



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

YOM KIPPUR

In memory of **Evelyn Rivers a"h**
חווה פּעסא בת אהרן זלמן הכהן ע"ה
Mother of Reuven Tradburks

YOM KIPPUR

The Torah reading for Yom Kippur is the description in Chapter 16 of Vayikra of the entire service in the Mikdash for Yom Kippur. The Kohen Gadol himself read this exact Torah reading as part of the service. We are reading what he read.



1ST ALIYA (VAYIKRA 16:1-6)

One may enter the Holy of Holies with the following elaborate procedure. For I, G-d, appear there in a cloud. Aharon is to bring a bull for a sin offering, along with a ram. The Jewish people bring 2 goats for sin offerings and a ram. Aharon wears 4 unique white garments for this service.

The Holy of Holies is where the Aron is housed, with the ten commandments. No one is ever to enter there. And the Torah adds

“For I, G-d, appear there in a cloud”.

Where else have we seen a cloud, the appearance of G-d, an area where no man may approach and the ten commandments?

Mt. Sinai. A thick cloud over the mountain. G-d descends. No man may approach the mountain. He utters the ten commandments.

The Holy of Holies is a miniature re-enactment of Mt. Sinai. There, He descended to us. With a thick cloud. To tell us the ten commandments

Here, the ten commandments are housed. But here, unlike Sinai, where He approached us, on Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol approaches Him. And unlike Sinai where the cloud descended on the mountain, here the Kohen Gadol comes with incense to create the cloud.

And at Sinai the people said “we can’t hear your voice or we will die”. Man cannot withstand G-d’s Presence. So too here, G-d says, no man may enter the Holy of Holies, for he cannot withstand My presence.

But once a year, on Yom Kippur, I make an exception and allow, with an elaborate ceremony, only one man to enter that place. And that man shall make a cloud.

Yom Kippur is the intimate encounter of man with the Divine Presence in the Holy of Holies. As if He Says: The pinnacle moment of Yom Kippur is just you and Me, in My most private place, the Holy of Holies. You, Aharon, as the representative of My people. And Me, in the cloud.

And this re-enactment of Sinai comes one

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week after Rosh Hashana, the day of the shofar. For at Sinai, besides the cloud and besides man not being allowed to approach, there was the sound of the shofar. At Sinai, He sounded the shofar. On Rosh Hashana, we sound the shofar.

The Sinai moment is the closest, most intimate encounter of man and G-d on this earth. The Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur re-enactment is man's desire to renew that intimate encounter, but on our initiative. Shofar. And Holy of Holies.



2ND ALIYA (16:7-11)

Take the 2 goats of the people. Through lots, identify one as an offering and the other to send to the desert for atonement. Aharon offers the offering for himself and his household.

In this moment of intimate contact of the Divine and us, we achieve atonement through pageantry. The pageantry of the 2 goats is rich; identical in appearance, their roles achieved through lots, their fate radically different. One will be an offering to G-d. The other will be sent to the barren desert.



3RD ALIYA (16:12-17)

Aharon is to take a pan of coals and of incense into the Holy of Holies, with the smoke of the incense enveloping the covering of the Aron. Aharon takes the blood of his sin offering and sprinkles it 1 + 7 times in the Holy of Holies and 1 + 7 times in front of the curtain, outside of the Holy of Holies. He repeats this with the blood of the people's sin offering, the goat.

Aharon brings incense into the Holy of Holies to create smoke. But the Torah does not say that the smoke from the incense fills the Holy of Holies. It says it covers the Aron.

The emphasis on the Aron is to be

reminiscent of Mt. Sinai, where the thick cloud covered the mountain when G-d spoke these ten commandments, housed in the Aron.

And perhaps the smoke and the cloud as accompanying this intimate encounter is deliberate. For the closer the encounter with the Divine, the more hidden, obscure, mysterious, enigmatic. Cloudy. Obscured. Intimacy and mystery.



4TH ALIYA (16:18-24)

He then takes the blood of his bull and the goat of the people and both places it on the incense altar and sprinkles it 1 + 7 times, purifying it. He thus completes the atonement of the holiest places. Aharon then places his hands upon the head of the other goat of the people, confessing all their sins, placing them on the head of the goat. The goat, bearing the sins of the people, is led out to the desert. Aharon now changes from the special white garments to his regular ones and offers the more conventional offerings for himself and the people.

