

LET THERE BE LIFE: THE BEGINNING



TEXT 1

VIDEO: [SOMETHING OF NOTHING](#)

(The video is hyperlinked to the title above.)



TEXT 2

GENESIS (*BERESHIT*) 1:1-2:3

1 When God began to create heaven and earth— **2** the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water— **3** God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. **4** God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, a first day.

6 God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water.” **7** God made the expanse, and it separated the water which was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse. And it was so. **8** God called the expanse Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

9 God said, “Let the water below the sky be gathered into one area, that the dry land may appear.” And it was so. **10** God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering of waters He called Seas. And God saw that this was good. **11** And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. **12** The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that this was good. **13** And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

14 God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night; they shall serve as signs for the set times—the days and the years; **15** and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth.” And it was so. **16** God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light to dominate the night, and the stars. **17** And God set them in the expanse of the sky to shine upon the earth, **18** to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that this was good. **19** And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.

20 God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and birds that fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” **21** God created the great sea monsters, and all the living creatures of every kind that creep, which the waters brought forth in swarms, and all the winged birds of every kind. And God saw that this was good. **22** God blessed them, saying, “Be fertile and increase, fill the waters in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” **23** And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

24 God said, “Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind.” And it was so. **25** God made wild beasts of every kind and cattle of every kind, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. And God saw that this was good. **26** And God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.” **27** And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. **28** God blessed them and God said to them, “Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth.”

29 God said, “See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. **30** And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food.” And it was so. **31** And God saw all that He had made, and found it very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2:1 The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array. **2** On the seventh day God finished the work that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the work that He had done. **3** And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done.

בְּרֵאשִׁית א, א – ב, ג

א בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ. ב וְהָאָרֶץ הִיְתָה תֵהוֹ וְבָהוּ וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם. ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהי אוֹר וַיְהי אוֹר. ד וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאוֹר כִּי טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ. ה וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם וּלְחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהי עֶרֶב וַיְהי בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד.

ו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהי רָקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהי מַבְדִּיל בֵּין מַיִם לַמַּיִם. ז וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָרָקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לָרָקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לָרָקִיעַ וַיְהי כֵן. ח וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לָרָקִיעַ שָׁמַיִם וַיְהי עֶרֶב וַיְהי בֹקֶר יוֹם שֵׁנִי.

ט וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקְווּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל מְקוֹם אֶחָד וְתִרְאָה הַיַּבֶּשֶׁה וַיְהי כֵן. י וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לַיַּבֶּשֶׁה אֶרֶץ וּלְמַקְוֵה הַמַּיִם קָרָא יַמִּים וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב. יא וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תְּדַשֵּׂא הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׁא עֵשֶׂב מִזֵּרִיעַ זֶרַע עֵץ פְּרִי עֵשֶׂה פְּרִי לְמִינֹו אֲשֶׁר זָרְעוּ בּוֹ עַל הָאָרֶץ וַיְהי כֵן. יב וַתּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ דָּשָׁא עֵשֶׂב מִזֵּרִיעַ זֶרַע לְמִינֵהוּ וְעֵץ עֵשֶׂה פְּרִי אֲשֶׁר זָרְעוּ בּוֹ לְמִינֵהוּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב. יג וַיְהי עֶרֶב וַיְהי בֹקֶר יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי.

יד וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהי מְאֹרֶת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיּוֹם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה וְהָיוּ לְאֹתוֹת וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וּשְׁנָיִם. טו וְהָיוּ לְמְאֹרֶת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל הָאָרֶץ וַיְהי כֵן. טז וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֶת הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת הַמְּאֹרֶת הַגָּדֹל לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת הַמְּאֹרֶת הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים. יז וַיִּתֵּן אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל הָאָרֶץ. יח וּלְמַשֵּׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה וּלְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב. יט וַיְהי עֶרֶב וַיְהי בֹקֶר יוֹם רְבִיעִי.

