

Parshat Bereishit: Where Are You?

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What we read

Bereishit 1:1–6:8: the six days of creation and the first Shabbat; Adam and Chava in the garden; Kayin and Hevel; the generations from Adam to Noach. Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan begins on Sunday, so this Shabbat is Erev Rosh Chodesh and Shabbat Mevarchim. Many communities read the haftarah "Machar Chodesh" (Shmuel I 20:18–42) in place of the usual one.

1. Order out of chaos

"The earth was formless and empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep" (1:2). G-d speaks, and each day brings order: light and darkness, sea and dry land, sun and moon. Again and again, "And G-d saw that it was good." Creation is not only power. It is power that gives each thing its place.

2. In the image of G-d

"And G-d created man in His image" (1:27). Every person carries that image, which is why every person matters. The first human is created alone, so that no one can say "my ancestor was greater than yours" (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5).

3. The first Shabbat

"And G-d blessed the seventh day and made it holy, for on it He rested from all His work" (2:3). The first thing in the Torah called holy is not a place or a person but a day. Shabbat teaches us to stop, look at what was made, and call it good.

4. "Ayekah?": Where are you?

After the sin, Adam hides. G-d calls, "Where are you?" (3:9). G-d knows where Adam is. The question is for Adam: where do you stand, and what will you do now? It is the question of teshuvah, and it follows naturally from the month of Tishrei.

5. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Kayin answers G-d's question with a question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (4:9). The rest of the Torah answers him: yes. Responsibility for one another begins with the first brothers.

6. A spark of hope

The parshah ends in a dark time, yet "Noach found favor in the eyes of the L-rd" (6:8). One person can carry the future.

For the table

- What is one thing you made this week that you can look at and say "it is good"?
- Why does the Torah call a day holy before any place?
- If G-d asked you "Ayekah?" right now, what would you answer?
- Who are you a "keeper" for, and who keeps you?

For children

Make a seven-day chart. For each day of creation draw what was made. Leave the seventh box empty except for two candles: the day of rest.

Shabbat shalom.

Prepared in deep partnership and cooperation with Grok and xAI

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