

Candlelight time: 6:16 P.M. ... Sabbath Ends at 7:07

Scriptural reading for tomorrow morning:

BERASHIT: Genesis 1:1-6:8

HAFTARAH: Isaiah 42:5-43:10

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK: The portrayal in Bereshit (Genesis) of creation traces the ancestry of all mankind to one man, Adam. It enforces the concept of human brotherhood. We all share the same parentage. Any claim of racial superiority is void. "Have we not all one father?" reasons the prophet (Malachi 2:10). Say the Rabbis, "The cause of universal peace is hereby advanced. One Adam was created, so that no man might say to his fellow, 'My Father was greater than yours.' " (Mishna, Sanhedrin 4:5)

Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

Candlelight time 6:28 Sabbath ends 7:19
Scriptural Reading for Saturday Morning, Oct. 16:

BERESHIT: Genesis 1:1-6:8

HAFTARAH: Isaiah 42:5—43:10

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

MAN'S DIVINE IMAGE: "God created man in His image." (Gen. 1:27) This by no means refers to physical form, but rather to man's unique status and role in the universe. As God's "partner" in the ever-renewed process of creation, man is in charge of his natural environment. He is called "to develop and protect it," (2:15), and not worship or exploit it. This evokes in a man a sense of responsibility towards this world and respect for himself and his fellow-men. By improving and cherishing the creation, man represents the Creator's image.

Candlelight time 6:34 Sabbath ends 7:15

BERESHIT: Genesis 1:1-6:8

HAFTARAH: Isaiah 42:5-43:10

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

“TAKING“ A PERSON, in the biblical sense, is to reach him, not seize him – to get to him spiritually, not get him physically. Therefore, the verse (Gen. 2:15), “Then the Lord God ‘took’ Adam and put him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and tend it,” means that God approached him with kind words and prevailed on him to enter the garden by his own free will. Thus is the verb “take” to be understood whenever its direct object is a human being (e.g., Num. 15:1). Only by “words” – the power of communication and the exchange of ideas and sentiments – can a person really be “taken” as a person, not by manipulation or imposition. Manhandled or overwhelmed, he is truly not reached. The only positive way, morally as well as practicably, is conviction, when a person is effectively moved to unfold and follow the dictates of his heart. So, too, man “taking” a woman (in biblical terminology) means not acquiring or possessing her, but gaining her love: courting her, touching her heart, embracing and shielding her with kindness. People must learn to become neither tyrants nor pawns, but each a master – reaching towards, and being reached by, one another.

Candlelight time 6:22 Sabbath ends 7:13

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, Oct. 20:

BERESHIT: Genesis 1:1-6:8

HAFTARAH: Isaiah 42:5-43:10

Simhat Torah: Friday, Oct. 19

— Thought of the Week —

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE STORY OF CAIN AND ABEL (Gen. 4:1-16) tells of the first homicide: The murderer and his victim are brothers. This is symbolic of all murders. Whenever one person kills another person, truly it is a brother killing a brother: "Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us all?" (Malachi 2:10).

Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, Oct. 4:

BERESHIT: Genesis 1:1-6:8

HAFTARAH: I Samuel 20:18-42

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

ADAM – proper name of the first human being as well as generic name for all human beings – is associated with the word “adama,” meaning soil or ground (which in Mesopotamia is mostly reddish; thus, “adom” is red and “dam” is blood). The Creation story employs a play on words (Gen. 2:7): Adam is created from the dust of the “adama.” Another word connection is implied in verse 5:1 between “adam” and “demut,” meaning likeness or imagery: Adam is made in the Divine “demut.” The name Adam thus points to both aspects of man’s being: his physiological origin and substance – “adama” – and his spiritual dignity and destiny – “demut.” Although stemming from and returning to the “dust of the ground,” man, in his creative and meaningful living, represents the Divine image.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE CREATION STORY comes not to provide a theory of cosmogony, to explain the genesis and evolution of the universe, but to establish a principle of faith: that all existence is designed, initiated and constantly sustained by God – by His creative, purposive and beneficent will. The common translation “God created” is inadequate; unlike “created” the Hebrew “bara” is applicable only to God; it means not just to produce or to form but rather to bring into being from absolute nothingness (“ex nihilo”), which no man, machine or natural force, can do. Also, the familiar “God said, ‘Let there be...’” is not in line with authentic Jewish commentary (Saadia, Maimonides, Nahmanides). The Hebrew “amar” in our context refers not to speech (verbal pronouncement) but to conception, indicating volition and decision: God **willed** (ordained and decreed) all that there is. The world is thus a tangible incorporation of the will of God, of His “ma’amarot” (words). The rabbis enumerated Ten Words of Creation—parallel to the Ten Words on the Tablets of the Law (“Ten Commandments”). Both are divine laws. The laws of morality are ingrained in the nature of the universe, the integrity and survival of which depend on their fulfillment.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