כ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִשְׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם שָׂרָץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה וְעוֹף יַעֲוִף עַל הָאָרֶץ עַל פְּנֵי רָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם. כא וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַתַּנִּינִם הַגְּדֹלִים וְאֵת כָּל נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה הַרְמֶשֶׂת אֲשֶׁר שָׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם לְמִינֵהֶם וְאֵת כָּל עוֹף כָּנָף לְמִינֵהוּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב. כב וַיִּבְרָךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים לֵאמֹר פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הַמַּיִם בַּיָּמִים וְהָעוֹף יִרֶב בָּאָרֶץ. כג וַיְהי עֶרֶב וַיְהי בֹקֶר יוֹם חַמִּישִׁי.

כד וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים תּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה לְמִינָהּ בְּהֵמָה וְרֶמֶשׂ וְחַיְתוֹ אֶרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וַיְהי כֵן. כה וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ וְאֵת הַבְּהֵמָה לְמִינָהּ וְאֵת כָּל רֶמֶשׂ הָאֲדָמָה לְמִינָהּ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב. כו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וְיִרְדּוּ בְּדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל הָאָרֶץ. כז וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם. כח וַיִּבְרָךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ וּכְבִּשְׁתֶּה וּרְדוּ בְּדִגְתַּי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל חַיָּה הַרְמֶשֶׂת עַל הָאָרֶץ. כט וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ וְאֵת כָּל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ פְּרִי עֵץ זֶרַע לָכֶם יְהִיָּה לְאֹכְלָהּ. ל וּלְכָל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וּלְכָל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל רֹמֵשׁ עַל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֵת כָּל יֶרֶק

עָשָׂב לְאֹכְלָהּ וַיְהִי כֵן. לֹא וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי.

ב, א וַיִּכְלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צָבָאָם. ב וַיִּכְלּוּ אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁכַּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְכָל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה. ג וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּו שָׁבַת מְכָל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.



TEXT 3 PANGU AND THE CREATION

Chinese Creation Myth, some versions dated dating back to the second century CE.

In the beginning there was darkness everywhere, and Chaos ruled. Within the darkness there formed an egg, and inside the egg the giant Pangu came into being. For aeons, safely inside the egg, Pangu slept and grew. When he had grown to gigantic size he stretched his huge limbs and in so doing broke the egg. The lighter parts of the egg floated upwards to form the heavens and the denser parts sank downwards, to become the earth. And so was formed earth and sky, the Yin and the Yang.

Pangu saw what had happened and he was pleased. But he feared that heaven and earth might meld together again, so he placed himself between them, his head holding up the sky and his feet firmly upon the earth. Pangu continued to grow at a rate of ten feet a day for 18,000 years, so increasing the distance between heaven and earth, until they seemed fixed and secure, 30,000 miles apart. Now exhausted, Pangu went back to sleep and never woke up.

Pangu died, and his body went to make the world and all its elements. The wind and clouds were formed from his breath, his voice was thunder and lightning, his eyes became the sun and moon, his arms and his legs became the four directions of the compass and his trunk became the mountains. His flesh turned into the soil and the trees that grow on it, his blood into the rivers that flow and his veins into paths men travel. His body hair became the grass and herbs, and his skin the same, while precious stones and minerals were formed from his bones and teeth. His sweat became the dew and the hair of his head became the stars that trail

- 25 throughout heaven. As for the parasites on his body, these became the diverse races of humankind. Although Pangu is dead, some say he is still responsible for the weather, which fluctuates according to his moods.

T. Moorey. 2012. *Understanding Chinese Mythology*. London: Hodder Education.



TEXT 4

NACHMANIDES (RAMBAN), *BERESHIT* 1:1–2

(1194–1270) (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman) Bible commentator and legal scholar in Spain.

It was essential to begin the Torah with “In the beginning God created . . .” for it is the essence of faith. One who does not believe in this and is of the belief that the world is eternal is a heretic and is not an [observer] of the Torah . . .