Two goats. One offered. One taken to the desert after the sins are confessed upon it.

Rav Soloveitchik captured this drama as a metaphor. This goat in the desert is pushed over a cliff, falling to its death.

The fall, the pull of gravity is a metaphor for the push and pull of our nature, but with no exercise of will. Man can choose to assert his will. Or choose to be subject to the whims and forces of his nature, like the goat unable to break his fall. In a word, when man allows himself to be pulled down by his nature, failing to assert his will, gravity pulls him down to his demise. Such is the sinful one, allowing forces to dominate, failing to assert his will.



5TH ALIYA (16:25-30)

The one who led the goat to the desert need be purified upon his return as do the ones who burn the sin offerings of Aharon and the people outside of the camp. All of this is to be done every year on Yom Kippur accompanied by fasting. For on this day, He provides you with atonement and purity; you become purified before G-d.

While the drama of this day was punctured by the destruction of the Temple, the atonement persists through the day of Yom Kippur itself. The Talmud took the verse literally. On this *day* you achieve atonement. The day itself, even without the elaborate Temple service, but the day itself, the power of Yom Kippur atones.



6TH ALIYA (16:31-34)

This procedure atoning for the Holy of Holies, the outer area, the altar, the Kohanim and the people shall be done once a year.

This atonement and purification are humbling, overwhelming, ennobling. For the Holy One reaches for mankind, descends in a cloud as it were to the Holy of Holies, granting atonement. It is His reach for man; His kindness, generosity, and love.

Yom Kippur is a gift, an affirmation of man, a chance to begin anew, a smile from

the Holy One, appreciating our desire and passion, even if we err. Yom Kippur is the faith of the Holy One in us, giving us a yearly clean slate. That is a gift.

MAFTIR (BAMIDBAR 29:7-11)

The maftir describes the extra mussaf that is brought in addition to the unique Yom Kippur offerings. ■

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HA'AZINU

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PARSHAT HA'AZINU

Ha'azinu is the second to last Parsha in the Torah. It is one chapter of 52 verses, making it one of the shortest in the Torah.

All but 8 verses consist of the song of Ha'azinu. The song is written in the Torah in the form of a poem with 2 parallel columns. The Torah itself calls it Hashira Hazot, this song; 5 times in last week's parsha and one time again this week.

The poem of Ha'azinu was the song the Leviim sang in the Beit Hamikdash during the Mussaf offering on Shabbat. We know the Leviim sang a psalm from Tehilim as the Shir Shel Yom – the daily song, sang accompanying the morning daily offering. They also sang a song during Mussaf of Shabbat and that song is Ha'azinu.

But they did not sing the entire song each week. Ha'azinu was divided into 6 sections

– exactly the way we divide the aliyot. One section was read per week, the entire song in 6 weeks. Perhaps it was spread out over 6 weeks to express its theme, Jewish history. Jewish history spans millennia, hence it is sung over 6 weeks in the Temple.



1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 32:1-6)

Listen heavens, listen earth.
G-d is Just, Faithful. I will call in the name of Hashem, ascribe greatness to our G-d.

The song is a rhythmic poem of couplets, or at least begins that way. These 6 verses are the introduction. What we are saying in this song is cosmic – give ear, heavens and earth. He is Great and Just. We, his children, are twisted.



2ND ALIYA (32:7-12)

Remember those days. While nations were arranged, you, Jewish people became His lot. He found you, the apple of His eye. Spread His wings over you. He Himself cares for us.

These 6 verses introduce the dawn of Jewish history. These are tender, wistful remembrances. This capsule of Jewish history and how G-d relates to us must begin with tenderness. This aliya is a smile, a description of those carefree days of faithfulness.



3RD ALIYA (32:13-18)

He placed you in the heart of the Land, fed you honey, olive oil, butter, with livestock aplenty and wine. Yeshurun got fat and kicked. Left Him and sought others – demons, new powers and

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forgot Him.

The song is written in the Torah in 2 parallel columns. All the verses in the song are couplets; either one line of one couplet or 2 lines of 2 couplets. One couplet is in one column, the second in the second column. Hence every verse so far has ended at the end of the column. Except this verse. The verse of Yeshurun getting fat, verse 14. It has 5 phrases. Too many. It ends not at the end of the column but now in the middle of the column.

