

# Torah Weekly

בס"ד

20-26 October, 2019

21-27 Tishrei, 5780

Torah: Genesis 1:1 - 6:8

Haftarah: Isaiah 42:5-21

PARSHAT BEREISHIS

## Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

## Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

## Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzah for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

**Finding Comfort** The first portion of the Torah begins with pristine beauty. The creation of a graceful, peaceful world, culminating with the creation of the day of rest, as the Torah describes:

*"And G-d saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good, and it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day. Now the heavens and the earth were completed and all their host. And G-d completed on the seventh day His work that He did, and He abstained on the seventh day from all His work that He did. And G-d blessed the seventh day and He hallowed it, for thereon He abstained from all His work that G-d created to do".* (Genesis 1:31- 2:3) Alas, the serenity was short lived. We turn just a few pages and we read of successive disasters. Adam and Eve taste the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, internalizing both good and evil, thus implanting within themselves an inclination to evil, creating a constant struggle within the human heart between the G-dly soul and the animalistic soul.

We read about Adam and Eve being told of their mortality. At the end of their lives, they would return to the earth. They understood that it would take death for the evil and good within them to separate. The body and the evil inclination would return to the earth, and the soul would return heavenward, to G-d.

We then read of the first murder in history. We read how Adam and Eve had to face a double tragedy; the murder of their son Abel, as well as coming to face with the fact that their son Cain was capable of murdering his own brother. The Midrash relates that Adam and Eve wept beside the corpse of Abel, unsure what to do with

the body because this was their first encounter with death. The Midrash continues: they saw a bird (*araiv* in the Hebrew) burying a dead bird in the ground. Adam and Eve decided to do the same and buried Abel in the earth.

On the surface, this Midrash explains how they found a solution to the technical question of how to dispose of the corpse. On a deeper level, however, this Midrash contains profound insight into the human condition. Adam and Eve were at a loss, not only about what to do with Abel's body, but they had a much deeper question: how to respond to absolute evil? How could they continue to live after witnessing the depravity of which humanity was capable?

True, they too had sinned. They too had been condemned to natural death. They too were not perfect. But they could never have imagined that a human being could act so brutally, that one human being could or would afflict an unnatural death upon another human being. They could not imagine that a person could act in a way that was the polar opposite of what G-d had intended. G-d therefore sent the bird to teach Adam and Eve how to respond to absolute evil. According to the Sages, the *araiv* is terribly cruel toward its young, abandoning its offspring at birth. Adam and Eve witnessed this same bird engaging in the truest form of kindness. The sages explain that burial is referred to in the Torah (Genesis 47:29) as "loving kindness and truth," because when doing kindness with a living person the doer can always expect a favor in return. Not so with burial. When we are kind to the dead, we do not expect anything in return. Thus, the kindness is

absolute. The kindness is true kindness.

Adam and Eve looked at the *araiv* and understood. They received the wisdom on how to react. They now understood that the response to absolute evil is absolute kindness. True, evil must be stopped and contained, but the remedy to absolute depravity within humanity is absolute love and compassion.

They were comforted. They were comforted, because they now understood that the profundity of evil that the human is capable of is matched only by the profound kindness within the human spirit. They understood that the same human heart capable of boundless hate is likewise capable of boundless love. We, too, must take this message to heart. We look around the world and see intense cruelty. We know that we must respond with intense kindness. Like Adam and Eve, we understand that this earth is a complicated place, that humanity is capable of extremes. Like Adam and Eve, we respond to negativity with a greater commitment to absolute kindness. When we face unspeakable cruelty, we take a step toward extreme kindness, bringing us closer and closer to G-d's vision of a perfect world. A peaceful world. A world that experiences the tranquility of the seventh day. The tranquility of Shabbat. (Based on the teachings of the Rebbe, Reshimot, booklet 25.)  
*By Rabbi Menachem Feldman*

## It's a Brand New world

*In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1)*

For a change, let's talk a little philosophy.

From the first verse of the Torah it seems that once upon a time there was nothing. Then the Creator brought the

universe into existence.

According to the Tanya, seeing as the world didn't always exist, it isn't quite natural for it to exist now. Therefore, the creative force of G-d, which brought the world into existence initially, must constantly be present to fuel its continued state of being. Remove that Divine energy from the world, and it simply ceases to exist. It would be like pulling the plug on creation.