- 5 God created the world from absolute nothingness. To express such creation ex nihilo, [biblical] Hebrew uses the root b.r.a. However, nothing that exists in the world was formed directly out of nothingness. First, God created out of the absolute nothingness a very fine substance, which although it lacks material being, it does have energy, and is able to receive form. This is the very first substance and is what
- 10 the Greeks called *hyle*. After creating the hyle, God created nothing else; rather God took it and gave this substance form and developed them . . . The hyle is called in biblical Hebrew *tohu*.

רב משה בן נחמן (רמב"ן), בראשית א, א-ב

כי צריך גדול הוא להתחיל התורה בבראשית ברא אלהים, כי הוא שרש האמונה, ושאינו מאמין בזה וחושב שהעולם קדמון, הוא כופר בעקר ואין לו תורה כלל . . .

הקדוש ברוך הוא ברא כל הנבראים מאפיסה מחלטה ואין אצלנו בלשון הקדש בהוצאת היש מאין אלא לשון ברא ואין כל הנעשה תחת השמש או למעלה, הונה מן האין התחלה ראשונה אבל הוציא מן האפס הגמור המחלט יסוד דק מאד, אין בו ממש, אבל הוא כח ממציא, מוכן לקבל הצורה, ולצאת מן הכח אל הפעל, והוא החמר הראשון, נקרא ליננים היולי ואחר ההיולי לא ברא דבר, אבל יצר ועשה, כי ממנו המציא הכל והלביש הצורות ותקן אותם . . . והחמר הזה, שקראו היולי, נקרא בלשון הקדש תהו.



TEXT 5

DR. JEFFREY TIGAY, *GENESIS AS ALLEGORY* (1987)

(b. 1941) Modern biblical scholar and ordained rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

In showing that the universe had a beginning, science has come closer than ever before to the teachings of the Bible. Nevertheless, there is still a considerable distance between current scientific thought and the details of the Biblical account of creation. According to the latter, the physical world and separate species of living things were created essentially as we know them less than six thousand years ago over a period of seven days. Astronomy, geology, biology, and related sciences indicate that the process was a gradual one that took billions of years. Earlier geological strata of the earth's surface show the different stages through which the earth passed and approximately how long they lasted, while fossils and remains of extinct species such as dinosaurs show that the different species of living creatures evolved slowly from a common ancestor. These conclusions are denied by adherents of a doctrine known as "scientific creationism," who are campaigning to require that any public school that teaches evolution must also teach what they call "creation science" as a scientifically respectable alternative to evolution. . . .

The feverish concern of the "scientific creationists" to protect a literal reading of the story in Genesis 1 reflects a conviction that devotion to the Bible requires one to interpret it – particularly Genesis 1 – literally and **accept** it in its literal sense. But, as Steven Katz notes . . . , "In Jewish religious thought Genesis is not regarded as meant for a literal reading, and Jewish tradition has not usually read it so." In fact, . . . even the compilers of the Bible do not seem to have been concerned with a literal reading of the text. They were prepared to have at least parts of it read non-literally. . . .

. . . In other words, these stories are regarded as poetic statements of certain basic truths, not as literal scientific accounts of how the universe developed. What matters in Judaism is the **concepts** shared by all these stories: that the world was created by God, that He planned it carefully and designed it to be hospitable to man. These are the very conclusions to which astronomy now points. The other details of the Biblical accounts should not be taken literally but metaphorically or poetically. To give but one example: the six days of creation culminating in the Sabbath on the seventh symbolize how God guided the development of the world

stage by stage according to a well-thought-out plan. The process is described as taking place over a period of seven days because seven was regarded in the ancient world as the number of perfection and seven days were regarded as the ideal length of a process. The seven days are more a statement about the perfection of the process than a chronological statistic.

Available online at sas.upenn.edu. Viewed May 2021.



