

The Daily Portion

- Sivan Rahav Meir

What have we learned from the Book of B'reishit?

Translated by Janine Muller Sherr

This past Shabbat we finished reading the Book of B'reishit. What important lessons have we learned?

1) There is order to the world. Though our world emerged from chaos – a state of emptiness and void – it was designed with direction and purpose. There is a never-ending struggle between light and darkness, good and evil. And every person is created in the image of God with his or her designated task.

2) The founding of the Jewish people represents a paradigm shift for the world. After the sin of eating from the forbidden fruit of Eden, the murder of Hevel by his brother Kayin, the Great Flood, and the Tower of Babel, Avraham Avinu makes his appearance on the world stage. God commands him to go to the land of Israel and to establish a nation that will help humanity fulfill its destiny and bestow blessing on the entire world. Avraham and Sara set up a home based upon kindness, righteousness, and faith, travel the length and breadth of the land of Israel, and

receive everlasting blessings from God. From that time onward, the land of Israel has belonged to the Jewish people. It has remained our compass throughout our exile and all that has befallen us.

3) Our enemies are transient. Time after time, they have sought to destroy what our ancestors have built in this land, and time after time, we have rebuilt what was destroyed. The lives of our forefathers – Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov – were filled with trials and adversity, but also with fervent prayer, faith, and perseverance that yielded great blessing.

4) Sibling rivalry is a recipe for disaster. The final four chapters of B'reishit focus on the bitter struggle between Yosef and his brothers that ultimately leads to our exile. But the book ends with an important lesson about our key to survival – Jewish unity. All of Yaakov's sons stand by his deathbed and declare SH'MA YISRAEL, dedicating themselves to following in his path of faith.

The Book of B'reishit: our foundational stories that continue to impact us until this day. May we internalize its lessons, as we continue on to the Book of Sh'mot.

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