

PARASHAH: B'resheet (In the beginning)
ADDRESS: B'resheet (Genesis) 1:1-6:8
READING DATE: Shabbat
AUTHOR: Torah Teacher Ariel ben-Lyman

*Updated: November 4, 2005

(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

Let's begin with the opening blessing for the Torah:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher bachar banu m’kol ha-amim,
v’natan lanu eht Torah-to.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you, O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have selected us from among all the peoples,
and have given us your Torah.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

Welcome to the first parashah (portion) in a study on the **Parash'ot HaShavuah** (weekly portions). This study is not designed to be an extensive commentary on the weekly Sabbath readings, although, this first installment to **Genesis 1:1-6:8** will be somewhat lengthy, for foundational sake. If the reader desires a more in-depth study on this subject, I suggest they dig a little deeper for themselves, with the aid of a good rabbinical commentary or even a Christian one. Any additional biblical source that will cause the student to further investigate the truths of God's Word for themselves, I believe, is a good source. Ultimately, we are all individually responsible to "Study to shew ourselves approved unto God..." (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV). Sometimes this requires a little "net fishing." As a Torah Teacher, I recommend that the student do some collective research on his own, compile information from many different sources (Jewish and Christian), carefully pray about what is helpful for him to foster spiritual growth, and put the rest on the "back burner." What I mean by that is use what is pertinent to you, and check back on the other stuff from time to time. You never know when HaShem may refresh your walk with "old" material. Don't be rigidly tied down to "dated" material. With that in mind, it is my desire that these particular studies will serve the reader in a somewhat "balanced" manner, not too simple, not information overload. May the Holy One be gracious unto you, as you seek a deeper, more meaningful relationship to him, through his Son, and through the pages of his Word.

The Signature of God

“In the beginning God....” I can remember growing up, listening to rabbis’ and preachers’ sermons using the first four words of our parashah for this Shabbat, **B’resheet**. There is quite a bit to contemplate within that first verse, they always told me. In fact, some say, the opening phrase pretty much sums up the foundation and purpose for our existence. In this first of two sections, I want to examine some of the details for the creation perspective.

“In the beginning God....” Were it not for this foundational starting point we would be left with very little direction in our lives. Unlike that of HaShem, our existence is finite. We have beginnings, and we need to be able to trace our simple beginnings to something substantial. Even the non-believing scientists espouse to this fact, by the presence of various evolutionary models that all purport a beginning “Somewhere.... Out there....” By beginning with HaShem, however, the **authoritative groundwork** is laid, whereby we can build a solid purpose for our existence, even as meager tenants of his creation. To be sure, as we shall soon find out, one of the primary reasons for man’s creation was to rule over the fish, birds, animals, and over all the earth (1:26).

Modern scientists would like for us to believe that we are all some fantastic jumbled mass of preconceived amino acids that supposedly grew intelligence in the course of a few million years. They claim that we have simply evolved and crawled from the “primordial soup,” into the awareness of being able to scientifically study, in depth, our own simple beginnings. But the opening verses here in Genesis not only diametrically oppose that hypothesis, they don’t even afford us the luxury of scientific research. The narrative takes for granted the fact that all things came to be by the power of God, without going into any scientific studies to prove it! Beginning with HaShem changes our viewpoint from that of scientific observation, to one of absolute faith, grounded in the Word of God. A scientist, who refuses to objectively deal with a supernatural creation, is a scientist who refuses to deal with a supernatural God! By removing God from the equation, mankind effectively dulls his own conscience towards the responsibility of his own actions, good or bad—if there is “no God,” then ultimately, there is no need to answer to anyone but “myself.” In this way, the Torah teaches that mankind ultimately destroys himself, and becomes a fool. The mercy of the Holy One offers us an authoritative beginning, complete with purpose and structure for our lives. When God begins something, its destined purpose is made sure.

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֵהוֹ וּבְהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי
תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהי אֹר וַיְהי-אֹר

“B’resheet barah Elohim eht hashamayim ve’eht ha’arets. Veha’arets hayetah tohu vavohu vechoshech al-peney tehom veruach Elohim m’rachefet al-peney hamayim. Vayomer Elohim yehi-or vayehi-or.”

(In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was unformed and void, darkness was on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.)

