

September 18, 2016 - Rosh Hashanah

To begin the first year of the 3 1/2 year cycle, we should first read the Shema. (The Jews always read this before opening the scriptures).

Shema -

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Deuteronomy 11:13-21

Numbers 15:37-41

In the Book of Genesis, we will continually read stories of alienation - Adam and Eve driven from the Garden, humanity scattered at the Tower of Babel, Abraham leaving Ur, nomads wandering in strange lands, Joseph sold into slavery in Egypt. It's also a story of God's faithfulness, and his promise to provide a Seed, and a place for them to dwell with Himself, pointing to Messiah, Emmanuel, "God with/ in us."

At the beginning of our journey through the Torah, we pray our experience will be like the disciples on the Road to Emmaus, who said "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"

Torah Reading - Gen. 1:1 – 2:3 - Creation

Psalm 1 - Delight in the Torah

Haftorah - Isaiah 42:5-13 + 21; Isaiah 44:24 – 45:5, 7; Isaiah 45:18-25; 46:9-10

Isaiah 65:17-25; 66:22

Special: Hosea 14:2-10; Micah 7:18-20

These readings have one overriding focus, to reveal Christ.

"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." - Luke 24:27

Rosh Hashanah -

Prayer on Rosh Hashanah - "This is the day of the beginning of Your creation, a memorial of the first day... today is the conception of the world."

This is the day of the beginning of creation, like R' Eliezer said: "In Tishrei the world was created." (Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 27a)

In the other 3 1/2 year cycle starting in the spring, Gen. 1 is read in Nisan, so there was some confusion about when the earth was created:

Rabbi Yehoshua says differently from Rabbi Eliezer that the world was created in Nissan (the month of Passover) but these are words of the living God. And we should assume that in Tishrei, the thought to create came up in [God's] mind, but it was not

brought into creation until Nissan. (Tosefot, Rosh Hashanah 27a)

Creation Account

Hebrews 11:3 - "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

Romans 1:19-20 - "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

Our prayer to "open to us the scriptures" assumes the scriptures can't be understood without revelation. They need to be "opened."

The Enlightenment standard of truth as empirical knowledge and brute fact is alien to the variety of forms revelation takes in the Bible.

Heb 1:1 - "Long ago, at many times and *in many ways*, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets"

Christians rightly expect a concord between the teaching of scripture and reality. One of the difficulties is that the teaching of scripture can take many forms ... poetry, story, proverbs, history, prophecy, apocalyptic imagery, and more. These forms are molded in time and place – not only by the worldview and knowledge of the day (ancient near eastern cosmology for example), but also by the literary forms at work in the culture.

God spoke in the language of the ancient Hebrews, using metaphors they would understand. The fact that he never mentions quantum mechanics doesn't mean the message is not true. The cosmology of a heaven above, earth beneath and an underworld below ground is one we don't believe today. For instance, emotions are not generated in our kidneys or entrails. But these were common beliefs in ancient times, and uncorrected in scripture.

The purpose of the scriptures

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable *for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*"

Paul told Timothy that all scripture is God-breathed, but it is in the context of a statement that defines a purpose for scripture. It gives "wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ" and it is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." ... *Not to tell us everything about everything.*

The creation account in Genesis serves one purpose - to express the Shema - "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4) This is made apparent by the Haftorah

readings for this week.

Nature and all its many forces are only creations, not gods themselves. There is only one supreme ruler and creator. He is in control. He reigns. And all men are created in God's image, not just a pharaoh or a king.

This is not designed to be a scientific explanation of how God created things. It is an attack on idolatry from the very first. Pagan religion infused divinity into everything - animals, fire, wind, storms, with gods birthing other gods. etc.

Genesis takes aspects of every other ancient creation account and turns them inside out. All the things people would worship as gods are seen to be merely creations of the One True God.

Even the primordial Chaos - "tohu" in Hebrew - was an ironic play on words. A related word - Tiamot - was the Sumerian goddess of chaos. The semi-divine Marduk fought and overcame her, split her in two and made heaven and earth. In Genesis, there is no conflict, chaos is not overcome, rather it's the formless state from which God's creation proceeds.

Proverbs 8 - Wisdom existed with God before the tohu.

