

Parashah 1

B'resheet

בראשית

“In the beginning”

Genesis 1:1 – 6:8

Torah Together



This portion of the *Torah* deals with the origins of the universe and mankind. While there may be many unanswered questions in this very familiar passage, there are also some important insights into God's character and His plans for mankind that can help us understand what kind of relationship God would like to have with His creation.

1. The Beginning - 1:1 - 2:3

a) According to the first sentence, what two things did God create first? How does this reflect the dual nature of man, both physical and spiritual?

b) What was the next thing created by God? How is “day” defined? When does a day start and when does it end?

c) What did God do on the second day? What was the result? What did He create on the third day? What characteristic did this particular creation have?

d) What did God create on the fourth day? What was their purpose? What did God create on the fifth day? And on the sixth day?

Where did this Story come from?

It may be helpful to remember that the story of creation was first written down by Moses about 3500 years ago. Until that time, the story had been passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Even Moses may have had unanswered questions concerning some of the details of the creation story.

Looking for Patterns

As you study the creation account, see if you can detect any patterns in the narrative. Notice, for example, that God's creation on the first day pairs with His creation on the fourth day. Then look at the second and fifth day and so on. There are many interesting patterns in this passage. As you discover them, you will begin to gain a better appreciation for the amazing and miraculous nature of God's word.

What was the World Like?

The world was a very different place in the beginning. It was designed by God to be a comfortable home for both man and animals, each living comfortably without having to work for food. It probably was a fairly constant, comfortable temperature without rain (see **Genesis 2:5**). Men would have been able to live long, peaceful lives in close harmony with the animals. It is difficult for us to imagine what such a place was like.

The Seventh Day

Genesis 2:2-3 reads, "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from (or ceased) all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy (set it apart), because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." The Hebrew word *Shabbat* means "rest" or "cessation." Thus God set the example that we are to follow, setting apart the seventh day for Him and resting from our regular work.

e) In verse 26, God seems to be talking to others. To whom do you think he is speaking?

f) What do you think it means to be "created in the image of God?" What was man's role on the earth? Do you think God intended man to be vegetarian?

"So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them."

Genesis 1:27

g) What did God do on the 7th day? What significance does this have for you?

Creation Week

Day 1 - "Let there be light", separating light from darkness, day & night
(Genesis 1:3-5)

Day 2 - An 'expanse' between the water above and the water below, called "sky"
(Genesis 1:6-8)

Day 3 - "Land" & "seas," the land producing seed-bearing plants and trees
(Genesis 1:9-13)

Day 4 - The sun, moon, and stars, to provide light and for signs, seasons, days and years
(Genesis 1:14-19)

Day 5 - Sea life and birds of the air
(Genesis 1:20-23)

Day 6 - Land creatures, including man who is to have dominion over all the earth
(Genesis 1:24-31)

Day 7 - God rested and established the Sabbath (*Shabbat* in Hebrew)
(Genesis 2:1-3)

2. Adam and Eve - 2:4-25

a) Out of what was the first man formed? What did God do to make him a living soul or living being? What insight does this give you into the composition of man?

b) What was man's source of food in the Garden of Eden? According to verses 5-6, how did the trees get their water? What two trees were in the middle of the garden?

c) What rivers flowed from the Garden? Do you know anything about these rivers? What was Adam's job in the garden? What prohibition did God place on Adam?

d) What was God's reason for creating Eve? According to verse 24, how does God intend for men and women to live with one another?

3. The Fall of Man - 3:1-24

a) How did the serpent tempt Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit? What were Eve's reasons for eating it? Where do you think Adam was at this time? Why do you think Adam ate of the fruit?

Genesis 2:7 states that God used the elements of the earth to form a perfect physical body for Adam. He then "breathed the breath of life" into Adam's nostrils. At that moment, Adam's heart began to pump and his lungs began to breathe – Adam became a "living being" or a "living soul." As such, Adam had his own mind, will and emotions and was able to make decisions. In short, he had a personality.

What do you think the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was? God had already told them not to eat of the fruit of this tree, so, in some sense, they already knew good from evil: to obey God was good and to disobey Him was evil. Perhaps the fruit represented the ability to choose between good and evil, giving man control of his own destiny.

Scripture Link:

Proverbs 3 speaks of the benefits gained through obedience to God's teaching and instruction, the *Torah*. In fact, verse 18 calls the *Torah* a "tree of life." Also, as we'll learn in Exodus, God's Commandments to the Israelites were stored in the Ark of the Covenant and were guarded by two cherubs, just as the entrance to the garden of Eden is guarded. Do you think the parallels between the *Torah* and the Tree of Life are merely coincidental?

The Payment for Sin

For God to provide the animal skin clothing for Adam and Eve after they sinned, an animal had to die. Perhaps this was the first blood sacrifice – an animal had to die to pay for or atone for man's sin. This may help us understand the price God places on sin: "for without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness."
(Hebrews 9:22)

God has plenty to say about **Temptation**. Look up the following scripture references and see if you can gain any insight from this comparison of two important temptations recorded in the Bible.

Temptation 1 John 2:16	First Adam Genesis 3:6	Second Adam Luke 4:1-13
"the lust of the flesh"	"the tree was good for food"	"command this stone to become bread"
"the lust of the eyes"	"it was pleasant to the eyes"	"the devil ... showed Him all the kingdoms"
"the pride of life"	"a tree desirable to make one wise"	"throw Yourself down from here"

b) What was their first act after eating the fruit? How did God find out about it? What do you find interesting about the exchange between Adam & Eve and God?

c) Do you see anything prophetic in the curse God pronounced on the serpent? What do you find interesting about God's curse on Eve? What about the curse on Adam?

d) How were Adam and Eve clothed after this? Who paid the price for their clothing? Why did God banish Adam and Eve from the Garden?

