

Bereshis – in the beginning

The Torah begins by stating that in the beginning Hashem created from nothingness the heaven and the earth. However, the world was yet void and without shape or order. During the first six days Hashem shaped, made and placed everything in the universe into its proper functioning position. The order of this Divine task was as follows:

First Day - Creation of light and darkness.

Second Day - Arrangement of "*rakiah*" to separate between the heavenly and earthly waters.

Third Day - Accumulation of the waters allowing the dry land to be visible.

Fourth Day - Creation and placement of sun and moon in the sky.

Fifth Day - Creation of sea life and birds.

Sixth Day - Creation of reptiles, animals, and finally man.

On the Seventh Day of creation, Hashem "rested" from His work, and sanctified the seventh day as the Shabbos.

Hashem (God) decided that it is not good for man to be alone. He brought all the animals and birds before Adam. Adam gave names to all of them, but could find no mate for himself among them. Hashem, therefore, put a deep sleep upon Adam. He split Adam in two parts, took a second part, making it into a woman, and brought her before Adam. Hashem placed them in the Garden of Eden where they could eat from anything, except for the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. However, Chava fell under the influence of the sneaky serpent and ate of the forbidden fruit and gave some to Adam as well. As a result, they were forced to leave the Garden of Eden and begin the lives of humans, as we know it, experiencing the hardship of working for their living and the sufferings of childbirth. The serpent's punishment was having to crawl on the ground and to eat the dust of the earth.

Adam and Chava gave birth to two sons: **Cain**, who became a tiller of the land, and **Hevel**, who became a shepherd. Both Cain and Hevel brought offerings of their produce to Hashem. Hevel was sincere in his offering and brought before Hashem from his first-born and from the best of his flock. On the other hand, Cain was insincere and brought his worst produce. Hashem accepted Hevel's offering and a fire came down from heaven burning his offering; but not so to Cain's offering. Cain was greatly angered and highly embarrassed. While they were in the field, Cain killed Hevel, his brother.

Asked by Hashem the whereabouts of his brother, Cain replied, "**Am I my brother's keeper?**" Hashem punished Cain severely for his actions. Cain was cursed and as penalty was forced to be a wanderer over the face of the earth.

Adam and Chava gave birth to a third son, **Sheis**, as well as additional children. As each new generation reproduced, the numbers of mankind increased.

There were ten generations from Adam till **Noakh**. Slowly people turned to evil and practiced immorality and violence. Hashem began reconsidering His act of populating the world with mankind. Noakh, however, Noakh found favor in His eyes.

Test yourself:

- In how many days did Hashem create the world?
- What happened on the seventh day?
- Why did Hashem create a wife for Adam?
- Why did Cain kill Hevel?
- What does it mean to be "my brother's keeper"?