

בְּרֵאשִׁית

BERESHITH/IN THE BEGINNING Bereshith/Genesis 1:1-6:8

The book of **Bereshith** is a book about **origins**: the origin of the **heavens** and the **earth**, the origin of **mankind**, the origin of **Sabbath**, and the origins of a **special relationship between יהוה and a particular people called Israel**. The **opening chapters of Bereshith** serve as a **backdrop** for the rest of the Bible as we understand that **mankind**, the **pinnacle of Creation** who was **created to enjoy a unique relationship with יהוה**, will soon **fall short** of his **intended responsibility**. Despite the **fall of mankind**, the **gracious Father** gives us the “**rest of the story**” as we plough through the entirety of Scripture to understand the **restoration process** of which the **Almighty is entirely in control of**:

Isaiah 46:11 ...Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.

The **Scriptures** have an amazing way of **combining physical concepts** with **spiritual concepts**. They are **both important** and **neither stands alone**. I like to think of them as the **two sides of train rails**. When we take a **close up** look at train tracks, we see **both rails**. But as we **stand** in the **center of those rails and look into the distance**, it appears that they **merge into one**. We are **unable to separate these with our senses**, yet we know that **both characteristics (physical/spiritual) continue**.

With those thoughts in mind, let's take a look at how the **Torah describes the formation of man**:

Bereshith 2:7 And יהוה Elohim formed man (adam - אָדָם) of the dust (afar - עָפָר) of the ground (adamah - אֲדָמָה), and breathed (naphach - נָפַח) into his nostrils the breath of life (neshmat chayim - נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים); and man (adam - אָדָם) became a living being (nephesh chayah - נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה).

The **Torah** is always **specific** with the information that it provides us with. Notice that we are given the **formula** for the making of “**man**” (adam - אָדָם). **Man** was made from “**ground**” (adamah - אֲדָמָה) and the “**breath of life**” (neshmat chayim - נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים). Thus man is **both physical** (ground) and **spiritual** (breath of life).

It is interesting that **Adam/man** (אָדָם) is **named** after his **earthly component** (adamah - אֲדָמָה). Although he was **created in the image of Elohim**, it seems to imply that his **primary ingredient** is **physical**. In fact, the **connection between “Adam/man” and “adamah/earth”** is seen again later in our parasha:

Bereshith 6:5 Then יהוה saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.⁶ And יהוה was sorry that He had made man (adam - אָדָם) on the earth (adamah - אֲדָמָה), and He was grieved in His heart.⁷ So יהוה said, “I will destroy man (adam - אָדָם) whom I have created from the face of the earth”

(*adamah* - אָדָמָה), both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

The “*Adam/adamah*” (אָדָמָה/אָדָמָה) association is a **theme** that runs like a **thread** throughout Torah. We will see how it acts as a **barometer for sin** in the Almighty’s creation. First we begin with the **sin of “Adam”** (אָדָמָה) which is followed up by a “**curse to the ground**” (*adamah* - אָדָמָה):

Bereshith 3:17 Then to Adam (אָדָמָה) He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground (אָדָמָה) for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground (אָדָמָה) from which you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."

Before sin, “*Adam*” (אָדָמָה) could simply pick fruits from the trees of the “*ground*” (אָדָמָה). After sin, he must **labor** in a **land** filled with “*thorns and thistles*.” Not only that, but he is **exiled from the Garden** to till the “*ground (אָדָמָה) from which he was taken*.” Note that **Adam** was **NOT** formed from the soil of the Garden of Eden. We see that “*Adam*” (אָדָמָה) is **in conflict** with the very “*ground*” (אָדָמָה) that he was formed from. It is interesting that **this conflict** between “*Adam*” and the “*adamah*” exists only **during Adam’s life**. After his death, he **returns to dust** illustrating a kind of earthly restoration:

Bereshith 3:19 ... dust you are, And to dust you shall return."

Chapter 4 relates the story of the **first murder**. Again, we find a “*man*” (*adam*) **sinning**, followed by a **curse affecting the “adamah.”** When **Elohim** confronts **Cain**, He indicates that he **not only sinned**, but he **defiled the “adamah.”** Now, when **Cain** will till the “*adamah*,” it will **not be fruitful** for him. It will **resist cultivation**, despite his efforts. Whereas **Adam** was **exiled from the Garden of Eden**, **Cain** will become a “*fugitive*” **upon the whole earth**:

*Bereshith 4:10 And He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground (adamah - אָדָמָה). ¹¹ "So now you are **cursed from the earth** (adamah - אָדָמָה), which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² "When you till the ground (adamah - אָדָמָה), it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth."*

It is with a breath of fresh air then that “*Noah*” (*means comfort or rest*) is **born** whose **name projects optimism** between “*mankind*” and the “*adamah*”:

Bereshith 5:29 And he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground (adamah - אָדָמָה) which אָדָמָה has cursed."

Still, the **deterioration of “man”** (*adam* - אָדָם) continued and **“rest”** and **“comfort”** would only be found by the **remnant of Noah’s family** in the **ark of salvation**:

Bereshith 6:5 Then אֱלֹהִים saw that the wickedness of man (adam - אָדָם) was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.⁶ And אֱלֹהִים was sorry that He had made man (adam - אָדָם) on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.⁷ So אֱלֹהִים said, "I will destroy man (adam - אָדָם) whom I have created from the face of the earth (adamah - אֲדָמָה), both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

These are the **closing words of our parasha**. In **only four chapters**, **“man”** (*adam* - אָדָם) has **sinned so grievously** that His **Creator** is ready to **wipe him out**. **Man** is now **completely corrupted**. The **“thoughts of his heart”** are on **“evil continually.”** Because of the **failures of “mankind”** (*adam*), the **“earth”** (*adamah*) is **no longer able to sustain him**. The **Creator** makes a **decision to destroy both man and the earth**:

Bereshith 6:13 And Elohim said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

After the flood אֱלֹהִים makes a **promise** that the **“adamah”** will **never again be totally “cursed”** as a **result of the sins of man**:

Bereshith 8:21...Then אֱלֹהִים said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground (adamah - אֲדָמָה) for man's (adam - אָדָם) sake, although the imagination of man's (adam - אָדָם) heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done."

