

# Torah Weekly

October 16-22, 2022  
21-27 Tishrei, 5783

Torah reading:  
Bereishit: Genesis 1:1 - 6:8  
Haftarah: Isaiah 42:5-21

Parshat Bereishit

## 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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## The Psychology of Sin

If we are all descended from Adam and Eve, then it stands to reason that our characteristics—both positive and negative, fine points and foibles—can all somehow be traced back to our earliest ancestors.

If one studies the accounts of the first man's first sin in the Talmud and Midrash, one is struck by a most remarkable observation.

The commandment not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge was given to Adam and Eve only after most of Friday (the sixth day, when they were created) had passed. Furthermore, the prohibition was only until that Shabbat. And it's not as if there was nothing to eat. I mean, there was a whole Garden of Eden with fruit trees galore. Could they not have started with a perfect pear, or a magnificent mango? Did they absolutely have to eat from the one and only tree that was forbidden to them?

The problem is further compounded when one considers that Adam and Eve were not just a couple of homeless hobos. They were handmade by G-d, formed and fashioned personally by the Creator! Surely such august creatures could have waited a few hours, and occupied themselves with the other fruit first. Why did it have to be *that* fruit?

We all know the answer, don't we? Forbidden fruit is always sweeter, isn't it? We play mind games. We imagine that the one forbidden fruit in a paradise with dozens of other luscious options has simply got to be the most deliciously delectable fruit on the planet. And we just have to get our hands on it—and it has to be now.

We do the same thing as Adam and Eve. But when it comes to our own choices we rationalize, whereas their sin seems ridiculous, foolish and unforgivable. The truth is that it's always the same story all over again. It has been since the beginning of time. It is simply the psychology of sin. It doesn't matter how difficult something is. It might be the easiest commandment, but once we *have* to do it, it becomes difficult in our minds.

Is it really so hard to be a Jew? Are our traditions so onerous? Is the Torah so demanding and burdensome? Are all those who do keep it such otherworldly saints? Of course not. It's all in the mind.

Is playing golf on Saturday so much more fun than on Sunday? Why can we walk and jog for miles all week long, but to walk a mile to *shul* on Shabbat is not even up for discussion? Are non-Jewish girls really more beautiful than Jewish girls? If we are honest and objective, we will recognize the truth.

The psychology of sin is that we imagine things to be more difficult than they really are, just as Adam imagined the forbidden fruit to be sweeter than all the others. He had one mitzvah, of a few hours' duration, and he still blew it. No doubt, it would be the same for us even if all of Judaism were reduced to one easy commandment. We would still complain and find it too hard.

The sooner we realize it's a mind game, the sooner we will be able to win the game. Good luck. *By Rabbi Yossy Goldman*

## Imperfect Perfection

Can something be both complete and incomplete at the

same time? Is perfection relative?

That depends on your vantage point.

Are three hairs a little or a lot?

That depends on whether they're on your head or in your soup.

The Midrash tells us that "everything created in the six days of creation needs fixing."

Sounds somewhat offensive to the Creator, doesn't it? Where's the source for this assertion?

"G-d blessed the seventh day... because on it, He ceased from all His work which G-d created *to do*."

If I were G-d's publicist, I would have said, "G-d blessed the seventh day... because on it He ceased from all of the work *He had done*." "Which G-d created *to do*" indeed implies that G-d created the world with some odds and ends left unfinished and in need of (what the Midrash calls) "fixing."

And yet, a few short chapters later, the Midrash states firmly that "the world was created complete."

How ironic that the same Midrash that reports on the world's inherent *imperfection* goes on to describe the world as having been created perfect!

The key to reconciliation in our case, as in many others, is to look at the timing of the contradictory statements.

"G-d blessed the *seventh day*... because on it He ceased from all His work which G-d created to do." Only on the seventh day of creation – on Shabbat – was reference made to the world's limitations.

Earlier that week no such talk

was heard. And that's not because something suddenly went wrong on Shabbat, changing things for the worse. "Which G-d *created* to do" tells us that the imperfection of our world, or the "to do," was part of its creation. So why not mention it earlier, in the account of the world's creation in six days? Why wait until Shabbat, when the work of creation is already complete, to deliver the sobering news?

