

B'REISHIT

1st of the 54 sedras;

1st of 12 in B'reishit



Written on 241 lines in a Torah, rank 9

23 Parshiyot; 10 open, 13 closed, rank 6

146 p'sukim - rank: 8th (5th in B'rei.),
same as Mikeitz; but Miketz is longer
in lines, words, letters

1931 words - ranks 8 (5th in B'reishit)

7235 letters - ranks 11 (5th in B'reishit)

MITZVOT

One (positive) mitzva in B'reishit -
viz. Be fruitful and multiply...

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a
parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of
the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of
p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the
Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND
Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV
(prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from
which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya - 34 p'sukim - 1:1-2:3

This Aliya contains the first account
of Creation. We just read it on
Simchat Torah for Chatan B'reishit.

[P>1:1 (5)] The first parsha contains the

"summary" statement of Creation and
the account of Day One.

SDT: Baal HaTurim points out that
the Gimatriya of B'REISHIT BARA is
1116, and is the numeric value of the
phrase: B'ROSH HASHANA NIV'RA -
on RH it (the world) was created.
Furthermore, the letters of B'reishit
rearrange to spell ALEF B'TISHREI,
the first of the month of Tishrei (or
B'ALEF TISHREI - on the first of
Tishrei - same thing), "confirming"
the opinion that the world was
created in Tishrei (R. Eliezer), rather
than in Nissan, as the other opinion
holds (R. Yehoshua). If we could prove
things with gimatriyas and anagrams,
then R. Eliezer would "win" the
dispute, but as it is, the dispute as to
when the world was created remains
a dispute - and seems to lean towards
Nissan.

"In the beginning, G-d created the
Heavens and the Earth. And the
Earth..."

**Did that happen on day 1 of Creation?
Or is something before Day 1 being
described?**

The Torah, the book of B'reishit, and
Parshat B'reishit begin with the
account of Creation - as we all know.
A famous question is what do the
first two p'sukim describe?

Are the p'sukim B'REISHIT BARA...
and V'HAARETZ HAYTA... part of day
one, or does day one begin with "And
G-d said Let there be light?"

One school of thought - which personally works for me and helps explain a lot of things - is that first there was Creation of Something from Nothing (YEISH MEI'AYIN, Creatio ex nihilo) and then there was the organized formation of Something from Something (YEISH MEI'YEISH).

In the Beginning, G-d created the heavens and the earth is understood as His creation of everything in existence from the state of nothingness in which only G-d existed. What that means is not really within human grasp and it should not bother you if your head hurts from trying to imagine that.

As the second pasuk tells us, the result of that first stage of Creation, was that everything was in a chaotic mixture - including matter, energy, time, and more.

Starting with the third pasuk - VAYOMER ELOKIM Y'HI OR, we have the six days of Creation, culminating in the first Shabbat - SHABBAT B'REISHIT.

Regardless of how long you think the days of Creation were - 24 hours, 1000 years, an eon each, or whatever, the first two p'sukim describe what took place in anywhere from a fraction of a second (Big Bang Theory) to immeasurable eons. Consequently, any question of age of the earth, fossil remains of pre-

historic animals, and more - are rendered unanswerable. There is so much more to say - and I often do say more on this, but not now.

“And G-d said: Let there be light...”

Thus begins the Torah's description of Days 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. And what happened on those days? G-d put everything in order, distinguished one thing from another. It was creation of Something from Something. YEISH MI'YEISH. Forming, shaping. The kind of Creation that we can and should emulate in our lives.

And how long was one of these days of Creation? Maybe they each were a thousand years long. Or an eon. Or maybe they each were 24 hours long. Either that Torah talks "our language" or not. Take your pick. Either way fits (because there was a super-fast-forward on each day so that which would take long periods of time to develop naturally could fit into a day as we know it).

Shabbat B'reishit is a time of rediscovery and re-creation. Just like on Pesach and Shavuot when we read of the events of Egyptian slavery and the Exodus on the one and the events of Matan Torah on the other, and we try to put ourselves into the events, to make them fresh, as if today we came out of Egypt, as if the Torah were given today, so too should we enthusiastically read and hear the description of Creation and put

ourselves into the position of discovering G-d through the world and nature that He brought into existence for us. Don't just see things as "once upon a time, a long time ago..." -- get excited, because G-d "renews with His Goodness, every day and always, the Acts of B'reishit."

Without going into detail, here is a breakdown of the first Aliya for your consideration.

