

Noah ***Noah ben Yitzchak Mordechai V' Masha Hertzlia***

Parashat Bereishit 1:1-6:8

October 4, 2018

Summary

This week we read the very first words of the entire Torah. Before we meet anyone else in the Torah we immediately meet God, and God is busy. The very first verses we read describe both what God creates and the order in which God creates it:

First day:	Day and night
Second day:	Sky, earth, and seas
Third day:	Plants and trees
Fourth day:	Sun, moon, and stars
Fifth day:	Animals that live in the water and birds
Sixth day:	Land animals and people
Seventh day:	Shabbat

Towards the end of the first chapter, the Torah makes a point of teaching us that we are created *b'tzelem elohim*--in the image of God.

Later in this week's *parasha* we read about the creation of Adam and *Havah* and the first family ever. We meet the brothers *Kayin* and *Hevel* and learn a little bit about their personalities. We see how a misunderstanding between them can quickly get out of control. We also learn about the ways in which members of this family deal with curiosity, the relationships they develop with God, and some of the challenges that they face with each other in the Garden of Eden as they get to know each other. As we learn about these first people we also learn about some of the mistakes they make as they try to figure out how best to live in this newly-created world.

Questions:

1) The part of this week's *parashah* that I was most interested in studying is the story of the first two brothers, *Kayin* and *Hevel*. One of the first things we learn about them is that they have different jobs. *Hevel* was a shepherd and *Kayin* worked the land as a farmer. Why do you think that the Torah tells us that they had different jobs? <<Pick 3>>

The Torah describes each brother as doing something different but useful. Maybe this shows that each brother is helping provide a different kind of food--meat and vegetables--or that *Hevel* worked to make sure human beings had wool for clothing and pillows while *Kayin* made sure human beings have vegetables for food.

2) The next thing we read in the *parasha* is that each brother brought a gift to God. *Kayin* brought fruit from the earth and *Hevel* chose the best of his first born sheep to bring as a gift. Why do you think each brother might have brought a gift to God? <<Pick 3>>

Maybe they want God to like them. For *Kayin* that it might be important for God to like him so that God would give him the right amount of rain for his crops. For *Hevel* it might be important that God liked him so that God would make sure his sheep had enough to eat and a long life.

For the most part, though, I think that people give gifts to be nice. When you do something kind and thoughtful for someone it puts more good into the world and makes the world a better place. It might even end up creating so much good that it comes back around to the person who gives.

3) After the brothers give their gifts, we read that God paid attention to the best of the first born sheep that *Hevel* gave, but not to the fruits of the land that *Kayin* gave. This made *Kayin* very upset. Why do you think God liked *Hevel*'s gift better? Was it fair that God paid more attention to *Hevel*'s gift, or do you think God should have acted differently?
<<Pick 3>>

I think God reacted naturally and appropriately. Before giving someone a gift it is important to think about the person you're giving the gift to so that you can give them something that they like and that is useful for them. I think God probably liked the sheep gift better because the sheep was a living thing with feelings and emotions so it felt like more of a sacrifice for *Hevel*.