

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

Credit of content – Hebrews for Christians

For the original content you can check <https://www.hebrew4christians.com/>

The word *bereshit* (בְּרֵאשִׁית) can mean "in the beginning" or "at the start" or "at the head of (all things)," etc. (notice the term *rosh* (ראש, "head") appears embedded in the word as its *shoresh* (root)). In Jewish tradition, the word can refer to *either* the first weekly Torah portion (parashah) in the annual Jewish cycle of Torah reading (called "parashat Bereshit") or to the first book of the Torah itself (called "Sefer Bereshit"). When used to refer to the first book of the Torah, *bereshit* is sometimes called *sefer rishon* (the First Book) or *sefer beri'at ha'olam* (the Book of the Creation of the world). The ancient Greek translation of the Torah (i.e., the Septuagint) called the book "Genesis" (Γένεσις: "birth", "origin") instead of using the translation of the first Hebrew word (בְּרֵאשִׁית), i.e., ἐν ἀρχῇ, for the book's title. The term "Genesis" was used in subsequent Latin and English translations of the book. There are fifty chapters in Bereshit (20,512 words, 78,064 letters) that are divided into twelve weekly readings.

The Hebrew Scriptures begin - not from the first person perspective of some man's understanding of God - but from an omniscient third person perspective, a Voice that reveals the Glorious Power that created the entire cosmos by means of His Word. The very first verse of the Bible, then, reveals the triune nature of God, further indicated by the use of the [plural form](#) of the name *Elohim* with the singular verb *bara* (he created). Indeed, later in this parashah we will read a direct quotation from this Elohim that uses *plural* personal pronouns: "Let *us* make man in *our* image and in *our* likeness" (1:26).

After this breathtaking opening line, shrouded as it is in mystery, the Torah describes how Elohim created the universe *yesh me'ayin* - out of nothing (Heb. 1:3) over a six "day" period, culminating in the personal creation of a human being *b'tzelem elohim* - in the image of Elohim Himself.

The first day (*yom*) of creation is introduced with the vision of the earth as *tohu vavohu* (without form and void), and the Spirit of Elohim is seen hovering over the waters. Then the first direct quotation of Elohim is given: *yehi or* (let there be light!), with the added commentary that Elohim then saw that the light was *tov* (good) and separated it from the darkness (*choshek*). The Divine

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

Narrator then adds that Elohim called the light *yom* (day) and the darkness *lialah* (night), and so ends the first day.

The first day is another great mystery, suggesting some sort of divine determination of both good and evil, light and darkness, and the creation and division of time. The phrase *vaihi erev, vaihi voker yom echad* ("And there was evening and there was morning, the first day") is also the basis for reckoning the start of the Jewish day at sundown (*erev*) rather than at sunrise (*boker*).

A quick overview of the remaining days. On the second day, Elohim formed the canopy (*rakia'*) above the earth, dividing the "upper waters" from the "lower waters." Elohim called the physical canopy heaven (*shamayim*). On the third day He set the boundaries of land (*eretz*) and seas (*yamim*) and called forth trees and seed-bearing vegetation from the earth. On the fourth day He fixed the position of the sun, moon and stars to establish the times and seasons (*mo'edim*) and to be illuminators of the earth. Fish, birds and reptiles are created on the fifth day (they are the recipients of the first personal blessing from Elohim), and on the sixth day, Elohim created land animals and finally the human being (*adam*, from *adamah*, earth), created *b'tzelem elohim*, as already mentioned above. Elohim ceased work on the seventh day, and sanctified it as a day of rest (*shavat*, from which the word Shabbat is derived). Thus ends the primary account of creation, from Genesis 1:1 through 2:3.

Beginning with Genesis 2:4, the Divine Narrator gives us a closer look at the creation of Adam, and Elohim is further revealed by means of the personal Name [YHVH](#) - the Sacred Name of God. It is generally thought that [Elohim](#) is the Name given as the Creator of the universe, implying strength, power, and justice, whereas YHVH expresses the idea of God's closeness to humans. For example, it is YHVH who "breathed into his (Adam's) nostrils the breath of life" to become a living soul (*nephesh chaiyah*), formed (*yatzar*) him from the dust of the earth, and then placed him in the Garden of Eden (*gan eden*), the original paradise.

In *gan eden* was *etz hachayim*, the tree of life, as well as *etz hada'at tov vara*, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam's first responsibility before the LORD was to work (*avodah*) and guard the garden, and to refrain from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

Originally Adam was created as a single person; but the LORD decided that it was not good for him be alone, and therefore paraded all of the land animals before him to see what he would name them. After experiencing all of the various animals of the earth, the LORD put Adam into a deep sleep and formed a woman from his "side" so that she would be *ezer kenegdo* - a "helper in front of him." Upon awakening, a happy Adam called her *ishah*, and they were made *basar echad* (one flesh) through the very first marriage ceremony on the earth.