Now, **after the flood**, there is a **change in how the sins of “man”** (*adam* - אָדָם) affect the **“ground”** (*adamah* - אֲדָמָה). **Previously**, with the **progression of “man” sinning**, the **“adamah”** experienced an **ongoing downward spiral**. In **Bereshith 8:21**, אֱלֹהִים promises **grace for mankind**, despite his **propensity towards evil**. אֱלֹהִים will find **other ways to correct man’s actions**, since **man** has already **distanced himself so far from the Garden** that he can **no longer understand the lessons of his origins**.

There is **one location**, however, where the **“adam/adamah” relationship** will **continue to exist**, even **after the flood**. That place is the **Promised Land of Israel**. The **second paragraph** of the **Shema**, recited **twice a day** (morning and evening) **addresses Israel as a nation** whose **fate concerning the Land depends on whether or not they are faithful**:

Devarim 11:13 ' And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love אֱלֹהִים your Elohim and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul,¹⁴ 'then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil.¹⁵ 'And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.'¹⁶ "Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be

deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them,¹⁷ "lest יהוה's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which יהוה is giving you.

In Israel, יהוה's people are threatened with agriculture hardships for disobedience. Those familiar with the agricultural history of Israel will be encouraged by what can only be seen as the beginnings of restoration, with the Land of Israel showing visible signs of budding and flourishing. It is still far, however, from complete restoration:

Ezekiel 36:35 "So they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the Garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.'

Thus we see that the “physical” Land of Israel is “spiritually” sensitive. It has the potential of enormous blessings for obedience; however it’s reaped devastation through the millenniums due to continuous sin. As “in the beginning” (*bereshith* - בְּרֵשִׁית), the Father’s plan is to “breathe life” into “mankind” (*adam*). There is a born-again experience of the individual, but do we not also see the born-again experience of “mankind?” As the Creator “breathed life” into “Adam,” so now He causes “breath” (*ruach* - רוּחַ) to enter into the “whole House of Israel!”

*Ezekiel 36:37 ' Thus says Adonai יהוה: "I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men like a flock."³⁸ "Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I am יהוה." ' ' 37:1 The hand of יהוה came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of יהוה, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.² Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.³ And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Adonai יהוה, You know."⁴ Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of יהוה!'⁵ 'Thus says Adonai יהוה to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath (*ruach* - רוּחַ) to enter into you, and you shall live (*chayah* - חָיָה).⁶ "I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am יהוה." ' ' ⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.⁸ **Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them.**⁹ Also He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says Adonai יהוה: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ' ' ¹⁰ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.¹¹ Then He said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!'¹² "Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says Adonai יהוה: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel."¹³ "Then you shall know that I am יהוה, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves."¹⁴ **I will put My Spirit in you, and you***

shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, אלהים, have spoken it and performed it," says אלהים! "

All of us have inherited sin since all of mankind was in the loins of Adam from the beginning. “Physically” speaking, we are without hope. “Spiritually” speaking, it is our Messiah who has breathed “life” into us:

John 14:6 Yeshua said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Adam sinned and from then on man was forced to deal with “*thorns and thistles*.” We know what “*thorns and thistles*” are of the earth, but Yeshua gives us a spiritual understanding:

Matthew 7:15 " Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ "Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

The “*good tree*” containing the “*good fruit*” contains the seed of Messiah. “*Grapes*” and “*figs*” are sweet and nutritious for the body. The words of a true prophet are like “*fruit*” which is nourishing to the spirit. On the other hand, the “*fruit/words*” of “*false prophets*” are like “*thorns*” and “*thistles*” to the spirit. These weeds have the potential of “*choking out the Word*” of Elohim:

Matthew 13:22 "Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

The writer of Hebrews also refers to “*thorns and thistles*” which lead to “*cursing*”:

Hebrews 6:7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from Yah; ⁸ but if it bears thorns and thistles, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

We'll let Rav Sha'ul (Paul) wrap this up for us as he makes reference to the “*first Adam*” (physical) and the “*last Adam*” (spiritual) and our identification with them. Praise the Almighty for His wonderful plan! When we identify with our Messiah (spiritual Man), the sin that destroys the earthly man (adam) is powerless against the risen Savior and those who become part of His body:

1 Corinthians 15:44 ... There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man (adam - אָדָם) was of the earth (adamah - אֲדָמָה), made of dust; the second Man is the Adonai from heaven. ⁴⁸ As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

Along with the “*last Adam*,” comes the “*final dwelling*.” This time the **Garden** will **not contain** the infamous **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**, but only the “**Tree of Life**.” The “*last Adam*,” complete with **His body (bride)** will **return to the Garden** where he will “*reign forever and ever!*”

Revelation 22:1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of Yah and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and **on either side of the river, was the Tree of Life, which bore twelve fruits**, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ And **there shall be no more curse**, but the throne of Yah and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. ⁵ There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for Adonai Elohim gives them light. And **they shall reign forever and ever.**

Baruch HaShem!

Shabbat Shalom!

Ardelle