

## Torah Talk – מאמרי תורה



*The Parasha Post of Milton Gottesman Jewish Day School of the Nation's Capital*

**Parashat Bereshit**  
**October 14, 2017**

**פרשת בראשית**  
**כ"ד בתשרי תשע"ח**

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.

Whether one believes, like Rashi, that *ma'aseh bereshit* happened just as recorded in the Torah, or like Rambam (Maimonides), that the text presents an allegory for the creation of the world, the poetry and its presentation are remarkable.

The section beginning with chapter 1, verse 1, and ending with chapter 2, verse 4, is "bookended" by symmetrical phrases. The section begins "בְּרֵאשִׁית, בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים, וְהָאָרֶץ" – In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and ends with the phrase, "אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ, בְּהִבְרָאָם: בְּיוֹם עֲשׂוֹת ה' – These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth when they were created, in the day that Hashem God made earth and heaven."

Within the creation story itself, the verses establish a beautiful symmetry of nature. Let us review what was created during each time period, referred to as "yom," which we usually translate as day, but which, in fact, simply means a specified period of time in Biblical Hebrew.

*Yom* 1: Light and darkness

*Yom* 2: Separation of waters above from waters below

*Yom* 3: Collection of waters into bodies, and the appearance of dry land and vegetation

*Yom 4: Sun, moon, and stars*

*Yom 5: Birds and fish*

*Yom 6: Land animals and humans*

*Yom 7: Shabbat*

A close perusal reveals that the first three *Yoms* are symmetrical to the last three and in some ways prepare for them (excluding Shabbat, which stands alone):

1. Light and Darkness	2. Separation of waters above and below	3. Dry Land and vegetation
4. Sun, moon, and stars	5. Birds and fish	6. Land animal and humans

The last three acts of creation could not have taken place without the foundational creations in the first three acts. The sun, moon, and stars are now the sources of our light (and darkness); the fish live in the “waters below” and the birds live just below the “waters above;” land animals and humans could not survive without dry land and vegetation.

What a beautiful symmetry, one reflected in nature all around us. Whether we find that symmetry in a snowflake, a leaf, or the human body, the physical world around us reflects the spiritual story of creation. Let us all try to take a few minutes this week to appreciate the beauty of nature in the world that God created and the symmetry therein.

Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- Symmetry means balanced proportions, or beauty of form arising from balanced proportions. Name as many things as you can that are symmetrical in nature.
- Do you think the story of creation happened just as it is written in the Torah? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Hashem created the humans last?