TEXT 6

RABBI LAURA NOVAK WINER, *ASK THE RABBIS RELIGION & SCIENCE (2014)*

Director of Clinical Education at the Hebrew Union College's Rhea Hirsch School of Education at HUC-JIR's Skirball Campus in Los Angeles.

As an undergraduate in a religious studies course, I wrote a paper on creation and evolution, asking whether creation could really have happened the way it is described in the Torah. It was at that point that I learned about day-age theory, which states that a day of creation was perhaps not 24 hours but, instead, hundreds of thousands or even millions of years. If we read the creation story with that lens, we can see that the order of creation described in the Torah symbolizes the scientific process of evolution.

For progressive Jews, science and Judaism do not have to conflict. We do not have to read Torah literally. Torah and Judaism are meant to teach us values and ethics, which give us a framework to guide our lives. Judaism provides us ways to express awe, wonder and appreciation for the mysteries of the universe and give thanks for the human mind, which is able to seek new understandings of that universe through scientific exploration and experimentation. For many, that scientific process enhances the appreciation of God's miraculous creation.

Available online at momentmag.com. Viewed May 2021.

BACKGROUND TEXT 7

In 1961, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson exchanged correspondence on the subject of Torah and Science with Professor Cyril Domb. Domb was professor of Theoretical Physics at King's College, London, and served as professor of Physics at Bar-Ilan University from 1981 to 1989. He was also president of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists. Domb wrote an article for London's *Jewish Chronicle* concerning the work of English radio astronomer Martin Ryle (1918–1984) in the field of cosmology. Domb asserted that the Torah's views could coexist with Ryle's theories, and he explained his reasoning. Schneerson disagreed.



TEXT 7

RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL SCHNEERSON, *ON SCIENCE AND ITS TRUTHS (1961)*

(1902–1994) Seventh and last rebbe of the Chabad/Lubavitch chasidic movement; studied Natural Philosophy, to include mathematics, physics, and philosophy, at the University of Berlin between 1928 and 1932.

... the fact that scientific laws are only probable, and are merely statements of the most likelihood, reflects not only on future predictions, but also on deductions relating to the past, which must remain in the realm of probability based on observation. Where no observation/experiment is possible, deductions are purely
5 conjectural. Hence science can never challenge the veracity of the Genesis account from the viewpoint of the evolutionary theory or any other theory, and it would be just as “scientific” to accept the account verbally as to reinterpret it allegorically to harmonize it with any particular cosmological theory.

... Here is where religious beliefs and practices have the “advantage” over science,
10 for it is only the Torah, Toras Chayyim, that gives certitude to human deductions arrived at in the proper way, giving them the stamp of truth not only within the rational and sensible world, but also in a transcending way ...

. . . I must disagree with the statement you made in the said article to the effect that from the Torah viewpoint it is possible also to accept the evolutionary theory . . .

- 15 This is not so, and the test of the matter is Halachah. Where Halachah is concerned there can be no alternatives, for the rule of Halachah is the rule of reality. So long as the Halachah is not infringed, we are at liberty to interpret the Biblical verses on any level of P'shat, Remez, Drash and Sod. But this prerogative ends where Halachah has ruled - this rule must be accepted "on top" of all interpretations. Now, according
- 20 to the Halachah our world came into being 5721 years ago, and the age of the world is reaffirmed on such Torah legal documents as Gittin, and the like; Shabbos is the seventh day of the week, which the Halachah connects with the six days of creation that preceded it (T.B. Shabbos 69b), and so on. The literal acceptance of the Genesis account does not conflict with the doctrine in Midrash, Kabbalah and
- 25 the Zohar that G-d "created worlds and destroyed them", since the latter refers to spiritual worlds as amply explained in these disciplines . . .

Available online at chabad.org. Viewed May 2021.



TEXT 8 *BERESHIT RABBAH 11:6*

Homiletic and midrashic material compiled on the biblical text, mainly in Israel, from the 3rd to the 10th centuries.

Everything that was created during the six days of creation needs further work. For example, the mustard seed needs to be sweetened and the lupine needs to be sweetened, wheat needs to be ground, and even a person needs more work.