Unequivocally, we see the foundation of the universe spring forth from the creative handiwork of HaShem’s spoken word. We also know from additional sources other than Genesis, that it was the creative power of the Word that brought the heavens and the earth into existence. The Hebrew word “**barah**,” translated “**created**,” means “**from nothing, into something**,” or to use Latin, “**ex nihilo**.” This meaning is reserved exclusively for the power of God. We never find the Adversary, angels, or any other created being possessing this same type of creative ability. We need not speculate the folly of “big bangs” or “pops” and “whistles.” Like a master artist, his orderly creation bears his signature and his signature alone. In fact, this signature in creation is the very reason why no man has an excuse for denying the Creator his due honor (Romans 1:18-25).

Spiritual Power

The word translated as “**hovered**,” in verse two of chapter one, is “**m’rachefet**” מְרַחֶפֶת. The root word is “rachaf” רָחַף, and conveys the sense of “shaking,” “moving,” or “fluttering,”¹ as when a bird softly relaxes its flight to alight upon its young. It adequately describes the actions of the Ruach (Spirit) as he lovingly and closely watches over the created substance. How so? Well, this verb, although found three times in Scripture, is defined as “hovering” only one other time in the entire TaNaKH:

“He found his people in desert country, in a howling, wasted wilderness. He protected him and cared for him, guarded him like the pupil of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up her nest, hovers over her young, spreads out her wings, takes them and carries them as she flies.” (Deuteronomy 32:10-11)

This beautiful illustration of the protective power of the Spirit, in relation to his children, Am Yisra’el (People of Isra’el), as they traveled through the wilderness reminds me of the same Spirit that hovered over the waters at the beginning of creation. The word translated “hovers,” in our above verse, is the same root as the one used in Genesis 1:2, “rachaf.” In fact, to strengthen the connection between the two applications, the **Haftarah** to **B’resheet** is **Isaiah 42:5-43:10**. A

¹ Brown, Driver, Briggs (BDB), רָחַף.

“haftarah” is a prescribed reading portion from the prophets and writings, chosen to compliment the Torah portion. In this passage, we read in the opening seventeen Hebrew words, a summary of the first chapter in Genesis:

“Thus says God, ADONAI, who created the heavens and spread them out, who stretched out the earth and all that grows from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk on it....”

Omniscience at Work

Unlike the evolutionist models, we find in the Torah, a Creator that is intimately interested in his creation. He doesn't just whip something together, via cosmic dust and proton-charged molecules, and then abandon it to “evolve” on its own. His beginnings, as stated above, carry with them, meaning and divine purpose.

Reading further into our parashah, HaShem goes on to create:

1. Light and Darkness on the first day
2. Firmament and sky on the second day
3. Dry land and seas, grass, plants and trees on the third day
4. Stars, planets, sun and moon on the fourth day
5. Marine life and birds, livestock and crawling animals on the fifth day
6. Male and female on the sixth day
7. A time of rest and refreshing on the seventh day

The sequence of events is not randomly initiated like the evolutionary models suppose. Everything is done with a super-intellect at the helm. Our galaxy is not just spinning along, drifting through the universe with no one to chart its course. Our LORD, ADONAI Tzva'ot (the LORD of Hosts) was there at its birth, and he will be there when it comes to an end, orchestrating every minute detail. When all of his creation has run it's chosen course, he will be there to facilitate another new beginning. I have spent quite a bit of time discussing the details of creation versus evolution, and the consequences of choosing the wrong system. However, believe it or not, that was not the primary thrust of my commentary. I want to briefly talk about the decision to sin, from a different angle. This brings me to the second part of my commentary: man's choices.

The Fall

The first unfortunate sin of our first parents, Adam and Chavah, left an indelible mark on all of mankind that followed after; a mark which only HaShem himself would eventually be able to remove. The sin of the eating of the forbidden fruit of chapter three was not just some trivial mistake made on the part of innocent children. Sure, the Adversary launched a well thought-out assault, attacking the weaknesses of the first couple's flesh, eyes, and pride of life (a homiletic explanation of 1 John 2:16), but there a little more to this sinful transaction than

meets the eye. In order to see it, I must conduct a sort of “sod” teaching. The Hebrew word “sod” means “hidden,” and it is the rabbinical way of examining a text or word of Scripture using the numerical value of a word, its proximity to other words in the text, or simply a deeper understanding of the word itself, linguistically. In a lighter sense, this is what etymology seeks to explain. Etymology is the history of a linguistic form shown by tracing its development since its earliest recorded occurrence in the language where it is found.

