

## Torah Talk – מאמרי תורה



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**Parashat Bereshit**  
**October 6, 2018**

**פרשת בראשית**  
**כ"ז בתשרי תשע"ט**

Torah Reading: *Bereshit* (Genesis) 1:1-6:8

In this *parasha* we read about *ma'aseh bereshit* (the Act of Creation); Adam and Chava's sin of eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad and their subsequent expulsion from *Gan Eden* (the Garden of Eden); Kayin's murder of his brother, Hevel; and Adam and Chava's descendants' genealogy, culminating with the birth of Noach.

The end of the *parasha* contains four verses that are easy to gloss over, but which clarify and elucidate two major questions that many people have about the Torah's account of creation and the beginning of the human species:

1. If God only created two human beings, from whom did the population grow?
2. How can we reconcile the Creation story with scientific evidence of evolution?

Here are the verses in chapter 6:

א וַיְהִי כִּי-הֵחֵל הָאָדָם, לָרֹב עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה; וּבָנֹת, יֵלְדוּ לָהֶם. ב וַיִּרְאוּ בְנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת-בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם, כִּי טֹבֹת הֵנָּה; וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים, מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּחָרוּ. ג וַיֹּאמֶר ה', לֹא-יִדּוֹן רוּחִי בָאָדָם לְעֹלָם, בְּשֹׁגֶם, הוּא בָשָׂר; וְהָיוּ יָמָיו, מִמָּאָה וָעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה. ד הַנִּפְלִים הָיוּ בָאָרֶץ, בְּיָמֵים הָהֵם, וְגַם אַחֲרֵי-כֵן אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ בְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל-בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם, וַיֵּלְדוּ לָהֶם: הֵמָּה הַגִּבֹּרִים אֲשֶׁר מְעוֹלָם, אֲנָשֵׁי הָשָׁם.

**1** And it came to pass, when humans began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, **2** that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives, whomsoever they chose. **3** And Hashem said: 'My spirit shall not abide

in the human forever, for that he also is flesh; therefore, shall his days be a hundred and twenty years.' **4** The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them; the same were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown.

Who are these “sons of God” and “daughters of men” that are mentioned here? One theory posits that Adam and Chava were not the first hominids; rather, they were the first humans with cognition.

Chapter 2, verse 7, says, “וַיִּצְרָה ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם, עָפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה, וַיִּנְفֹחַ, נְשָׁמַת וַיֵּיכָר ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם – Hashem God formed the earthling out of dirt from the ground and breathed into his nostrils a soul of life, and the earthling became a living spirit.” We can interpret this as God giving the Divine spirit of higher-order thinking skills to Adam.

Under this interpretation, then, non-cognitive hominids (“daughters of men”) could still have roamed the planet, and thinking humans (“sons of God”) could have mated with them. With those of the higher order contributing the dominant genes, could these unions have produced additional thinking humans? If so, it makes sense that the text would refer to these hominids who possessed higher-order thinking skills as “the mighty men... men of renown.” This might explain the rapid proliferation of humans on earth even though the creation story reports that Adam and Chava were the sole human beings created by God.

This interpretation may also reconcile evolutionary theories with the Creation story. The Torah outlines creation in the same order as the evolution of life. First came plants, then fish and birds, then land animals, and finally humans, each on its own *yom*. The word *yom* is usually translated as “day,” as in *Yom Echad* (one day). However, in Biblical Hebrew, *yom* does not signify “day” but rather “period of time.” For example, *Bereshit* 21:34 says, “וַיָּגֵר אַבְרָהָם בְּאֶרֶץ פְּלִשְׁתִּים, יָמִים רַבִּים.” – Avraham lived in the land of the Philistines a long period of time.” Certainly, if God is Infinite in time, the Creation did not necessarily take place in seven 24-hour periods. One period (*Yom*) could have lasted millions of years, with the final evolutionary phase, masterminded by God, involving the cognitive human.

As these verses show, a close reading of the Torah text often reveals information that we could easily miss in a superficial reading, information that can address some of the fundamental questions about the world.

Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- What is evolution? Do you believe that this is how the world came to be the way it is today? Why or why not?
- Do you think the world in general, and specifically humans, are still evolving? Why or why not?
- What is the difference between humans and lower orders of animals? Why might these differences be important?