DID “SONS OF GODS” MATE with fair mortal females? So say current Bible translations. The New English Bible of 1970 puts it this way (Gen. 6:1-2): “When mankind began to increase and to spread all over the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of the gods saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; so they took for themselves such women as they chose.” This rendition, “sons of gods,” for the Hebrew “benei ha-elohim,” differs from that of The King James Version of 1611, “sons of God.” Both, however, are not in accord with mainstream Jewish commentary (Targum, Midrash, Rashi, Ramban) that renders the Hebrew phrase, simply and mundanely, “sons of the mighty” – namely, the spoiled scions of powerful rulers. These “noble princes” imposed themselves, by rape or seduction, on the poor women of the common folk. Their ambivalent title “benei ha-elohim may hint they claimed “Divine” origin and privilege. Accordingly, this is no mythical tale about “fallen angels” or “deities” (nor science fiction or prehistoric astronauts from outer space) engaging in sexual exploits with human earthlings, but a real historical picture of social iniquity: a warning against the corruption of power.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE STORY OF CREATION is the first theme of Torah. It teaches that the world in which we live is an expression of God's wisdom and will, divinely designed and ordained, to be cherished and cultivated by human initiative and care. The whole natural world is thus a sacred shrine — the true House of God; as dramatized by Isaiah (66:1-2) in His name: "The skies, My throne; the earth, My footstool. Where is the house you could build for Me? Where the place of My abode." Within this world, and no other, permeating divine presence and majesty, we are called upon to perfect our humanity and to worship Him — within His glorious palace, this world.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE CREATION STORIES of Torah aim to teach faith in the Creator and respect for His creation, not lessons in science. In sublime verses and majestic style the stories proclaim that the natural order reflects Divine will and design, all being “very good;” that all human beings are created in the Divine image, endowed with moral responsibility to choose between evil and good. The biblical accounts of creation neither negate nor confirm any scientific theory on the origins and evolution of the physical world and its living species. Revealing nothing about cosmology or biology, these biblical sources, nonetheless, are the foundations of our religion and ethics. They foster our sense of reverence and gratitude to God, appreciation and concern for the natural order, and self-esteem in relating to this world as partners to God, ordained to cherish and improve life.

Candlelight time 6:42 Sabbath ends 7:34
Scriptural reading for Saturday morning, Oct. 7:

BERESHIT: Genesis 1:1-6:8

HAFTARAH: I Samuel 20:18-42

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

“AM I MY BROTHER’S KEEPER?” is the attitude of a Cain (Gen. 4:19). Lack of concern for others—their lives and well-being—is the root of violence. The absence of the desire to cherish life, even without the overt desire to kill, fosters aggression and bloodshed. A philosophy of “each for himself” spells disaster, breeds Cains. To combat murder we must nourish reverence for all life. As long as others are considered strangers, even no enemies, there exists the threat of people killing each other. Only an active sense of brotherhood will prevent murder. The essence of a just and secure society is maintained by strengthening the bridges between man and man, not by enforcing and keeping fences between them. The lesson of Cain’s Tale: If you are not your brother’s keeper, you might become his murderer.

BERESHIT

Thought One

THE IDEA OF HUMAN BROTHERHOOD is advocated by Torah's portrayal of Creation which traces the ancestry of all humankind to a singular Adam -- one father and one mother. We all share the same parents. Any claim of racial superiority is thus void.

Say the Rabbis (Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5): One single person was created at the beginning, as the origin of all humanity, for the sake of promoting universal peace. So that no one might say to his fellow, "My parents were superior than yours!"

BERESHIT

Thought Two

HUMAN DIVINE IMAGE: Torah's assertion that (Genesis 1:27) "God created every human being in His image" does not refer to a person's physical form but rather to his unique status and role in the universe. As God's partner in the ever-renewed process of creation, a human being is put in charge of his natural environment. He is called upon (2:15) "to develop and protect it," rather than either worship or exploit it.

This Jewish conception of the divine image in every human being may imbue a person with a sense of responsibility towards this world, respect for himself, and regard for his fellow human beings. By cherishing and improving the created universe, a human person represents his Creator's image.

BERESHIT

Thought Three

ANY HOMICIDE IS FRATRICIDE. Torah's story of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-16) tells of the first homicide. It was fratricide: The murderer and his victim were brothers. This is symbolic of all bloodshed. Whenever one human being kills another human being, truly it is a brother killing a brother.

So claims the prophet Malachi (2:10):
"Have we not all one father? Has not One God created us all?"