2 p'sukim, as mentioned above, for the first phase of creation. Notwithstanding the argument above that broke these two p'sukim off of the description of the first day (so to speak), they are part of the first PARSHA, together with the creation of Light, etc. Which might support other "understandings" of the "process" of Creation.

3 p'sukim for Day 1, the creation of light, the separation of light and darkness, and their being identified as day and night. One KI TOV. The day is called YOM ECHAD (cardinal number) rather than YOM RISHON (ordinal number), because RISHON has meaning only if there is a SHENI, which there wasn't yet.

[P>1:6 (3)] The next parsha is for the Second Day of Creation. The creation of the Heavens and the separation of the Upper and Lower waters. (Some say that angels and various forces were created on the 2nd day too. This might include germs.) Notably absent

from the second day is KI TOV. One explanation is that the separation of the waters was not completed until the third day when water was further separated from land. The assessment, so to speak, as KI TOV works only at "the stopping points" of Creation. There are other suggestions as to why there is no KI TOV on the second day.

[P>1:9 (5)] The next parsha contains the Third day of Creation which consists of two "sections". First, two p'sukim for the "gathering of the lower waters" into different areas and the formation of dry land. And the "naming" of Land and Seas. KI TOV. And then the Divine command to the Land to spring forth with vegetation. 3 p'sukim with another KI TOV introduce us to the Plant Kingdom.

[P>1:14 (6)] Next we find the account of Creation on the fourth day. The Sun, Moon and stars (and other "heavenly bodies") are placed in their appointed positions and orbits. KI TOV.

Interesting to note that the Sun and the Moon (which are interestingly not named here) are called the Great Luminaries and in the same pasuk, it is the Sun that keeps the title and the Moon is called the Me'or HaKatan, the small luminary. Aside from the Midrashic explanations, there is an important physical observation to note. Comparing the Sun and the Moon, we find that the Sun has a diameter about 400 times greater than the Moon. If that doesn't sound

that impressive, look at it this way: 64,000,000 Moons would fit into the Sun. From this perspective, the Sun is certainly the Me'or HaGadol to the Moon's Me'or HaKatan.

But look at things another way. Because the Sun is approx. 400 times more distant from the Earth as is the Moon, the Sun and the Moon appear to us as the same size. If you have seen the Sun through a cloud or during a dust storm, the Sun looked very much like a full Moon. furthermore, during a total solar eclipse the Moon will approximately cover the disk of the Sun as if they were a matched set. No other heavenly body - star or planet - appears to us as more than a point of light (to the naked eye). As such, they (Sun & Moon) are the Me'orot HaG'dolim. Sometimes it is actual size that matters, but sometimes it is how we perceive things that is significant. This pasuk teaches us both perspectives.

[P>1:20 (4)] Next comes the Fifth Day, with its account of Animal Kingdom, part one. Swarming insects, fish, birds. KI TOV. And P'RU URVU.

[P>1:24 (8)] Next comes the largest parsha yet, with the formation of the Animal Kingdom, part two. Land animals (most mammals). "Creepy things" probably includes most reptiles as well.

Fifth day creatures and sixth day

creatures do not necessarily divide along modern biology's taxonomic guidelines. For example, dolphins and bears are both mammals (and NFL teams), but aquatic mammals were (probably) created on the fifth day. The bat, although a mammal, (probably) preceded the mouse by a day. What about flightless birds? And mammals that spend much time in the water, but do come onto land at times? Good questions (not necessarily practical ones, but...). One KI TOV.

Then comes the formation of human beings, first as a single being both male and female and then separated into two different beings, male and female (but with some "crossing" of characteristics). P'RU URVU **[1, A212 1:28]**, which will combine them once again (in a sense). TOV M'OD. THE sixth day. YOM HASHISHI.

An interesting gimatriya:

A person with both male and female parts is called an androgynos. The gimatriya of the Hebrew (Aramaic) word is 390. ZACHAR UN'KEIVA, male and female, also equals 390. The observation is attributed to Rabbi Yehuda HaChasid (12th century c.e.).

[P>2:1 (3)] This relatively long first Aliya concludes with the 3-pasuk parsha introducing us to Shabbat B'reishit, the day that G-d blessed and sanctified because He "rested" from Creation on that day. We say this parsha in the Friday night Amida,

right after the Friday night Amida, and at the Friday night table as the first part of Kiddush. This should tell us how important it is that we learn well (as best as we can) the Torah's account of Creation.

You might not know...