That's because the world recognized its lack only with the coming of Shabbat. On the first six days of its existence, it lacked this awareness. On Shabbat, however, with the ascent of the world to a higher state of consciousness, with the presence of G-d more palpable and real, all of existence suddenly became aware. It dawned on the world that there was so much more it could be, and there was so much more to be done. So the world was both perfect and imperfect throughout its creation. Perfect relative to where it was, imperfect relative to where it could be.

The six days of creation represent the perfection of today; Shabbat represents the perfection of tomorrow.

Chasidim of old were wont to say, "*Morgen vet zein gar andersh*," Yiddish for, "tomorrow will be very different."

According to Chassidic teachings, even the perfect *tzaddik*, the most saintly individual, must repent. Not for sins he has committed today—for he has none; but for the perfect mitzvot he fulfilled yesterday—considered to be imperfect today.

Consider the man who makes one hundred dollars today. He will give ten percent to charity. Consider the very same man, promoted, now making two hundred dollars. He will continue to give ten percent to charity, just as he did yesterday. But ten percent of today is far more than it was yesterday.

Could this shed light on our request for forgiveness in the *amidah* prayer, considered to be the most elevated segment of prayer? Aren't we beyond sin, and the need for forgiveness, at that point?

Prayer is likened to a ladder. The *amidah* is considered to be the highest rung, the loftiest point of communion. It is precisely when we reach that level that we see how deficient we used to be.

As we become bigger and better, so does the standard to which we are held.

We may have been perfect then, but we can be more perfect now, and yet more perfect tomorrow. So would you say that the world was created perfect or imperfect, or both?

By Rabbi Mendel Kalmenson

**Monday, October 17, 2022 --- 22 Tishrei, 5783**

**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.

**Nation Returns Home After Holy-Temple Dedication Festivities (827 BCE)**

At the end of the 14-day dedication festivities celebrating the completion of the [Holy Temple](#) in Jerusalem (see calendar entry for 8 Tishrei), “[King Solomon] sent off the people, and they blessed the king. They went to their homes, rejoicing and with glad hearts for all the good that the L-rd had wrought for David His servant and Israel His people” (I Kings 8:66).

**Tuesday, October 18, 2022 --- 23 Tishrei, 5783**

**Passing of R. Chanoch of Cordova (1014)**

As a youngster (in c. 960), R. Chanoch was captured by pirates, along with his father R. Moshe and three other great Torah scholars. R. Moshe and his son were ransomed by the Jewish community of Cordova, Spain, where R. Moshe opened a yeshivah for Talmudic studies. When R. Moshe passed away, he was succeeded by his son.

These events marked a turning point in Jewish history. Until then, the primary centers of Torah scholarship were located in the great and ancient Jewish communities of Babylonia, and Jews throughout the Diaspora depended on their leaders for guidance. With the opening of the yeshivah of R. Moshe and R. Chanoch in Spain, Jewish leadership shifted westwards, and European Jewry slowly became independent of the Babylonian community. Thus began the golden age of Torah scholarship in Western Europe, where it flourished for the next five hundred years.

**Wednesday, October 19, 2022 --- 24 Tishrei, 5783**

**Returning Exiles Commit to Follow the Torah (335 BCE)**

The Jews who had returned to the Land of Israel with [Ezra](#) and [Nehemiah](#) gathered on this day and repented their misdeeds, signing a document in which they committed to trust in G-d and follow His ways. Among the mitzvot they specified were to refrain from intermarriage and from purchasing produce on Shabbat (Nehemiah 9:1–3; 10:1–32).

**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.

**Passing of the Ribnitzer Rebbe (1995)**

On this day in 5756 (1995), the Ribnitzer Rebbe, Rabbi Chaim Zanvil Abramowitz, passed away. For decades, with great self-sacrifice, he lived a full Chassidic lifestyle under Soviet rule before emigrating to Israel and then the U.S.

**Thursday, October 20, 2022 --- 25 Tishrei, 5783**

**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.

**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.

**Shabbat, October 22, 2022 --- 27 Tishrei, 5783**

**Passing of R. Yitzchak of Dampierre (C. 1190)**

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.