Things start to go awry. The verses no longer end symmetrically, at the end of the second column. Now they begin to end in the first column, in the middle of the line, off balance. The song is off kilter now. The plenty in the land turned us fat. And rebellious. And off kilter. It is beautiful poetry – the fat of the land is a verse of 5 phrases (the only verse not of 2 or 4 phrases), too many phrases, too much consumption, too much good.

Leave Him. Forget Him. Look to demons and other powers. This is not your forefather's beliefs.



4TH ALIYA (32:19-28)

I will hide My Face from them and see what happens then. They angered Me. I will send aggressors to anger them. My anger burns. I will take it out on the Land. I will scatter them, with no trace of their memory. They won't even understand that I am behind this, for they lack all insight.

This is no longer a 6 verse aliya like the first 3, but 9. The verses no longer end symmetrically, at the end of the second column. Now they end in the first column – off balance. As if to say, the world is not working the way it ought to, off kilter; things gone awry.

The song switches now from Moshe's voice

to G-d's voice. Moshe no longer describes Him – G-d speaks now in the first person. Moshe can't describe this for once G-d hides his Face, no man can understand His ways; G-d needs to describe the hiding of His Face Himself.

The Ramban comments that this is actually a prediction of the exile of the 10 tribes, the Kingdom of Israel. Their memory is gone. A full 10 tribes of the Jewish people have been lost forever. With no happy ending. While the history of the Jewish people will have many tragedies, the loss of 10 tribes of our people, with no trace is a tragedy of, well, Biblical proportion.



5TH ALIYA (32:29-39)

Oh, would the people understand the consequences. One could not pursue 1000 nor 2 pursue 10000 were it not for our G-d. The oppressors drink the bitter vintages of Sodom and Gemorrah. G-d will eventually relent of this abandonment of His people, while the nations have none to their rescue. I am the One who gives life and takes it; none escapes My hand.

The song turns back to Moshe's voice. The plain meaning of some of the verses in this aliya is apparent, others quite obscure. The last verse, with the return of G-d's voice, also returns to ending in the second column. Structure has returned, order is back. This

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aliya is striking in referring both to the Jewish people and to the others, what we have been referring to as oppressors. While we have been disappointing, we have an end of reconciliation. But when it comes to the other nations and their evil and rebelliousness, Moshe cedes the floor back to G-d. It is not for us to speak of the justice due others. That is His work not ours.



6TH ALIYA (32:40-43)

Arrows of blood, a flesh consuming sword, the payment of the enemy. Sing nations of His people, for in the end there is retribution and the Land atones for His people.

3 verses are in the first person with G-d speaking of ultimate justice, vengeance against My enemies, those that hate Me. This aliya is not for the faint of heart. We squirm

at the notion of a vengeful G-d. As we squirm at “Shfoch chamatcha”, pour out Your wrath on the nations, the verses we say when we open the door at the seder.

But Moshe insisted that we recite this song, seeming to feel this song will guide us in history. Divine justice, reward and yes, punishment is part of the order of the world. We repeat it at the seder when we look to the culmination of history and we repeat it in Akdamot that we say on Shavuot in looking to the future. We don’t delight in His meting out justice. Though we acknowledge that justice, Divine justice is to be part of the end of days. But the song does not end with the retribution. It ends with all peoples singing – a universal end of days.



7TH ALIYA (32:44-52)

Moshe brings this song, together with Yehoshua to the people. He instructs them to take it to heart and to command it to their children. It is not empty words but rather it is your life. Then Moshe is told to ascend Har Navo where he is to die.

The verse states that Hashem spoke to Moshe of his impending death “b’etzem hayom hazeh”, on that very day. The simple meaning is that on the very day that this song was complete, Moshe’s life too had served its time and was too to be completed.

But Rashi quotes the Midrash that prefers to translate this as meaning “in broad daylight”. Moshe’s ascension to the mountain and his death is to be public, in full view. As if to avoid the objections of the people. As much as the people would want to prevent this – Moshe’s death is inevitable. As devastating as the loss of Moshe’s leadership is, it is a part of life. The covenant is with our people, transcending any one leader. ■



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SUKKOT

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SUKKOT

VAYIKRA 22:26-23:44



1ST ALIYA (VAYIKRA 22:26-23:3)

An offering may not be brought in the first 7 days of the animal's life. An animal and her offspring may not be killed on the same day. A thanksgiving offering must be eaten within one day. Do not profane My Holy Name, rather sanctify My Name, the One who brought you out of Egypt.

