

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Breishit
October 2, 2021 *** Tishrei 26, 5782

Breishit in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3137/jewish/Bereishit-in-a-Nutshell.htm

God creates the world in six days. On the first day He makes darkness and light. On the second day He forms the heavens, dividing the "upper waters" from the "lower waters." On the third day He sets the boundaries of land and sea, and calls forth trees and greenery from the earth. On the fourth day He fixes the position of the sun, moon and stars as timekeepers and illuminators of the earth. Fish, birds and reptiles are created on the fifth day; land animals, and then the human being, on the sixth. G-d ceases work on the seventh day, and sanctifies it as a day of rest.

G-d forms the human body from the dust of the earth, and blows into his nostrils a "living soul." Originally Man is a single person, but deciding that "it is not good that man be alone," G-d takes a "side" from the man, forms it into a woman, and marries them to each other. Adam and Eve are placed in the Garden of Eden, and commanded not to eat from the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." The serpent persuades Eve to violate the command, and she shares the forbidden fruit with her husband. Because of their sin, it is decreed that man will experience death, returning to the soil from which he was formed, and that all gain will come only through struggle and hardship. Man is banished from the Garden.

Eve gives birth to two sons, Cain and Abel. Cain quarrels with Abel and murders him, and becomes a rootless wanderer. A third son, Seth, is born to Adam; Seth's eighth-generation descendant, Noah, is the only righteous man in a corrupt world.

Haftarah in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/573554/jewish/Haftarah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

The haftarah of this week's reading opens with a statement by "the Almighty G-d, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who laid out the earth and made grow from it." This echoes the Torah portion's recounting of the creation of the world in six days. G-d speaks to the prophet Isaiah, reminding him of his life's purpose and duty, namely that of arousing the Jewish people to return to being a light unto the nations, "To open blind eyes, to bring prisoners out of a dungeon; those who sit in darkness out of a prison."

The prophecy continues with a discussion regarding the Final Redemption, and the song that all of creation will sing to G-d on that day. G-d promises to punish all the nations that have persecuted Israel while they were exiled. The prophet also rebukes Israel for their errant ways, but assures them that they will return to the correct path and will be redeemed. *(all nutshells borrowed from chabad.org)*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Genesis of Justice (Breishit) from The Rabbi Sacks (z"l) Legacy Trust
<https://rabbisacks.org/bereishitcovenantconversation/>

There are words that change the world, none more so than two sentences that appear in the first chapter of the Torah:
Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created mankind in His own image,
in the image of God He created them;
male and female He created them. (Gen. 1:26-27)

The idea set forth here is perhaps the most transformative in the entire history of moral and political thought. It is the basis of the civilisation of the West with its unique emphasis on the individual and on equality. It lies behind Thomas Jefferson's words in the American Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal [and] are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights ..." These truths are anything but self-evident. They would have been regarded as absurd by Plato who held that society should be based on the myth that humans are divided into people of gold, silver and bronze and it is this that determines their status in society. Aristotle believed that some are born to rule and others to be ruled.

Revolutionary utterances do not work their magic overnight. As Rambam explained in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, it takes people a long time to change. The Torah functions in the medium of time. It did not abolish slavery, but it set in motion a series of developments – most notably Shabbat, when all hierarchies of power were suspended and slaves had a day a week of freedom – that were bound to lead to its abolition in the course of time.

People are slow to understand the implications of ideas. Thomas Jefferson, champion of equality, was a slave-owner. Slavery was not

abolished in the United States until the 1860s and not without a civil war. And as Abraham Lincoln pointed out, slavery's defenders as well as its critics cited the Bible in their cause. But eventually people change, and they do so because of the power of ideas planted long ago in the Western mind.

What exactly is being said in the first chapter of the Torah?

The first thing to note is that it is not a stand-alone utterance, an account without a context. It is in fact a polemic, a protest, against a certain way of understanding the universe. In all ancient myth the world was explained in terms of battles of the gods in their struggle for dominance. The Torah dismisses this way of thinking totally and utterly. God speaks and the universe comes into being. This, according to the great nineteenth century sociologist Max Weber, was the end of myth and the birth of Western rationalism.

More significantly, it created a new way of thinking about the universe. Central to both the ancient world of myth and the modern world of science is the idea of power, force, energy. That is what is significantly absent from Genesis 1. God says, "Let there be," and there is. There is nothing here about power, resistance, conquest or the play of forces. Instead, the key word of the narrative, appearing seven times, is utterly unexpected. It is the word *tov*, good.