- I. The Haftarah reading is found in [Isaiah 42:5-43:10](#).
 - A. Can you relate at least two ways Isaiah 42:5 is thematically connected to the Torah portion?³⁴
 - B. How is Isaiah 42:6 thematically related to the Torah portion?³⁵
 - C. How is Isaiah 42:13 thematically related to the Torah portion?³⁶
 - D. How is Isaiah 42:14 thematically related to the Torah portion?³⁷
 - E. How is Isaiah 42:15-16 thematically related to the Torah portion?³⁸

Questions about the Bible Reading:

1. What is the first letter of the Bible? (Gen. 1:1)
2. What does the word bereshit (tyviarEB.) mean? (Gen. 1:1)
3. Why doesn't the Torah begin with God's Name, i.e., "God created in the beginning"?
4. What existed before God created the heavens and the earth?
5. How was the earth described just after its creation? (Gen. 1:2)
6. What was the Spirit of God doing over "the face of the waters"? (Gen. 1:2)
7. What was the first thing God said (Gen. 1:3)?
8. Why did God separate the light from the darkness? (Gen. 1:4)
9. What did God create on the first day (Gen. 1:1-5)?
10. What does the Hebrew word yom (~Ay) mean? (Gen. 1:5)
11. When does a day (yom) begin?
12. Should we understand each "day" mentioned in the creation account to be a literal, 24-hour day, or perhaps some sort of "eon" or period of time?
13. Did Jesus believe Adam and Eve were created beings?
14. Did God create the darkness? (Gen. 1:5)

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

Answers:

1. The first letter of Torah is the Bet (**B**) that begins the word bereshit a letter that is composed of three Vavs, which add up to 18, the same value for chai , or life. The house of creation is then the life of the universe.
2. Bereshit comes from reishit meaning first or best (Psalm 111:10). Note that this does not necessarily mean “the beginning” in a temporal sense, but rather primacy or rulership over all that exists. Indeed, the word bereshit includes the root idea of “head”, which suggests the “head of all things,” that is, to the Messiah, the Creative Word of God who is the “head of all beginning and authority” and through Whom and for Whom all things were created (Col. 1:16; 2:10).
3. This is to teach us not to pronounce God’s Name in vain. Alternatively, it is a token of God’s humility. Gentile kings wish to place their names before everything else; the LORD places His Name in the middle of things, so to speak.
4. We do not know and we are advised not to probe too deeply into such mysteries. We take it on faith that God created the universe at the precise instant he desired, and for reasons of his own inscrutable will. There is some debate, however, as to whether God created everything in an instant and the description of the other “days” were revelations of things already performed on the original day, or whether we should read the text as literally a six day period of creation. There is also debate on whether creation began in Nisan or in Tishri, relative to Jerusalem.
5. Tohu va’vohu "confusion and emptiness." Notice that this is mentioned to state that everything, without exception, was created in the six days (i.e., there was no preexistent matter since God created the heavens and the earth, yet the earth was “without form and void”). The structure of the world was imposed by God through the imposition of His word, and if the world reverts to original chaos, it is because God removes His sustaining presence. Later judgments alluded to “tohu va’vohu” (e.g., Isa 34:11; Jer 4:23), though this usage should not be “read into” the meaning implied here.
6. The Hebrew verb is thought to mean “hovering” (as a bird over her young: Deut. 32:11), brooding over the waters in preparation for the creative acts that follow. Note that the “Spirit of God” is assuredly God Himself.
7. Yehi Ohr “Let there be light.” Note that this light should not be understood as the light of the sun or the stars, which were established in their locations (relative to earth) on the 4th day. The Divine Light was extremely brilliant, that could “see to the ends of the world,” that is thousands of times brighter than the light of the sun. The idea that God spoke and something was created indicates creation ex nihilo, or yesh me’ayin (Psalm 33:6, 9).

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

8. God separated (vayavdel) the light from the darkness, calling light “good”. The same verb is used later regarding the law of holiness: You are to distinguish between the holy and the common (Lev. 10:10) and is the basis for the closing Sabbath ritual called havdalah.
9. Heaven, earth, light, darkness, chaos, void, water, day, night, wind, and perhaps angels. According to some sages, the very first thing God created was the Throne of His Glory, followed by the angels, the heavens, the earth, etc.
10. In general, yom can refer to the period of light as contrasted with the period of darkness, and therefore is relational to the measurement of the extent of sunlight and its relative position (i.e., daylight). The word can also refer to a 24 hour solar day that includes both evening and morning (Gen. 1:5). An hour (sha’ah) is calculated by taking the total time of daylight (from sunrise until sunset) of a particular day and dividing it into 12 equal parts. This is called sha'ah zemanit, or a "proportional hour." Since the duration of daylight varies according to seasons of the year, a proportionate hour will therefore vary by season. For example, if the sun rises at 4:30 a.m. and sets at 7:30 p.m., the total time of daylight is 15 hours. 15 hours * 60 minutes is 900, which divided by 12 yields a proportional hour of 75 minutes. The "sixth hour of the day" therefore begins 450 minutes after sunrise, or about 11:30 in the morning.
11. The Torah repeats the formula, “it was evening, and it was morning, one day,” therefore day follows night, and hence we start the Sabbath and festivals at sunset of the night before. The fact that light was created (and separated) out of darkness implies that day follows the night, not the other way around.
12. The Hebrew word yom appears over 2,000 times in Scripture, and whenever it is used in connection with a specific number, it always indicates a 24-hour period. Likewise, whenever it occurs with the terms “evening” (erev) and “morning” (boker), it always refers to a 24-hour period. The idea of a literal six days of creation is the foundation for the weekly Sabbath and was written by God Himself in the Ten Commandments: “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy (Exod. 20:11). Note that the idea of the seventh day is connected with the idea of holiness (Gen. 2:2-3). Likewise the Sabbath is called an “eternal sign” between God and the people of Israel because “in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed” (Exod. 31:17). The grammar of Genesis chapter one undeniably uses the word “day” to mean a 24 hour period of time.
13. Yes, He plainly stated that “from the beginning of creation God made them male and female” (Mark 10:6) and this implies a relatively recent span of human history. Yeshua clearly believed in a special act of creation for Adam and Eve (Matt. 19:4), not that they were evolved creatures that arose from past eons of time.

THE LIGHTHOUSE FELLOWSHIP

14. Yes, God formed the light out of the darkness, and therefore “night” (the time after sunset until sunrise) is part of the concept of “day.” This explains why we say “this Sabbath day” after sundown on Friday.