4. Cain and Abel - 4:1-26

a) What were the respective occupations of Cain and Abel? Are there any clues as to why God “looked with favor” upon Abel’s offering and not Cain’s? What do you think God really cared about? How did Cain respond to this failure?

b) What do you think was at the root of Cain’s anger? What was God’s challenge to Cain? Do you think Cain’s murderous act was pre-meditated? What do you think of Cain’s response to God’s question in verse 9?

c) What was God’s punishment for Cain? What was Cain’s reaction? Why do you think God relented? What did He do for Cain? What became of Cain?

d) What was the name of Adam and Eve’s next son?

Offerings made to God

What kind of sacrifice does God require? Can you find any clues in the text about why God favored Abel’s sacrifice more than Cain’s? Do you think it had to do with what was sacrificed or with the manner in which it was presented? How does each brother’s sacrifice reveal their heart attitude toward God?

Cain’s Punishment

Cain’s punishment was significant because he was a “tiller of the soil.” Thus God had deprived him of his means of making a living. Cain was destined to wander, dependent on others for his livelihood. The Hebrew word ‘Nod’ means ‘to wander.’

Where did the other people come from?

Where did Cain find his wife? **Genesis 5:4** states that Adam and Eve “had other sons and daughters.” Since people in these times tended to live hundreds of years, there would have been ample time to have plenty of offspring. Marriage to a close relative wasn’t prohibited by God until the time of Moses, much later.

Scripture Link:

Referring to the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the last part of **Genesis 2:17** can be translated "... for in the day you eat of it, you will surely die." However, it appears that Adam and Eve didn't die. There are at least two possible explanations for this. One is that the Adam and Eve did die a spiritual death due to their disobedience to God (See **Ephesians 2:1**). A second thought is that the term "day" is not literal. Both **II Peter 3:8** and **Psalms 90:4** state that with God, "a day is as a 1000 years and 1000 years as a day." An examination of the genealogies in **Genesis 5** indicates that indeed every man died in the "day" (1000 years) that he was born.

Why these long genealogies?

A significant amount of the Bible is given to the recording of family trees. In any extended family, it is interesting to know how the family members are related. This information was passed down by word of mouth for many generations until it was written by Moses. At first, the long lists of difficult names seem tedious, but there are interesting details contained in these records. For example, the Messiah's ancestry can be traced back to Adam.

5. From Adam to Noah - 5:1-6:8

a) Notice that Adam and each of his descendants lived to be slightly less than 1000 years old. How do you reconcile this with God's statement in **Genesis 2:17**?

b) What happened to Enoch? What light does Hebrews 11:5 shed on this? Why do you think this happened to Enoch?

c) Who was Noah's father? What does Noah's name mean? Who were Noah's sons?

d) Who do you think the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” were? What do you think God meant in **Genesis 6:3**? Who do you think the Nephilim were?

Who were the Nephilim spoken of in Genesis 6:4?

The question of the identity of these people has never been definitively answered. From the text, it would appear that the Nephilim are the offspring from the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” and it would seem that they were in some way superior to humans – “they were heroes of old, men of renown.” Traditionally, there have been at least three explanations put forward as to the identity of the Nephilim:

1. They were the offspring of fallen angels and human women. This view is supported by the meaning of the Hebrew word ‘Nephilim’ - “fallen ones.”
2. They were the offspring of the male descendants of Seth and the female descendants of Cain. This view is held by those who believe it is not possible for angels to have offspring with humans.
3. They were merely tall, large, strong men who dominated society in those days.

Whatever the answer, we are not given enough information in the Bible to know with certainty the origin of these people. We do, however, encounter descendants of the Nephilim in other Bible passages, such as **Numbers 13:33**.

e) Why was God grieved and his “heart filled with pain”? What did He decide to do? Why do you suppose that Noah “found favor in the eyes of God”?

Scripture Link

In **Genesis 6:8**, the *Torah* states that “Noah found favor in the eyes of God.” How do you suppose Noah was able to do this? In **Hebrews 11:7**, the writer speaks of the faith that Noah had. As we will see in the next lesson, Noah believed God, which is what faith really is, and unquestioningly obeyed his instructions. Just one verse earlier, **Hebrews 11:6** states that “without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Digging deeper

1. Compare the first chapter of Genesis with the first 18 verses of the Gospel of John. Also compare **Genesis 1:3** with **John 8:12**. What similarities do you find and what additional insights do you gain from these comparisons?

2. Based on the genealogy given in **Genesis 5**, calculate how many years elapsed between creation and the birth of Noah. Did Adam live to see Noah's birth?

3. **Matthew 24:36** reads "As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be at the coming of the Son of Man." Do you think this describes the state of the world today?

For each *Torah* portion (*Parashah*), the ancient Hebrew scribes defined a corresponding reading from the prophets, called the *Haftarah* (conclusion). These passages are tied to the *Torah* portion by a key idea or theme. Also, after the New Testament (*Brit Hadashah*) was formalized, Bible scholars chose from it passages that also complement the *Torah* portion. These often provide additional insight into the *Torah* portion and can lead to a better understanding of the unity and consistency of God's word.

For further study, see
Haftarah : Hosea 2:1-22
Brit Hadashah : Luke 2:1-7; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31