator’s Name is forbidden, 3) murder is forbidden, 4) sexual immorality is forbidden, 5) robbery is forbidden and 6) a system of law and justice must be established. The explanation of these can be found in the *Midrash Rabba, B’reshith 45:5* and *Talmud, Sanhedrin 56a*. Both of these references, plus more can be found in Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Kings 9:1*; which can be found online at: [Mishneh Torah](#). These six commands, along with the command not to eat the limbs of any living animal (*Parsha No’ach, Genesis 9:4*), make up what’s known as the Seven Universal Laws of B’nei No’ach (Children of Noah). Maybe we can discuss this further next week during our midrash time together.

As we look at the creation of Chavah (Eve), I want to share a little something from **verse 18**; **And Adonai God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone, I am going to make a helper for him, as his counterpart.”** This last phrase using “*helper*” and “*counterpart*” are most often translated as “*helpmeet*”. How many of us have questioned the term “*helpmeet*”? I mean, “*helpmeet*”? Well, “*helper*” and “*counterpart*” are certainly better. But, as usual, the Hebrew is much more interesting. In the Hebrew Torah, the term written is “**ezer k’negdo**”. Ok, “**ezer**” means “**help**” or “**helper**”. But, “**k’negdo**” literally translates as “**against him**”. So, let me get this straight. The phrase “**ezer k’negdo**” means “**a helper against him**”? Literally, this is

the meaning. Well, having someone against you, to offer alternate opinions and understanding can be a positive thing, even if very annoying. But, the implications of the Hebrew “**k’negdo**” are more like, “**if you lean against someone, they stand firm against you to support you**”. It’s like saying, “**This helper has your back**”.... And of course, the further implication is that you’ve got her back also.

What’s really cool here is the numeric value of the Hebrew letters; “**ezer**” (ayin-zayin-reish) equals 297 and “**k’negdo**” (kaf-nun-gimmel-dalet-vav) equal 83, for a total of **380**. This is also the numeric value of “**n’ishah**” or “**his wife**”, “**i’shakan**” or “**his dwelling**” and “**shalem’i**” or “**my peace**”.

Next, as we look a little closer at our text, let’s re-read **verse 25; *And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.*** This verse really highlights the sin of Adam and Chavah (man and his bride). The Hebrew word translated as “**naked**” here is “**arum’im**” (ayin-reish-vav-mem-yud-mem). This is the plural of “**arum**” which, also means “**prudent**”. So, we understand that Adam, ***the man and his wife were prudent, and they were not ashamed.*** Say what? Let’s look at **Mishle / Proverbs 14:18**, where we read, ***The simple shall inherit folly, But the prudent (arum) are crowned with (da’at) knowledge.*** From this, we see that, in their creation, Adam and Chavah were crowned with knowledge. But, they ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. That was not “**prudent**”. This led them into shame and fear. Had they feared HaShem, held Him in awe and utmost respect, they would have been prudent to obey Him.

There is so much to cover in this parasha, it’s impossible to fit it all in, as I’m sure you’ve noticed. There is, however, a narrative here that has proven to be difficult to understand. Last year, I “**saw the light**”, so to speak, thanks to Rabbi Yossi Serebryanski. His teachings can be found at: [Revealing the Soul](#) . Let’s look at the Torah narrative, after the death of Hevel (Abel) and Qayin’s (Cain’s) being banished, where we begin with Qayin’s words in **B’reshith / Genesis 4:14-18; *“See, You have driven me from the face of the ground today, and I am hidden from Your face. I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and it shall be that anyone who finds me kills me.” And HaShem said to him, “Well, if anyone kills Qayin, vengeance is taken on him sevenfold.” And HaShem set up a sign for Qayin, lest anyone finding him kills him. So Qayin went out from the presence of HaShem and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. And Qayin knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Hanok. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son, Hanok. And to Hanok was born Irad. And Irad brought forth Mehuya’el, and Mehuya’el brought forth Methusa’el, and Methusa’el brought forth Lemek.***

The key to understanding these verses is to understand just what this “**sign**” was, that HaShem put upon Qayin. The Hebrew word here for “**sign**” is “**oth**” (aleph-vav-tav). Now, “**oth**” has several related meanings and connotations. It means “**sign**”, “**signal**”, “**banner**” or “**ensign**”. We are very familiar with all of these. It also means a “**warning**” or a “**prophetic portent**”. The rabbis, including Yossi Serebryanski, teach according to the Hebrew in our narrative, that the “**sign**” HaShem set up, or placed, upon Qayin was a promise that, not only was his life to be spared; but, that life would be extended to his offspring to allow for repentance. However, if there was no repentance by the seventh generation; then, that generation would be wiped out. Lemek was the sixth generation, and he had two children. But, he did not believe in the warning about Qayin or repentance.