בְּרֵאשִׁית רַבָּה יא, ו
כָּל מֵה שֶׁנִּבְרָא בַּשֵּׁשֶׁת יָמִי בְּרֵאשִׁית צְרִיכִין עֲשִׂיָּה כְּגוֹן הַחֲרָדֵל צְרִיךְ לְמִתְקַת הַתְּרֻמוֹסִים צְרִיךְ
לְמִתְקַת הַחֲטִיץ צְרִיכִין לְהַטְחֹן אֶפְלוֹ אָדָם צְרִיךְ תְּקוּן.



TEXT 9

RABBI DR. JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK, *HALAKHIC MAN*

(1903–1993) Philosopher and talmudic scholar; leader of Modern Orthodoxy in America.

The peak of religious ethical perfection to which Judaism aspires is man as creator. When God created the world, He provided an opportunity for the work of His hands—man—to participate in His creation. The Creator, as it were, impaired reality in order that mortal man could repair its flaws and perfect it. God gave the Book of

5 Creation—that repository of the mysteries of creation—to man, not simply for the sake of theoretical study but in order that man might continue the act of creation. . .

. . . Man, the creature, is commanded to become a partner with the Creator in the renewal of the cosmos; complete and ultimate creation—this is the deepest desire

10 of the Jewish people . . . Just as the Almighty constantly refined and improved the realm of existence during the six days of creation, so must man complete that creation and transform the domain of chaos and void into a perfect and beautiful reality.

J. B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, trans. by Lawrence Kaplan. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983, 101, 105–106.



TEXT 10

TAMAR BIALA, *VAYEKADESH OTO,
AND HE SANCTIFIED IT*

Lecturer and author on the intersection of Judaism and feminism.

“The heavens and the earth and all their array were complete. And God completed on the seventh day the work that [God] had done, and God rested on the seventh day from all the work that [God] had done” (Bereshit 2:1–3).

- 5 Why does the verse need to repeat that God *completed* the work on the seventh day? [Rather, understand the first verse as] teaching that the first [creations],

heavens and the earth and all their array, began to *deteriorate* (a play on the word *veyechulu*). For until the seventh day they lasted, but on the seventh day cracks developed and they began to fall apart.

10

God was taken aback and ceased the work, saying, “How long will I continue to create these, while they go on to deteriorate and fall apart?”

God sat, as it states, “and God rested on the seventh day,” and considered all
15 that God had declared to be good beforehand and all that God had declared to be very good.

God saw that each creation that was created was good, and yet it deteriorates, and that each action God took was fleeting and yet it was good, and God was sad
20 for the creations and for GodGod. God sought an idea for how to preserve and maintain the world that God created, a world that was returning to being in a state of chaos, until God came up with something.

What did God come upon? God invented the concept of *kiddush*, “sanctification,”
25 as it states, “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.” God said, “Let the blessings and the sanctifications come and highlight all the good and all the vigor in every thing and every act of Creation, and by recalling that aspect of Creation, it will be fortified, as will we. In this way, some of the ongoing devastation of the world will be delayed somewhat, as will some of the decay of our souls.” And so it says, “[God]
30 sat and restored to life” (Shemot 31:17).

N. Weingarten-Mintz and T. Biala, eds. *Dirshuni – Israeli Women Writing Midrash*. Tel Aviv: Miskal, Yedioth Ahronoth Books, 2009.

תָּמַר בִּיאָלָה, וִיקְדֹּשׁ אוֹתוֹ
'וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם. וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם
הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְכַל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה'.

עַל שׁוּם מָה חֲזַר הַכָּתוּב וְשָׁנָה שְׂכָלָה הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ? לְלַמֶּדֶךָ
שֶׁרֵאשׁוֹנִים הֵחֵלוּ כָּלִים שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ מַעֲצָמָם. שְׁעַד אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם הָיוּ עוֹמְדִים וּמְתַקְּיָמִים. הַגִּיעַ הַיּוֹם
הַשְּׁבִיעִי, סְדָקִים נִתְּנוּ בָהֶם וְהֵם הוֹלְכִים וְנִשְׁבָּרִים.