Why do we say VAYCHULU after the Amida on Friday night if we said it in the Amida and are going to say it again at Kiddush?

Last Friday night (Sh'mini Atzeret) and the one before it (Leil Rishon shel Sukkot) and two weeks before that (Leil Rosh HaShana), the Amida did NOT contain VAYCHULU. Originally, Chazal instituted saying VAYCHULU right after the Amida that didn't have those p'sukim. It was then standardized as procedure for every Leil Shabbat.

Yom Tov on Shabbat doesn't even happen every year. Something a few times. But on overwhelming majority of Shabbatot, we do have VAYCHULU in the Amida. Yet because of LO PLUG (not to differentiate), that Rabbinic decrees are often declared universally applicable, we say VAYCHULU after the Amida every Friday night.

**Levi - Second Aliya -
16 p'sukim - 2:4-19**

[P>2:4 (37)] Now we have a restate-

ment of Creation, focusing on Gan Eden, the formation of Adam, Adam's dominance over Nature, and his first prohibition - eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil.

"It is not good that man shall be alone" is explained in different ways, including that only G-d is singular. Man needs to know that as great as he can become, as much as he can accomplish, he is not G-d nor is he a god.

All creatures were brought before Adam as "candidates" for partner-to-Adam. None was found suitable, but Adam named them all (as people have done throughout the ages).

In the first account of Creation, Man was the final act of Creation, but not so much the purpose and focus of creation. In this second account, Man is presented as the focus of creation.

We must see things both ways in order to maintain a healthy perspective on this world, our role in it, and our responsibilities towards it and all elements of nature.

To paraphrase a famous saying: A person should write the following on two pieces of paper, fold each one, and put one in his left pocket and one in his right pocket. One should say: For me the whole world was created. The other should say: A mosquito was created before I was.

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 27 p'sukim - 2:20-3:21

The Torah's wording implies that Adam was first created as a combined male-female being, then (still on Day Six) he was physically separated as Adam and Chava, with the command and challenge of recombining spiritually, emotionally, and physically - "and they shall become one flesh".

Next the Torah tells us cryptically of the episodes of the Serpent's enticement of Chava, the eating from the Tree, the punishments for the Serpent, Chava, and finally, Adam.

The sin(s) of Adam and Chava are not just personal sins, but more significantly, they help us define and understand (some of) human nature. It's almost like asking, "How could they have done what they did!?! And the answer is, "That's how humans behave." Yes, it was a sin, but for us, it's more and different.

[S>3:16 (1)] This 1-pasuk parsha consists of G-d's "punishment" (call it "redefining") of Chava (woman-kind).

[S>3:17 (5)] And this parsha consists of Adam's "punishment" (same other possibility) and G-d's act of Chesed, in clothing the naked. This act is one of the many pointed to in our challenge to emulate the qualities of G-d.

It is interesting to note that the "story" parts of Shlishi and most of R'vi'i are part of one large parsha, but

G-d's statements to Adam and Chava, and His kindness to them are slightly isolated in the form of two parshiyot S'tumot, thus calling specific attention to them and the lessons we learn from them.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 21 p'sukim - 3:22-4:18

[P>3:22 (3)] This Aliya begins with the expulsion from Gan Eden, which is also seen as a metaphor for a re-definition of the role of humans in this world and of their (our) relationship with G-d.

[S>4:1 (26)] The Torah continues with the births of Kayin and Hevel and Kayin's killing of Hevel following the attempt of each to make an offering before G-d.

Kayin's response to G-d's query as to where Hevel was, echoes in our collective Jewish Experience through all the generations: HASHOMEIR ACHI ANOCHI? Am I my brother's keeper? Kayin said it to shirk his responsibility for his brother. We are constantly challenged to be the kind of human being and the kind of Jew who knows very well that we ARE responsible for each other.

We should remove the questioning HEI at the beginning of the question and the question mark from its end (not in the Torah, of course) and make our definitive statement -

YES! SHOMER ACHI ANOCHI!

Kayin's punishment and fate is presented, as is his lineage.

It is possible that Kayin sired different species of humanoids. This is how some want to explain the evidence of the existence of pre-historic man. Kayin's whole line was destroyed in the Flood. (Almost, that is. See further)

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 8 p'sukim - 4:19-26

This portion contains the story of Lemech, the great-great-great-grandson of Kayin and his accidental killer. Lemech's two wives were Ada and Tzila.

