

The Family Table: Simchat Torah and Shabbat Bereishit

Questions, a short story and conversation starters for the festive meals

Simchat Torah: Shabbat 3 October 2026 (22 Tishrei 5787, in the Land of Israel) · Shabbat Bereishit: 10 October 2026 (29 Tishrei 5787)

Aryeh Leib Thorne Toren · Yerushalayim · For reading at the table

At the Simchat Torah meal

Questions for children

- Why do we dance with the Torah when it is closed and we cannot read it while dancing?
- The Torah ends with the word *Yisrael* (Israel). What does it mean that the last word of the Torah is the name of a people?
- On Simchat Torah one person is called up for the very end of the Torah and another for the very beginning. Why do you think we give honors to both?
- If you could ask Moshe Rabbeinu one question, what would it be?
- What was your favorite story in the Torah this year? Tell it in one minute.

A short story: The Smallest Dancer

Every year in the shul there was a little girl who held the smallest Torah, the one with a velvet cover no bigger than a loaf of bread. One year she asked her grandfather, "Saba, why do we dance with a Torah we can't even open?"

Her grandfather thought for a moment. "When you were a baby," he said, "I danced with you before you could read a word or say my name. I did not dance because you understood me. I danced because you were mine and I was yours. The understanding came later. It is still coming."

She looked at the little Torah in her arms. "So we dance first," she said, "and we learn all year."

"Exactly," said her grandfather. "And next year we will dance again, because we will love it even more."

(A story for the table, not a historical account.)

Talk about it

- What do we love before we understand it?
- Is there something you learned this year that you understand better than last year?

At the Shabbat Bereishit table (10 October)

Questions for children

- On the first day G-d made light. Why do you think light came before everything else?
- What did G-d say after making things each day? ("It was good.") What is one good thing you made or did this week?

- The Torah says people are made "in the image of G-d" (Bereishit 1:27). How should that change the way we treat someone?
- G-d asked Adam, "Where are you?" (Bereishit 3:9). G-d knew where he was. So why ask?
- Why did G-d rest on the seventh day? Does G-d get tired?

Discussion prompts for older children and adults

- "It is not good for the person to be alone" (Bereishit 2:18). Who in our community might be alone this Shabbat, and how could we include them?
- Kayin asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Bereishit 4:9). How would you answer him?
- The Torah could have started with laws. It starts with the creation of the world. What does that tell us about what kind of book it is?
- Starting again: what is one thing our family wants to begin this year?

A blessing to end the meal

May we be blessed with a year of light, of good days and of learning together, and may every beginning in our home be a blessing, just as the Torah's first letter is.

Prepared in deep partnership and cooperation with Grok and xAI

All glory to the Ribono shel Olam · Errors are mine.