In Genesis 3:6, the Torah says,

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it had a pleasant appearance and that the tree was desirable for making (one) wise, she took some of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her; and he ate” (emphasis mine).

In the Hebrew, the phrase translated as “making (one) wise” is really just one word (literally “לְהַשְׂכִּיל” from the Hebrew=sakal שָׂכַל). This verb is conjugated in what is known as the “hiph’il,”² and it generally causes the subject to become something that they previously were not, i.e., add to the quality of the original form.³ How is this significant to you the reader? Well, up until the eating of the forbidden fruit, our first parents had been created complete, lacking no wisdom,

² Hiphil (according to Blue Letter Bible tools
<http://www.blueletterbible.org/help/lexicalDefinitions.cfm?lang=H&num=8818>)

a) Hiphil usually expresses the "causative" action of Qal

Qal Hiphil

he ate he caused to eat, he fed
he came he caused to come, he brought
he reigned he made king, he crowned

b) Hiphil is often used to form verbs from nouns and adjectives.

Noun or Adjective Hiphil

ear to listen (lend an ear)
far to remove oneself, put far away

c) Some "simple" verbs are found in Hiphil.

to cast, to destroy, to get up early, to explain, to tell

The form accounts for 13.3% of the verbs parsed.

³ BDB, שָׂכַל.

as HaShem saw fit to endow them. To be sure, Adam named all of the animals with the wisdom that HaShem created him with! Even our smartest specialists today cannot do the same without the aid of material of some sort! Adam did it, first-handedly, without any materials! The wisdom that they possessed was exactly the amount that HaShem knew they needed. When the Adversary suggested that Chavah's wisdom was lacking in some manner, this was an insult to the One who endowed her with her wisdom in the first place. In other words, how could the tree make her "wiser" than she already was to begin with? By understanding that she was tricked into doubting the providence of her Creator, we begin to understand why HaShem was so disappointed at the "simple act of eating from a tree." It is true that it was also blatant disobedience, but I believe that a primary mistake of the first couple was to mistakenly believe that, in taking unto themselves, a substance reported to possess wisdom which they lacked, they could somehow "improve" on God's design. Quite simply, they believed, as the Adversary did unknown eons earlier, that they could "be like the most High" (Isaiah 14:14b, KJV).

Conclusion

Equality with God is a serious offense! Attributing power unto another created being, power that belongs only to the Most-High God, is blasphemy! The lust of the flesh (**good for food**) and the lust of the eyes (**pleasant appearance**) are bad enough temptations, in and of themselves, that we should strive to avoid them. But when we get involved in the third one, the pride of life (**desirable for making one wise**), we really start going downhill from there. Borrowing again from Isaiah 14, the Torah tells us that pride was what brought the Adversary down from his prestigious position of leadership (also read Ezekiel 28:1-19)!

This is drastically different from what is recorded about the **Messiah** in Philippians 2:5-11! It says,

"Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God something to be possessed by force" (verse 6).

Our LORD Yeshua has no reason to be jealous of the Father, neither is there any room for pride. **Yeshua the Messiah is one in Purpose and Will with the Father!** Our first parents would have done well if they could have followed the example of our LORD, Yeshua! I realize of course that, for them, his life example was yet future history, but HaShem's ultimate plan was not thwarted by the likes of an ancient snake. HaShem graciously provided a covering for their nakedness (3:21), justifiably meted out the appropriate punishment for each of them (3:14-19), and even provided the first scriptural Messianic prophecy (3:15). The rest of the parashah is given over to the genealogies of the first family (4:1-5:32), the ongoing consequences of the introduction of sin into the world (6:1-7), the first murder (4:8), and the beginning of God's continuing plan of "righteousness established through seed" (6:8).

Since the Messiah has provided a more permanent covering for our transgressions, we as believers today do have his example to follow. He has made a way whereby we can resist the temptations of the Adversary—and we all know that that “Old Serpent” is still up to his old tricks. Since, as believers, this “mind” which was in Messiah Yeshua, is in us (Philippians 2:5, KJV), we need not give into the old lie of trying to be wiser than we already are. HaShem has mercifully endowed us with the wisdom from on high! Let us live our lives in the richness of his Truth!

The closing blessing is as follows:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher natan lanu Toraht-emet,
v’chay-yeh o’lam nata-b’tochenu.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you O’ LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have given us your Torah of truth,
and have planted everlasting life within our midst.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

“Shabbat Shalom!”

Torah Teacher Ariel ben-Lyman yeshua613@hotmail.com