The Torah reading for the first day of Sukkot is the whole of Chapter 23 in Vayikra, which lists the entire yearly cycle of holidays. Curiously, we begin 8 verses before that chapter with a paragraph describing various rules concerning offerings.

But it is the last line that is the connection to Yom Tov. Sanctify My Name because it is for that reason that I brought you out of Egypt. The observance of the holidays has historical meaning to be sure. But the history is not the story; the story is the relationship. I brought you out to be the sanctifiers of My Name. You are My reflection in this world. And as such,



2ND ALIYA (23:4-14)

Pesach is on the 14th of the 1st month. For seven days consume matzah. Day 1 and Day 7 are holy, no work is to be done. On the day after the Yom Tov, bring a measure of the first harvest of barley as an Omer offering, accompanied by a sacrifice. The new grain may not be consumed until this Omer is offered.

The description of the Omer offering seems out of place. Though each holiday has an offering, the emphasis of this section is not offerings but holidays, chagim. The day the Omer is brought is not a yom tov. But, similar to the holidays, it has a specific calendar date. Hence this section would be accurately called, not a list of chagim, or holidays, but a list of calendric events.



3RD ALIYA (23:15-22)

Count 7 full weeks from this offering and on the next day, the 50th bring 2 baked breads of chametz accompanied by sacrifices. The Kohen shall wave these 2 bikkurim breads. That day is a yom tov, no work is to be done. When harvesting your fields leave the corners and gleanings for the poor and foreigner.

The 2 breads brought on Shavuot are the bookends of the Omer. The Omer was barley, brought the 2nd day of Pesach. The 2 breads are wheat, chometz, bread, the first wheat

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offering of the new crop brought on Shavuot. The Omer offering allowed consumers to now be able to use the newly harvested grains. But in the Temple, the new grain cannot be used until 7 weeks later, with the offerings of the 2 breads on Shavuot.

The contrast of the matzah that we eat on Pesach and the chametz of this bread offering on Shavuot invites our curiosity. Perhaps it expresses 2 differing qualities. Pesach is the holiday of history. In history you need to move, move fast. Don't let the dough rise. Seize the moment; don't miss it. Speed.

But on Shavuot, the topic is holy offerings, not history. In the context of holy offerings, patience is king. Wait. 7 weeks. Patience. Let the dough rise, become chometz. Wait. While history demands speed, holiness inheres in restraint.



4TH ALIYA (23:23-32)

The first day of the 7th month is a day of Teruah, a yom tov. But the 10th day of the month is Yom Hakippurim. Afflict yourself for it is a day of atonements. It is a holy day; no work may be done. Afflict yourself from the 9th in the evening, evening to evening.

The Torah refers to Yom Kippur as Yom Hakippurim, plural atonements. Perhaps

this is to infer that there are gradations of atonement. Each holiday has a sin offering, a chatat. If we gain atonement monthly, what is the need for a unique day of atonement?

Perhaps because not all atonement is created equal. There is atonement of a certain level achieved monthly. But profound atonement, a complete cleansing, a thorough and deep forgiveness is achieved on Yom Kippur. Atonement accompanied by cleansing. Hence, Kippurim – double kappara, double atonement.



5TH ALIYA (23:33-44)

The 15th of the 7th month is Sukkot for 7 days. The first day is a yom tov as is the 8th day. Take a lulav and etrog and rejoice for 7 days before G-d. Dwell in Sukkot for 7 days so you will know that G-d had your ancestors dwell in Sukkot when leaving Egypt.

Sukkot rounds out the year of chagim. It is the end. As such, it is a celebration not only of itself but a celebration of the completion of the chagim of the year. The lulav is the expression of appreciation for the rich life we enjoy, a life punctuated by rendezvous with the Divine. Our greatest joy is that we stand before the King, rejoicing before G-d. That is true inner joy. ■

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SHMINI ATZERET / SIMCHAT TORAH

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SHMINI ATZERET/ SIMCHAT TORAH

We read the parsha of V'zot Habracha, a short parsha of 41 verses. And the beginning of Breishit which itself is 34 verses.

Moshe blesses the tribes of the Jewish people, pointing out the qualities that a variegated society will need. Leadership, consistency, legislature, judges, business, agriculture, warriors, minerals. In this Moshe speaks mostly to G-d, not to the people, illustrating to Him the greatness of the people he is to take leave of.