The Torah mentions more descendants of Kayin and their roles as the "firsts" in various fields of human activity. Yaval (son of Lemech and Ada) was the "first" tent-dwelling animal raiser. His brother Yuval was a musician. Tuval-Kayin (son of Tzila) worked with iron and copper. His sister was Na'ama.

Rashi (quoting B'reishit Rabba) says that she was the wife of No'ach. What is significant about that is that Kayin's line was not completely terminated by the Flood. Although we refer to all of mankind as Bnei No'ach, who descended from Adam through Sheit, on the mother's side there is Na'ama and before her, Kayin.

This portion also contains Lemech's

lament for having killed Kayin. (Rashi adds that Lemech also killed his son Tuval-Kayin (accidentally, in his grief), because he (TK) directed the blind Lemech's hands with bow and arrow to kill what he thought was an animal, and turned out to be Kayin.

By the way, in case your Chumash does not have the same Aliya breakdown as is presented here, don't worry. There are different versions.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 24 p'sukim - 5:1-24

The lineage from Adam through Sheit (Seth) to No'ach (into the next Aliya) is set down, with the age of the father at the birth of the main son, and each person's age at his death. These numbers help us construct the first part of our timeline. Although many sons and daughters are born to this list of patriarchs of the world, only one representative of each generation is named. Some say that only the named individual had the longevity that is recorded; the "average man and woman in the street" lived much shorter lives. Others say that the lifespan of the human was generally much longer before the Flood.

[S>5:1 (5)] This is the Book of the Chronicles of Mankind... Adam and Chava were created. Adam was 130 years old when Sheit was born. He lived another 800 years after Sheit was born, during which time he

fathered many sons and daughters. He lived 930 years and then he died.

The wording seems strange, but is repeated with each generation.

[S>5:6 (3)] Sheit was 105 when Enosh was born. He lived another 807 years for a total of 912. Sons and daughters. And he died.

[S>5:9 (3)] Enosh, 90, Keinan + 815 = 905...

[S>5:12 (3)] Keinan, 70, Mahalal'eil, + 840 = 910...

[S>5:15 (3)] Mahalal'eil, 65, Yered, + 830 = 895...

[S>5:18 (3)] Yered, 162, Chanoch, + 800 = 962... (Yered is the Avis, K2, Buzz Aldrin... of longevity.)

[S>5:21 (4)] Chanoch, 65, M'tushelach, + 300 = 365...

Shishi concludes with mention of Chanoch, who was taken from this world (possibly not by death - according to Tradition) at the relatively young age of 365.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 16 p'sukim - 5:25-6:8

[S>5:25 (3)] M'tushelach, 187, Lemech, + 782 = 969, the oldest age recorded in the Tanach. According to Tradition, he died immediately prior to the Flood, which was held up for 7 days of mourning for him.

[S>5:28 (4)] Lemech 182, a son. He

named him No'ach (note the different wording for the birth of No'ach)... + 595 = 777.

[S>5:32 (5)] No'ach, 500 (note how much older he was when his sons were born compared with the previous generations), Sheim, Cham, Yefet.

The Torah now describes the deterioration of society...

[P>6:5 (4)] and G-d's "regret" for having created Man, His decision to destroy the world (almost). No'ach alone found favor in G-d's eyes. Stay tuned for the continuation, next week.

Last 4 p'sukim are reread for the Maftir.

Haftara - 25 p'sukim - Shmuel Alef - 20:18-42

Since Shabbat is Erev Rosh Chodesh, the regular haftara of the sedra is preempted by the MACHAR CHODESH haftara.

The connection between the Haftara and Erev Rosh Chodesh is obvious. The opening words are: And Yonatan said to him, tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh... The real question is why the Sages decided on a special Haftara for Erev R"Ch in the first place. No other EREV gets a special reading. (Well, Pesach sort of does when Erev Pesach is Shabbat.)

Perhaps it is because R"Ch is so understated and often ignored. This became

a way - in addition to Rosh Chodesh benching, every month - to say: Hear ye hear ye, tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh. Yom Tov, on the other hand, needs no reminder.

From this reading we see that Rosh Chodesh was celebrated with a special meal... Many have the custom today of marking Rosh Chodesh with a special meal - or at least, a special food item, dessert, ice cream, peanut butter cookies... (be creative).

The Haftara also serves as a source of the minhag of abstaining or reducing one's work on R"Ch.

With Israel's history resembling the waxing and waning of the Moon, we see Machar Chodesh as a hope-filled message of a brighter tomorrow. The cycle continues until the Complete Redemption, when the Moon (and Klal Yisrael) will be completely restored.