Now, let's read on with **B'reshith 4:19-24**; ***And Lemek took for himself two wives, the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Tzilah. And Adah bore Yabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents, with livestock. And his brother's name was Yuval. He was the father of all those who play the lyre and flute. As for Tzilah, she also bore Tubal-Qayin, a smith of all kinds of tools in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Qayin was Na'amah. And Lemek said to his wives, "Adah and Tzilah, hear my voice! Wives of Lemek, listen to my words! For I have killed a man for wounding me, even a young man for hurting me. For Qayin is avenged sevenfold, and Lemek seventy-sevenfold."***

According to the oral history, before Adah and Tzilah became Lemek's wives, they convinced the other women that, because of his disregard for the warning, they should not marry Lemek and give him children that would be destroyed in order to wipe out Qayin's lineage. As a result, all the women Lemek would encounter only wanted to marry men of the sons of Seth. As Rabbi Yossi writes, *"In response, Lemek gave a threatening speech. He spoke to Adah and Tzilah who had organized the strike, and to all of the women who followed their instructions. He told them about where he came from and about his brutality. 'I kill over even the smallest thing that I don't like. If you don't want to do what I want, then I will kill as many of you as I wish, which will mean that your actions against me were for naught. He continued, telling them that as far as the repentance thing is concerned, it is a joke. God rewarded my great grandfather who killed one person by insuring him life for seven generations. I plan to kill seventy people so that God will reward me with life for seventy times seven generations. If you do not agree to give me children, I will murder many women (and blood will flow.)'"*

Rabbi Serebryanski concludes, *"Adah and Tzilah realized that their leadership ideas endangered many women. So it was that in order to save the other women they agreed to be his wives and have his children. The result was that they all died in the flood of Noah. Lemek and all the descendants of Cain died in the flood. We can see that Lemek did not get the right message from the leniency that was extended to Cain's succeeding generations. His twisted reckoning brought about his doom."*

There's a huge lesson in this for all of us. There is a window of opportunity for our redemption and deliverance. There's a time for each of us to repent and make teshuva, to return to HaShem. The prophet speaks, as he comforts Tzion, in **Yeshayahu / Isaiah 55:5-7**; ***Seek HaShem while He is to be found, call on Him while He is near. Let the wrong forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him (shuv) return to HaShem, who has compassion on him, and to our God, for He pardons much.***

As we study the Torah, again together this coming year, we are going to see this in a practical way. And in so doing, we will truly discover our purpose. This is so important. We will see and understand the purpose for which we were created. I would like to paraphrase Rabbi Eli Touger of Chabad, one of my favorite teachers and authors. As he posted last year from his book ["Garden of Torah"](#), he wrote generally, that when a person is sent to accomplish a task, we would expect the goal to be clearly outlined. Sometimes, however, only an allusion is given; the person charged with the mission is not given explicit instructions. Instead, he is left to discover its purpose on his own. Why would someone choose to issue instructions in such a manner? When the intent of the exercise is not only the accomplishment of the mission, but also the spiritual growth of the agent. Were the purpose of the mission spelled out, the agent would be denied the opportunity of self-discovery, and thus his efforts would lose much of their value. His vision would depend on someone else's light. When, by contrast, the agent comes to the

realization of the goal on his own, it arouses more than his sense of duty; the revelation rings deep within him and becomes part of his own thinking.

This applies regarding God's creation of the world. When the Torah describes creation, its first words are not "*Let there be light.*" Instead, it speaks of "*void and darkness.*" Why? The rabbis explain, as we've studied, that HaShem's motive in creating the universe was "*a desire for a dwelling in our material universe; a place in which His Essence cannot ordinarily be perceived.*" HaShem wants His dwelling to be part and parcel of where His creation dwells. His intent is not to nullify the limitations of our material existence, but rather to manifest Himself *within* those limitations.

Had HaShem begun creation with "*light*", were He to have created a world that recognizes Him effortlessly, all existence would have been one with Him; there would have been no "*material world.*" And, this was not His desire. God wants man to exist in a universe which, by its very nature, seems to separate creation from its Creator. And the intent is that we realize the connection for ourselves, and develop it until the world proceeds toward restoration, until, "*The world will be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.*" (**Yeshayahu / Isaiah 11:9 and Habakkuk 2:14**)

For man to reach such heights requires a fusion of opposites, and it is in such a fusion that HaShem's essence is revealed. For He is neither light nor darkness, neither finite nor infinite. No worldly quality nor its antithesis can define Him. When, however, we see two apparently contradictory qualities joining, we can appreciate that this is possible only because He has manifested Himself. And, it is just such a manifestation that characterizes the Era of the Redemption and the Restoration of All Things, when it will be revealed that the physical world has indeed become the Dwelling Place of the Shekinah (*HaShem's Divine Presence*) again.

The simple meaning of the word "**B'reshith**" as we've seen is "**In the beginning**", indicating that creation is only the first phase in an ongoing process. This highlights the importance of man's contribution. For man is intended to be HaShem's "*partner in creation*", helping to restore the Tabernacle of David (the Kingdom of Israel) and Adonai's Dwelling Place on the earth. HaShem created the material world; but, left man the task of revealing the spiritual within it. So it is that man begins in a world of darkness, and endeavors to endow it with light. And each glimmer of light kindles others, for a little light banishes a great deal of darkness and leads to the ultimate light of Redemption, when it will be openly revealed that the world is Dwelling Place of HaShem. The *Zohar* states that "**HaShem looked into the Torah and created the world. Man looks into the Torah and maintains the world.**" As we begin the study of the Torah anew on this *Shabbat B'reshith*, we have the potential to renew creation, and bring it to its ultimate goal.

**Baruch HaShem & Shabbat Shalom!**