This concept is known as the law of continuous creation. Indeed, in our daily morning prayers, we describe G-d as the One who "in His goodness renews each day the work of creation." The Tanya, then, would understand that to mean not only each day but also each moment. I suppose we could understand this idea from the simple analogy of a person throwing a ball up into the air. When he throws the ball, his strength will determine how high the ball will fly. The stronger his arm, the higher it will fly and the longer it will defy the natural law of gravity. But as soon as the power of his throw is spent, the ball can no longer defy nature and comes hurtling down again. If we want the initial or "natural" state of the world—which was non-existence—to be defied, then we need to keep fueling the thrust of creative energy that brought the world into existence in the first place. Likewise, if we want the initial or "natural" state of the world—which was non-existence—to be defied, then we need to keep fueling that same initial thrust of creative energy into the world that brought it into existence in the first place.

Otherwise, the universe simply reverts to its initial state of nothingness and non-existence, just like the ball that runs out of steam and falls back to earth. Now let's move from the philosophical to the practical and we discover a beautiful message of hope and inspiration in this concept. We are often burdened by the past, weighed down by our personal history and experiences. Our mistakes and failures still haunt us and prevent us from moving on. Here then is a stirring message for all who would be hampered by past disappointments. It's a brand new world. Every day, every minute, every second G-d is recreating the world anew. Forget about the past. What was was. Today is a new world, a new present filled with exciting new opportunities. At any given moment we can begin again. Especially in the week of Bereishit, when we read the Torah from the very beginning, it is a most opportune time for each of us to make a fresh start and a new beginning. New beginnings aren't always easy. But this idea of continuous creation offers powerful inspiration to give ourselves a new chance filled with new opportunities. As we start a new Jewish year, let us embrace this promise and be encouraged to begin again.

By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

**October 20, 2019—21 Tishrei, 5780**

**Prophecy of Haggai Encouraging the Building of the Second Temple (353 BCE)**

On this day, the prophet Haggai received a divine message to pass on to "Zerubavel son of She'altiel ruler of Judah, Joshua son of Jehozadak the High Priest, and the remnant of the nation" (Haggai 2:1). He was instructed to encourage them to continue their efforts to build the Second Temple, whose construction had been halted some seventeen years prior:

**October 21, 2019—22 Tishrei, 5780**

**Lubavitcher Rebbe Suffers Heart Attack (1977)**

While celebrating the joyous holiday *hakafot* with thousands of chassidim in the central Chabad-Lubavitch synagogue in Brooklyn, NY, the Rebbe suffered a massive heart attack. In spite of the tremendous pain, the Rebbe remained calm and insisted on continuing the *hakafot*, and only after they concluded did he depart the synagogue. On the following day, the Rebbe requested that the chassidim celebrate the Simchat Torah festivities with the same joy and fervor as all other years, and so it was. After the holiday ended, the Rebbe addressed and reassured the anxious chassidim from his office (which was hastily converted into a cutting-edge cardiac unit) via a public address system. The Rebbe remained in his office in Lubavitch World Headquarters under medical supervision for several weeks. He returned home five weeks later on the 1st of Kislev, a day designated by chassidim for celebration and thanksgiving.

**October 23, 2019—24 Tishrei, 5780**

**Passing of R. Yaakov Yosef of Polonye (1781)**

R. Yaakov Yosef was one of the foremost disciples of the Baal Shem Tov. He was the first one to disseminate the teachings of Chassidut in print, publishing the work *Toldot Yaakov Yosef* in 1780.

**October 24, 2019—25 Tishrei, 5780**

**Passing of R. Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1809)**

Passing of the great Chassidic leader and advocate for the Jewish people, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1809). Rabbi Levi Yitzchak was a close disciple of the second leader of the Chassidic movement, Rabbi DovBer, the Maggid of Mezritch. He is best known for his love for every Jew and his impassioned words of advocacy on their behalf before the Almighty.

**October 24, 2019—25 Tishrei, 5780**

**Passing of Chatam Sofer (1839)**

Tishrei 25th is the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Moshe Sofer of Pressburg (1762-1839), known as "Chatam Sofer" after his work of Rabbinic responsa. Rabbi Moshe was an outstanding Halachic authority and community leader, and was at the forefront of the battle to preserve the integrity of traditional Judaism in the face of the various "reformist" movements of his time.

**October 26, 2019—27 Tishrei, 5780**

**Passing of R. Yitzchak of Dampierre (335 BCE)**

R. Yitzchak was a great-grandson of R. Shlomo Yitzchaki, the seminal Biblical and Talmudic commentator commonly known as Rashi. R. Yitzchak and his three uncles—R. Shmuel (Rashbam), R. Yaakov (Rabbeinu Tam), and R. Yitzchak (Rivam)—are among the earliest and most well-known Tosafists. Their comments and explanations, which appear on the outer margin of all classical prints of the Talmud, are vital to any serious student who wishes to properly understand the Talmud.