BERESHIT

Thought Four

HOW DO WE "TAKE" A PERSON? In the biblical sense, to "take" a person means to reach him spiritually, not hold him physically. Thus, the verse in Genesis (2:15), "Then the Lord God 'took' Adam and put him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and tend it," has been explained in rabbinic tradition to mean that God approached him with kind words and appealed to him to enter the garden. Adam was not coerced to do so; he did it on his own free will.

Whenever its direct object is a human being, the Hebrew verb "to take" (lakahat) is understood as verbal persuasion, winning him over with "words" (devarim; cf., Numbers 15:1). Only with words -- by the power of human communication, the charm of expressed ideas and feelings, not by force of manipulation, harassment or imposition -- can a person really be "taken" as a person. Manhandled or overwhelmed -- by a human being or God -- a person can only and certainly be forced, but never truly reached, or "taken" in the biblical sense. The only valid way, morally as well as prudently, for "getting" a person, is by appeal and conviction: Then he is really moved by and follows the dictates of his own heart.

In the same way the biblical phraseology of a man "taking" a woman means not acquiring her or possessing her, but rather gaining her will and her love -- tenderly courting her, lovingly touching her heart, in kindness embracing and shielding her. Torah teaches us that in our human interaction we shall become neither tyrants nor pawns -- neither "grab" nor be "grabbed" -- but remain our masters and retain our dignity. As human beings, we can "take" and be "taken" -- reach out and be reached -- only through the power of words.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

WHAT IS A HUMAN BEING? Partly brute, partly divine, claim the Sages: "He eats, drinks, cohabits, procreates, and dies--like an animal; he rules, speaks, thinks, and has vision--like a celestial being." Biologically, part of all other living creatures, weaker and more vulnerable than most of them; spiritually, however, homo sapiens is uniquely distinguished to rank above all creatures. Man (including both male and female) is portrayed in Genesis as the crown of creation, partner to God in the ongoing process of creation--born in His image. This "divine image"--hallmark of each and every member of the human race--refers not to any physiological quality or appearance, but to a person's spiritual assets and virtues. What is divine in a human being is his ability and duty to reason, to be free, to choose--and assume moral responsibility.

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

THE DIVINE IMAGE of every human person (Genesis 1:27) refers to the spiritual qualities which distinguish him from other living creatures; his innate dignity, supreme intelligence, freedom of choice, moral awareness, sense of responsibility, and above all, his deliberate (rather than instinctive) compassion. These divine qualities cannot be taken for granted; they must be cherished and cultivated. A human being must maintain and respect his human dignity, develop and apply his gifts of reason and articulation, exercise and protect his freedoms, refine his moral sensitivities, strengthen his sense of responsibility, and--consciously and sensibly--be helpful and merciful. No human being can, or should aspire to be God. But the closest a person can and should come to God is to live by His attributes, His loving-kindness and His justice.

Candlelight time 6:28 Sabbath ends 7:19

Scriptural reading for Saturday, Oct. 16:

BERESHIT: Genesis 1:1-6:8

HAFTARAH: I Samuel 20:18-42

Thought of the Week

By Rabbi Zvi Yehuda

FROM THE END TO THE BEGINNING: In a strikingly symbolic and dramatic manner, whenever we conclude the reading of the last portion of Deuteronomy, we immediately start with the reading of the first portion of Genesis. In truth, Torah has no end and no beginning. The cycle of constant study must never be broken or interrupted. Torah begins with a cosmological-universal outlook, with the word *bereshit* (in the beginning), and concludes with the religious-national experience of the people, ending with the word Israel. This symbolizes the universal scope and the particular core of Torah's concern. It was also observed that Torah ends with the letter *lamed* and begins with the letter *bet*, thus forming together the word *lev*, heart. Torah is the heart of the world and of the people.

Thought of the Week

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

“TOV ME’OD!” (“VERY GOOD!”) is the “grade” given to all creation by the Creator (Gen. 1:31): “God inspected all that he had made and found it very good!”

This does not mean that our world (as claimed by Leibnitz) is the best of all possible worlds. This view was eloquently ridiculed by Voltaire (in his satire, “Candide”). How can a universe full of violence, earthquakes, floods, famine, and other inherent deficiencies, be considered perfect?

But as imperfect as it is, still it is magnificently a “very good” universe, commanding our gratitude to its Creator, and our concern for its preservation, cultivation, and constant perfection. It is the only world in which humankind can and must exercise moral and spiritual development, always making it better and better.

Thought of the Week

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

“LET US MAKE ADAM”(Gen. 1:26): The plural “us” in this divine statement is merely rhetorical. Torah insists on God’s absolute Oneness, on pure Monotheism. But why use such a misleading phrase, with vestiges of polytheism?