1ST ALIYA (DVARIM 33:1-7)

Moshe blesses the people before his death. G-d approached us at Sinai, although He has all nations; we were the ones who received His utterances. He is the King over Israel. Reuven endures as does his progeny. Yehuda, G-d hear his voice, he is powerful, and be his help.

Moshe does not bless the tribes in a way that we think of blessing. A blessing would be: may you have success or may you have peace. Rather, Moshe describes the unique quality of each of the tribes. Perhaps the blessing is: be as you are, continue as you are.

Reuven is the consistent one. Enduring. Always at the ready. Yehuda is power and

leadership, the eventual monarch.



2ND ALIYA (33:8-12)

Levi, He is Your pious one, with-standing trials by listening to Your covenant. They will teach Your Torah and serve You. Bless him and gird him in the face of adversaries. Binyamin, the beloved of G-d, He protects him, while he dwells on His chest.

The Jewish people need religious leaders and that is Levi. Binyamin is the seat of the Mikdash, the physical partner to Levi's religious service.



3RD ALIYA (33:13-17)

Yosef, his land is blessed, from the sweet of the Land, mountains and hills. He has power through both Ephraim and Menashe.

Yosef is agricultural bounty, strength in economy and strength in numbers.



4TH ALIYA (33:18-21)

Zevulun is pleasing in his journeys, Yissachar in his dwellings. People gather at the mountain, enjoying the bounty of the sea and of the earth. Gad is blessed, dwelling as a lion. His portion is legislation, leadership, righteousness and justice.

Zevulun is the merchant marine, Yissachar the philosopher prince. Gad is the backbone of national institutions, of justice and the rule of law.



5TH ALIYA (33:21-29)

Dan is a lion cub, enjoying the Bashan. Naftali, satisfied, full of blessing, the sea and the south. Asher, blessed more than children, beloved by brothers,

feet of oil, shoes of iron and copper. None is like G-d, riding the heavens in your aid, splendidous.

Dan protects the northern border, while Naftali the west and the south. Asher is the peace maker, with "soft oiled feet but shoes of iron", a metaphor for stepping softly but with principles when needed. The peace maker.



CHATAN TORAH (34:1-12)

G-d of ages surveys, under Him strength, repelling enemies. The Jewish people dwell safely, wheat and wine, oil like dew. Fortunate are you Israel to have such a Protector. Moshe ascended Har Navo, looking out over the Land. G-d told him, this is the Land I promised to you, though you will not enter it. Moshe died, buried, though his burial spot is not known. His strength was with him to the end. The people mourned 30 days. Yehoshua was filled with Divine spirit, though none will ever be as Moshe, knowing G-d, face to face, performing all the wonders which he did in front of all Israel.

Moshe's life comes to an end. Perhaps a tinge of tragedy, failing to enter the Land he worked toward his whole life. But, in

mentioning Yehoshua, and in following his poetic description of the spectrum of talent the Jewish people display, he leaves the world satisfied. His goal was not to enter the Land; his goal was to successfully lead his people to enter the Land. He leaves the world satisfied that all that is needed for success is right there in front of them. His life's mission was accomplished.



CHATAN TORAH - BREISIT (1:1-2:3)

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ייתמו ימי בכי אבל משה (לד:ח)

"And the time of weeping and mourning was over." (34:8)

By the case of Moshe Rabbeinu's demise, we are told that the days of weeping and mourning "came to an end".

The Oznayim LaTorah (Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin 1881-1966 Lithuania-Jerusalem) asks why by the death of Yaakov Avinu there is no mention of when the weeping came to an end? Rabbi Sorotzkin answers that when Moshe passed away, even though the people were full of anguish and sadness, nevertheless they were encouraged by the forthcoming embarking into the Land of Eretz Yisrael. This jubilant occasion was able to galvanize their feelings. However, with the death of Yaakov was the impending danger of enslavement and exile. For this reason, the Torah omits any reference to weeping or mourning "coming to an end." Shabbat Shalom



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BERESHIT

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PARSHAT BERESHIT

The first 2 parshiot of the Torah, Bereshit and Noach span 2,000 years. They can be viewed as the dawn of mankind. But in the narrative of the Torah, they must be seen differently.

The Torah has 54 parshiot. The first 2 describe universal man. And 52 describe the Jewish people's covenant with G-d. Clearly, the first 2 parshiot are a prelude, the back story to the story of the Jewish people. But not the Jewish people. The unique covenant between G-d and a people. That is the story of the Torah.