John 1:1-3 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Tohu and bohu - usually related to God's judgment. i.e., a place is reduced to a state of desolation, waste, formlessness before creation - very bad indeed, completely wiped out.

One of the Haftorah readings uses all the words for "create":

Isaiah 45:18 - For thus says the Lord, Who created (bara') the heavens, Who is God, Who formed (yatzar) the earth and made ('asah) it, Who has established (kuwn) it, Who did not create (bara') it in vain (tohu), Who formed (yatzar) it to be inhabited: "I am the LORD, and there is no other.

We can only marvel:

Job 38:4-7 - Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

Let There Be Light

Genesis 1:3 - "And God said, let there be light..."

But this was before the sun, moon or stars were created.

R. Judah maintains:

The light was created first, this being comparable to a king who wished to build a palace, but the site was a dark one. What did he do? He lit lamps and lanterns, to know where to lay the foundations ; in like manner was the light created first.

R. Simeon b. R. Jehozadak asked R. Samuel b. Nahman:

'As I have heard that you are a master of haggadah, tell me whence the light was created?' He replied: 'The Holy One, blessed be He, wrapped Himself therein as in a robe and irradiated with the lustre of His majesty the whole world from one end to the other/ Now he had answered him in a whisper, whereupon he observed, * There is a verse which states it explicitly: Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment (Ps. 104:2), yet you say it in a whisper!' 'Just as I heard it in a whisper, so have I told it to you in a whisper,' he rejoined. R. Berekiah remarked: Had not R. Isaac taught it, 1 could we have said it! 2 Before this, what did they say [on the matter]? R. Berekiah said in R. Isaac's name : The light was created from the place of the Temple, as it is said, And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the east; and His voice was like the sound of many waters ; and the earth did shine with His glory (Ezek. 43:2). Now ' His glory * is nought else but the Temple, as you read: Thou throne of glory, on high from the beginning, Thou place of our sanctuary (Jer. 17:12).

R. Simon said: 'Light' is written five times [in this paragraph], corresponding to the Books of His Torah.

This light stored up for the days of Messiah

It was taught : The light which was created in the six days of Creation cannot illumine by day, because it would eclipse the light of the sun, nor by night, because it was created only to illumine by day. Then where is it? *It is stored up for the righteous in the Messianic future*, as it says, Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of the seven days (Isaiah 30:26).

That light came from God's own garments.

Psalm 104:1-2 - - "covering yourself with light as with a cloak"

Adam and Eve were also clothed with light in the Garden, created in His image and "likeness."

Gen. 2:25 - naked - *ârôwm* - here means not clothed in the normal manner, or "having taken off his mantle, goes only clad in his tunic."

Not as later, in Gen. 3:7 - *erum* - They knew that they were "utterly naked and helpless."

In Zohar, Bereshith - "AND THE EYES OF BOTH OF THEM WERE OPENED. R. Hiya says, their eyes were opened to the evil of the world, which they had not known hitherto. Then they knew that they were naked, since they had lost the celestial lustre which had formerly enveloped them, and of which they were now divested. . . . Formerly they were garments of light (rut 'or), to wit, of the celestial light in which Adam ministered in the Garden of Eden. For, inasmuch as it is the resplendency of the celestial light that ministers in the Garden of Eden, when first man entered into the Garden, the Holy One, blessed be He, clothed him first in the raiment of that light. Otherwise he could not have entered there. When driven out, however, he had need of other garments; hence "garments of skin".

"Now, it has been already taught that a man's good deeds done in this world draw from the celestial resplendency of light a garment with which he may be invested when in the next world he comes to appear before the Holy One, blessed be He. Apparelled in that raiment, he is in a state of bliss and feasts his eyes on the radiant effulgence. So Scripture says: "To behold the graciousness of the Lord, and to visit early in his temple" (Psalm 27:4).

Jesus, as the last Adam, also exhibited this light at the Transfiguration
Matthew 17:2 - "And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."