נִבְהַל הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא וּפָסַק מִמְּלָאכְתּוֹ. אָמַר בְּלִבּוֹ: 'עַד מָתִי אֲנִי בּוֹרָא אֶת אֱלֹהִים, וְהֵם הוֹלְכִים לָהֶם וּמִתְכַּלִּים מַעֲצָמָם?'

יָשַׁב בְּמִקְוָמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר 'וַיִּשְׁבּוּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי', וְהִתְבּוֹנֵן בְּכָל מָה שֶׁאָמַר עָלָיו שֶׁהוּא טוֹב וּמָה שֶׁאָמַר עָלָיו שֶׁהוּא טוֹב מְאֹד.

רָאָה שֶׁכָּל בְּרִיאָה וּבְרִיאָה שֶׁבָּרָא הִיא טוֹבָה וְהִיא מִתְכַּלִּית, וְכָל מַעֲשֶׂה וּמַעֲשֶׂה שֶׁעָשָׂה הוּא כָּלָה וְהוּא טוֹב, וְהָיָה צָר לוֹ עֲלֵיהֶם וְצָר לוֹ עַל עֲצָמוֹ. בִּקְשׁ עֲצָה כִּיצַד לְשָׁמֵר וּלְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם שֶׁבָּרָא, שֶׁהוּלָה וְשָׁב לוֹ לְתֵהוּ וְבוֹהוּ, עַד שֶׁמָּצָא.

מָהוּ אוֹתוֹ הַדָּבָר שֶׁמָּצָא? שֶׁהִמְצִיא אֶת הַקָּדוֹשׁ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר 'וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אוֹתוֹ'. אָמַר: יְבוֹאוּ בְּרָכוֹת וְקְדוּשִׁים וַיְרָאָה כָּל דָּבָר וְדָבָר וְכָל מַעֲשֶׂה שֶׁיֵּשׁ בָּעוֹלָם, צַד חַיּוֹת שָׁבוּ וְצַד טוֹב שָׁבוּ, וְעַל יְדֵי שֶׁנִּזְכַּר בּוֹ אוֹתוֹ הַצַּד, נִתְחַזַּק אוֹתוֹ הַדָּבָר וְנִתְחַזַּק אֲנִיחָנוּ בְּעֲצָמֵנוּ, וְתִתְעַכֵּב בְּמִשְׁהוֹ כְּלָיָה שְׁבַע עוֹלָם, וְתִתְעַכֵּב בְּמִשְׁהוֹ כְּלִיּוֹן שְׁבַע עָשָׂר וְעַל זֶה נֶאֱמַר 'שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפֵשׁ'.



TEXT 11

RABBI ARYEH KAPLAN, *GOD'S REST*

(1934–1983) A noted Orthodox scholar, author, and trained physicist.

What does the Torah mean when it says that G-d rested?

Was He tired? Had He worked too hard? Was Creation an exhausting task?

- 5 **Is the Torah so naïve that it looks at G-d in such anthropomorphic and human terms? Does it really assume that G-d needed a rest after six days of hard work, just like any other laborer?**

Of course not. The Bible itself says (Isa. 40:28), “Do you not know? Have you not

- 10 **heard? The L-rd, the everlasting G-d, Creator of the wide world, grows neither weary nor faint.”**

G-d did not rest because He was tired or overworked. Even creating a universe is not hard work for G-d. Our sages teach us that it involved less effort than to pronounce a single letter.

15

G-d rested in another sense. He rested when He stopped creating—when He no longer interfered with His world. . . .

20

During the six days of Creation, G-d asserted His mastery over the universe by actively changing it. On the Sabbath, He “rested” by no longer asserting this mastery. . . .

25

Work, in the Sabbath sense, is an act that shows . . . mastery over the world by means of . . . intelligence and skill. . . .