The story of the Torah is the covenant established by G-d with the Jewish people; who is in, how it develops, what are the mutual demands, how is it expressed. The first 2 parshiot must address the most basic question; why was a covenant made with a single people? While Parshat Bereshit is rich in myriad lessons as to the nature of man, it is primarily this back story to the covenant with the Jewish people that is the narrative of our parsha.



1ST ALIYA (GENESIS 1:1-2:3)

In the beginning was chaos; the spirit of G-d hovered over the waters. Day 1, light was created. Day 2, the waters were split up and down, with heavens

emerging between. Day 3, the water below was split, with dry land emerging, with vegetation. Day 4, the heavens above were filled with the sun, moon and stars. Day 5, the seas were filled with fish, the skies with birds, blessed to be fruitful. Day 6, animals were created on the land. And finally, man is created in the image of G-d. Man is blessed to be fruitful and multiply, to subdue the world and to rule over the animals. The world was completed; with no creation on the 7th day, it was endowed with blessing and holiness.

The Creation of the world is depicted as evolving from less sophisticated to the most sophisticated. It begins with inanimate earth, water, heavens, which then are filled with vegetation, then living beings of fish and birds, then land animals. And finally, man.

It is clear that it is not the creation of man that is the pinnacle of this story, but rather the radical being that he is; the image of G-d. While we are quite familiar with the description that man is created in the image of G-d, it is, as Rabbi Sacks coined, "Radical Then, Radical Now".

Man created in the image of G-d? That is a shocking depiction of man. As if to say, G-d is Creating a partner, a shadow of Himself. Man is not a fancy ape, a well-developed baboon. While man shares characteristics with animals, a chasm divides; that chasm is the image of G-d.

The rest of this parsha is the development of this unique and radical relationship; G-d and His shadow creation, man. How much

is man like G-d? In what ways? And more crucially, in what ways not?



2ND ALIYA (2:4-20)

A more detailed account of the Creation of Man: G-d creates man from dust of the earth and breathes into his nostrils the breath of life. He is placed in the Garden of Eden, full of beautiful trees, to work it, surrounded by rivers. G-d commands man to not eat of the tree of knowledge. And declares that it is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a partner.

The language of chapter 2 is in striking contrast to chapter 1. Chapter 1 placed man as the pinnacle of created beings. Chapter 2 describes personality, morality, humility, emotion. Chapter 1 is the creation of mankind – chapter 2 is the creation of a person.

Man gets the name Adam as he is created from the adama, the earth, a rather humble beginning. Yet the description of his activities are all echoes of G-d the Creator. Man is created alone. The garden will not grow without him. He is to work and preserve the garden. He is given a command punishable by death. It is not good that man be alone; I will make him a partner. The animals are brought to Adam to name.

This description of man is defining the image of G-d. Man, as G-d's image is charged with being His partner, sharing with Him many characteristics. But he is not G-d Himself. He is to rule the world, as G-d Rules. He is to name the animals, as G-d named the day, night, heavens and seas. As He is a Creator, man is to be a creator – a creator of life through children, a creator of vegetation through the garden.

On the other hand, it is not good that he is alone – for there is only One who is Alone.

Man is to be G-d like, to be creative, to name things as G-d named things in the Creation, to take his place as the guardian of the world. But while being G-d like, man needs to realize the limits of that, so as to prevent his thinking: I am not just G-d like but perhaps G-d Himself. Distinctions need be made.



3RD ALIYA (2:20-3:21)

Woman is created. The serpent convinces Eve that were she to eat of the forbidden fruit, she would be as G-d, knowing good and evil. She and Adam eat of the fruit and their eyes are opened and they cover themselves with fig leaves. They hide from G-d, Who challenges their disobedience. All are punished – the serpent will slither, the woman will birth children with pain, and man's cultivation of the earth will be with sweat.

A richer story of symbolism in Tanach is hard to find. A speaking serpent, the enticement of beauty, hubris, failure, hiding from G-d, blame, consequences. Many and varied are the lessons to be culled from this story.

Man, created in the image of G-d, must aspire to his lofty calling, while remembering he is but the image of, not G-d Himself. Man being alone may mislead him in thinking he is the One and Only. Hence, he needs a

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partner. The serpent convinced Eve, and then she Adam, that man need not keep the command, for you are in His Image. The serpent convinced them: as G-d cedes to man leadership in this world, He likewise cedes to man the role as legislator of good and evil. If you don't like His rule to not eat, make up your own rule.