Another mystical view:

The only difference between the Hebrew words for light and skin is one letter: Aleph (t) for light and Ayin (g) for skin. Numerically, Aleph = 1 and Ayin = 70. The difference between them is 69, represented by the Hebrew letters Samech (x) and Tet (y) or yx. The pictograph of Samech is a prop, meaning, to support. The pictograph of Tet is a snake. Putting the two together, yx means, to support the snake! In other words, by supporting the snake (supporting or going along with the snake's arguments/ways) Adam and Chava (Eve) lost their skins of light and had to be given skins of flesh. And so it is that whenever we support or go along with the snake's arguments/ways we lose some of God's radiance in our lives and become more animalistic and debased in our nature.

(see <http://www.yashanet.com/studies/judaism101/sidebar/ohr.htm>)

Another creation story - Creation of Israel

Genesis 1:2 -

"And the spirit of God hovered:" - this alludes to the spirit of Messiah, as you read, And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him (Isa. xi, 2). In the merit of what will [this spirit] eventually come ? [For the sake of that which] hovered over the face of the waters, i.e. in the merit of repentance which is likened to water, as it is written, Pour out thy heart like water (Lam. 11,19). - Genesis Rabbah

Deuteronomy 32: 10.11 - uses tohu and the word for fluttering râchaph in describing

God discovering a “formless” people, Israel, and caring for her, mirroring Genesis 1:1-2.

Separation of light from darkness is reflected in Exodus 14:19-20 - Pillar of Cloud was light to Israel but darkness and confusion to Egypt.

In the days of Messiah also -

Isaiah 4:5 - And the LORD will create (bara) upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense (or, “indeed a canopy will accompany the Lord’s glorious presence”)

Isaiah 43:15 - I am the LORD, your Holy One, the creator (bara) of Israel, your King.

Personally, we’re a new creation in Him:

Psalms 51:10 - Create (bara) in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

In Christ - 2 Corinthians 2:17 - Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new *creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (ktisis - the act of creating; a thing created)

Days of Creation

Darkness, watery chaos and formless earth are not evil or bad, just amorphous, without order. The problem is solved in the first three days. They are ordered, formed and then filled with creatures (day six).

Babylonian Talmud, Pesachim 88a: Said R. Yohanan, “The ingathering of the exiles is as great as the day on which heaven and earth were created: ‘And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves one head and shall go up out of the land, for great shall be the day of Jezreel’ (Hos. 2:2), and ‘and there was evening and there was morning, one day’ (Gen. 1:4).

Psalms 104 - the whole psalm reflects and expands on the description of the days of creation

Psalms 33 - also here

The Sabbath Rest

Gen. 2:1-3 - God rested from his labors on the seventh day.

Hebrews 10:1-12 - Christ “sat down” after his work of redemption

He is "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8)

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." - John 19:30

"There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:9–11).

Seven - The Heptadic Pattern

Exodus 20:10-11 - But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it

Moses collected the various sources for Genesis from genealogies and narratives that had been passed down orally and then written down at some point. "These are the generations of" marks out the beginning of the genealogies. Then he combined them in a single story.

But Gen. 1:1-2:3 is different. It's not about human history. Different in genre. Not like other creation stories from Babylon or Egypt in style.

Scholars say the structure is heptadic - i.e. the use of 6 + 1 pattern.

Two places in the Bible use this structure - Gen. 1 and the Book of Revelation, the beginning and the end. But they are also reflected in Moses' receiving the Law and Jesus' Transfiguration.

Exodus 24:10 - And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. (Similar to visions of God in Revelation)

Exodus 24:16 - "And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud."

There is a correlation between the creation story and the giving of the Law. Some scholars believe Moses here received a vision of the seven days of creation - perhaps confirming an account passed down from Adam, but possibly a new revelation from God, which correlated with his 6 + 1 experience of waiting before entering in to the cloud on Sinai. (Also, Moses was shown the pattern of the Tabernacle during this time).

Both Jesus and Moses shown with a supernatural light.

Exodus 34:29 - Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

At the other end of history, Revelation repeats the pattern, with three heptads - six related events (seals, plagues and trumpets) each followed by a seventh which is significantly different.

This was also reflected at Jesus' transfiguration: "And *after six days* Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them." (Mark 9:2)

There is also the voice of God from the cloud, as on Sinai:
Matthew 17:5 - "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

The visions of the beginning of the world, and it's end, are patterned on Moses' experience of receiving the Law on Sinai, and then reflected in the Transfiguration.

"Worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." (Revelation 14:7)