30

Rest, in the Sabbath sense, is not interfering with nature nor exhibiting mastery over it. It is a state of peace [with] nature. . . .

. . . In the account of creation, the Torah says (*Gen. 2:2*), “G-d finished on the seventh day.”

35

The Midrash asks an obvious question. If G-d rested on the seventh day, how could He have finished on the very same day? If He did nothing on the Sabbath, then obviously, He finished on the sixth day.

. . . [The Midrash] gives us a most profound answer. It says that *on the Sabbath, G-d created Rest. . . .*

40

. . . [The world] was no longer in a process of change, and therefore was able to partake of G-d’s serenity. . . .

The Sabbath thus brought about an integral harmony between G-d and His world. Rather than continuing to change the universe, G-d brought it into harmony with Himself.

A. Kaplan. 1974. *SABBATH: Day of Eternity*. New York, NCSY.

KEY TERMS

Halakhah. [הלכה, **Guidance**] The central body of Jewish law. The content of classical Jewish law as well as the process for determining that law, both initially established by the talmudic Rabbis.

Kedushah. [קדושה, **Holiness or sanctity**] A major biblical concept expressing the quality of things that are Godlike or set apart for particular closeness to God. *Kedushah* is attained through the observance of mitzvot and the emulation of God who is regarded as the ultimate source of holiness.

KEY NAMES

Kaplan, Aryeh. (1934–1983). Noted rabbi and author, who had a background in both physics (he was listed in Who's Who in Physics) and Judaism. He was a prolific and original teacher; his work ranged from studies of the Torah, Talmud, and works of mysticism to outreach and philosophy.

Nachmanides. (1194–1270) Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman; also known as Ramban. He was a Spanish biblical exegete, kabbalist, talmudist, poet, and physician. His works include a commentary on the Torah, novellae on the Talmud, and other halakhic and philosophic writings. After his famous disputation in Barcelona with a Christian convert in 1263, he moved to the Land of Israel, where he died.

Novak Winer, Laura. Director of Clinical Education at the Hebrew Union College's Rhea Hirsch School of Education at HUC-JIR's Skirball Campus in Los Angeles. She has been published in a variety of academic and online journals, is a regular contributor to *Moment Magazine's* Ask the Rabbis column, and was the editor of several curricula, including Sacred Choices: Adolescent Relationships and Sexual Ethics (2005 and 2007). She is also past president of the Association of Reform Jewish Educators.

Schneerson, Menachem Mendel. (1902-1994). Known to many simply as “The Rebbe,” he was the seventh leader in the Chabad-Lubavitch dynasty, an industrious and unique Torah scholar, and a leading voice in promoting Jewish values among Jews and non-Jews alike. As leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, he took a Chasidic group that almost came to an end with the Holocaust and transformed it into one of the most influential movements in religious world Jewry, with an international network of over 3,000 educational and social centers. His published teachings fill more than 300 volumes, and he is noted for his contributions to Jewish continuity and religious thought.

Soloveitchik, Joseph B. (1903-1993). A spiritual leader of Modern Orthodoxy in America, he taught Talmud and Jewish philosophy at Yeshiva University, and was the author of numerous halakhic treatises, responsa, sermons on the Torah, and philosophical books and articles, including *Halakhic Man*, *The Lonely Man of Faith*, *On Repentance*, and *Kol Dodi Dofek*. His students number in the thousands.

Tigay, Jeffrey. (b. 1941) 1995 winner of the Lindback Award for distinguished teaching, he is Emeritus A.M. Ellis Professor of Hebrew and Semitic Languages and Literatures in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Pennsylvania. From 1995-1998 he was Chair of the Jewish Studies Program. He retired in 2010 after teaching at Penn since 1971. His specialty is the Hebrew Bible and its interpretation, particularly in its original ancient Near Eastern context.

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APPENDIX

CHART OF CREATION STORY IN *BERESHIT* 1

DAY	What was created?	What was created?	DAY
1			4
2			5
3			6
7			
SHABBAT (Ceasing or Stopping)			