Our Sages explain that before creating Adam, the first human being, God “consulted with His angels” -- namely, all the forces of creation already in existence -- involving them in the creation of humanity. Cosmic participation is essential in the design of the crown of creation. This example of divine considerateness and cooperation serves as a lesson in proper human conduct: No one should boast of being too great to consult with others. Torah prefers risking a possible mistake in theology (polytheism), to suppressing a lesson in ethics -- the virtue of humility.

Thought of the Week

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

“BERESHIT,” the word with which Torah begins, is commonly rendered “In the beginning.” Symbolically, the “beginning” of Torah points to the “beginning” of all existence. Torah operates as the blueprint of the universe. In its first three verses (Genesis 1:1-3), Torah conveys the idea that “In the beginning” of God’s creation of the universe (“the heavens and the earth”) – when the earth was unformed and void, darkness covered the surface of the abyss, and a mighty wind was sweeping over the waters – God decreed, “Let there be light!” And there was light. The initial act of Genesis is creation of light (“*Yehi Or*”). So, too, is the perpetual purpose of Torah to bring light (“*Torah Or*”).

Another translation of “*Bereshit*” is preserved in the Aramaic *Targum Yerushalmi*: In wisdom God created the universe (compare Proverbs 3:19). Both Torah and creation manifest divine wisdom. The beginning of both is wisdom.

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

AYEKA? -- "WHERE ARE YOU?" -- God's question to Adam (Gen. 3:9), is eternally directed to each individual at any moment of his life. Phrased in the second person singular, "you" referring to one person, this divine call invokes one's sense of duty and accountability: Do I know where I am? Am I where I should be?

This "*ayeka*" question branches off in rabbinic tradition into three parts, all addressed to the singular "you" (*ata*), as they relate to a person's origin, progress and destiny: "Whence do you come? Whither do you go? Before whom do you prepare to give account?" (*Avot* 3:1).

This introspection encompasses one's past, present and future: What are my historical roots? What are my current accomplishments? And what is my responsibility towards generations to come?

THE "DIVINE IMAGE" OF A HUMAN BEING (Genesis 1:27) relates to the spiritual -- not the physical! -- qualities which distinguish the human person from other living creatures: Innate dignity, supreme intelligence, moral awareness, sense of duty, responsibility and freedom of choice; and, above all, the human ability to experience life, and express oneself, through reason and deliberation, rather than by impulse and instinct. These human qualities -- emulative of the Divine and thus reflective of His image -- must be cherished and cultivated. No human being can, or should, aspire to be God or even like God. But the closest a person can, and should, come to God, is to live by God's attributes. Namely, to respect one's human innate dignity, develop one's gifts of reason and articulation, refine one's moral sensitivity, strengthen one's sense of accountability, exercise and guard one's freedoms; and, in particular, teach oneself to be, sensibly and consciously, merciful and helpful. Thus, one maintains and reflects the Divine image.

THE "DIVINE IMAGE" OF A HUMAN BEING (*Tzelem Elokim*; Gen. 1:27) refers to the spiritual -- not the physical! -- qualities which distinguish the human person from all other living creatures, endowing humankind with divine dignity. These include: Moral awareness, responsibility, sense of duty, freedom of choice; inner quest for meaning and high intelligence. All these noble qualities -- emulative of the Divine and reflective of God's image -- must be cherished and cultivated humanly.

In Judaism no human being can become God or even be like God. The closest a person can come to God is by following God's Torah (Teaching) and living by God's attributes of wisdom and compassion. To be truly human means to experience life and relate to oneself and others by applying reason and moral judgment, and not by succumbing to impulse and instinct. By being human -- doing God's will, by learning to be merciful and helpful, by refining one's moral sensitivity and sense of accountability -- one maintains and reflects the Divine image.

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

By RABBI ZVI YEHUDA

BERESHIT ("In the beginning") is the first word of Torah. Symbolically, the "beginning" of Torah points to the "beginning" of all existence. In rabbinic Midrash, Torah operates as the core and blueprint of the universe.

Torah's first three verses (Genesis 1:1-3) convey syntactically one interconnected idea. "In the beginning – of God's creation of the world (heaven and earth) – when the earth was unformed and void, darkness covering the surface of the abyss, and a mighty wind sweeping over the

waters – God decreed, 'Let there be light!' and there was light."

Symbolically, so, too, is the enduring purpose of Torah, bringing light and enlightenment.

Another significant rendition of the initial word of Torah, *Bereshit*, in a homiletic vein, is that of the

Aramaic *Targum Yerushalmi*: "By 'wisdom' God created the world" (compare Proverbs 3:19). Both Torah and creation manifest divine wisdom. The light of wisdom is the origin and quintessence ("beginning") of both.