In that they err. While G-d, like you, must defer in the ways I Require. G-d responds by walking them back a bit specifically in their most creative activities, as if to say that while you are creators, I remain *the* Creator. Eve, when you create and bear children, the quintessential creative moment of humanity, it will be with labor, a reminder of your earthly origins. And man, when you create from the earth, it will be with sweat.

There is only One who Creates with the uttering of a word, with ease. He is *the* Creator; you, *a* creator. And He is the Commander of what is good and evil, while you are the commanded.



4TH ALIYA (3:22 – 4:18).

Man is exiled from the Garden of Eden. Cain and Abel are born. They bring offerings to G-d – Abel's accepted, Cain's not. Cain kills Abel. "Am I my brother's keeper?" Cain is consigned to wander the earth.

Cain kills his brother. And in so doing, violates another boundary between the one created in His Image and the Creator himself. While man will be a *creator* of life, he will

not be a *taker* of life. That he must cede to the Creator.

Sin is met with exile. Adam's sin brings exile from the Garden of Eden. Cain's sin brings wandering, homelessness. The Torah explains the meaning of exile: Cain left from being before G-d.

This introduces a pillar concept of man and G-d. Divine disfavor with man results in distance. Adam was sent away from the Garden. Cain sent away from being before G-d. Later, the tower of Babel will bring dispersion. Only Avraham will reverse this and journey not away but toward a specific place.



5TH ALIYA (4:19 – 4:22)

Lemech and his wives Ada and Tzila bear children. One is the initiator of animal husbandry, one of the music of strings and wind instruments, and one of the fashioning of copper and iron.

A curiously short aliya. Mankind advances marvelously in creatively mastering the world: the mastery of animals, creative artistic expression of music and advanced productivity of copper and iron. Man was commanded in creation to master the world. He is doing a good job.

But, while man is masterful in his creative conquest of the world, the brevity of mention is perhaps to highlight that of much greater importance is his mastery of himself. The Torah is far more interested in man's ethical behavior and his relationship with G-d than with his mastery of iron and the creative expression of his music. He is mighty good at mastery of the world. Let's see how good at mastering himself.



6TH ALIYA (4:23 – 5:24)

The generations from Adam through Noah.

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Enosh is described as beginning to profane the name of G-d. Rashi explains that people and things were ascribed Divine qualities. The beginning of idolatry. It is erroneous to call Avraham the first monotheist. G-d spoke to Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel brought offerings and He spoke to Cain, and Noah will be instructed by G-d.

Rather, man moved away from G-d, failed in his behavior and became distanced. Avraham is not the first monotheist; he is the first to be embraced and to be pulled closer by G-d.

The creation of man in the image of G-d, to be His partner is suffering. Man overstepped his place in failing to listen to the command, in murder, and now in failing to maintain G-d's unique being. Early mankind is moving away; Avraham will eventually be brought near.



7TH ALIYA (5:25 – 6:8)

Noah is introduced. G-d is disappointed in man; his lifespan is reduced to 120 years. G-d plans to destroy man, animals, birds. Noah finds favor in His eyes.

In the man/G-d balance, longevity induces in man a feeling of eternal life, blurring again the crucial differences between man and G-d. In calibrating the correct balance for the man/G-d relationship, longevity is counter-productive. Mortality is better. Man will not live forever – only One lives eternally. A shorter lifespan is in fact a gift from G-d, an act of love and generosity. Reducing man's lifespan helps man to more clearly see that while man is created in G-d's Image, he is not G-d Himself. Only One is eternal.

And so, the pillars of man in His Image are presented. Only He is One; man has a

partner. Only He Commands; man obeys. Only He Takes life; while man creates life, he does not take it. Only He is Eternal, man but 120 years. ■



STATS

1st of the 54 sedras; 1st of 12 in Bereshit.
Written on 241 lines in a Torah, rank 9th.
23 Parshiyot; 10 open, 13 closed, rank: 6.
146 pesukim - rank: 8th (5th in Bereshit), same as Mikeitz; but Miketz is longer in lines, words, letters.
1931 words - ranks 8 (5th in Bereshit).
7235 letters - ranks 11 (5th in Bereshit).



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