Tov is a moral word. The Torah in Genesis 1 is telling us something radical. The reality to which Torah is a guide (the word "Torah" itself means guide, instruction, law) is moral and ethical. The question Genesis seeks to answer is not "How did the universe come into being?" but "How then shall we live?" This is the Torah's most significant paradigm-shift. The universe that God made and we inhabit is not about power or dominance but about *tov* and *ra*, good and evil.[1] For the first time, religion was ethicised. God cares about justice, compassion, faithfulness, loving-kindness, the dignity of the individual and the sanctity of life.

This same principle, that Genesis 1 is a polemic, part of an argument with a background, is essential to understanding the idea that God created humanity "in His image, after His likeness." This language would not have been unfamiliar to the first readers of the Torah. It was one they knew well. It was commonplace in the first civilisations, Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt, where certain people were said to be in the image of God. They were the Kings of the Mesopotamian city-states and the Pharaohs of Egypt. Nothing could have been more radical than to say that not just kings and rulers appear in God's image. We all do. Even today the idea is daring: how much more so in an age of absolute rulers with absolute power.

Understood thus, Genesis 1:26-27 is not so much a metaphysical statement about the nature of the human person as it is a political

protest against the very basis of hierarchical, class- or caste-based societies whether in ancient or modern times. That is what makes it the most incendiary idea in the Torah. In some fundamental sense we are all equal in dignity and ultimate worth, for we are all in God's image regardless of colour, culture or creed.

A similar idea appears later in the Torah, in relation to the Jewish people, when God invited them to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6). All nations in the ancient world had priests, but none was "a kingdom of priests." All religions have holy individuals – but none claim that every one of their members is holy. This too took time to materialise. During the entire biblical era there were hierarchies. There were Priests and High Priests, a holy elite. But after the destruction of the Second Temple, every prayer became a sacrifice, every leader of prayer a priest, and every synagogue a fragment of the Temple. A profound egalitarianism is at work just below the surface of the Torah, and the Rabbis knew it and lived it.

A second idea is contained in the phrase, "so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky." Note that there is no suggestion that anyone has the right to have dominion over any other human being. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton, like the Midrash, states that this was the sin of Nimrod, the first great ruler of Assyria and by implication the builder of the Tower of Babel (see Gen. 10:8-11). Milton writes that when Adam was told that Nimrod would "arrogate dominion undeserved," he was horrified:

O execrable son so to aspire
Above his Brethren, to himself assuming
Authority usurped, from God not given:
He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl
Dominion absolute; that right we hold
By his donation; but man over men
He made not lord; such title to himself
Reserving, human left from human free.
(*Paradise Lost*, Book 12:64-71)

To question the right of humans to rule over other humans without their consent was at that time utterly unthinkable. All advanced societies were like this. How could they be otherwise? Was this not the very structure of the universe? Did the sun not rule the day? Did the moon not rule the night? Was there not a hierarchy of the gods in heaven itself? Already implicit here is the deep ambivalence the Torah would ultimately show toward the very institution of kingship, the rule of "man over men."

The third implication lies in the sheer paradox of God saying, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." We sometimes forget, when reading these words, that in Judaism God has no image or

likeness. To make an image of God is to transgress the second of the Ten Commandments and to be guilty of idolatry. Moses emphasised that at the Revelation at Sinai, "You saw no likeness, you only heard the sound of words." (Deut. 4:12)

God has no image because He is not physical. He transcends the physical universe because He created it. Therefore He is free, unconstrained by the laws of matter. That is what God means when He tells Moses that His name is "I will be what I will be" (Ex. 3:14), and later when, after the sin of the Golden Calf, He tells him, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." God is free, and by making us in His image, He gave us also the power to be free.

This, as the Torah makes clear, was God's most fateful gift. Given freedom, humans misuse it. Adam and Eve disobey God's command. Cain murders Abel. By the end of the parsha we find ourselves in the world about to be destroyed by the Flood, for it is filled with violence to the point where God regretted that He had ever created humanity. This is the central drama of Tanach and of Judaism as a whole. Will we use our freedom to respect order or misuse it to create chaos? Will we honour or dishonour the image of God that lives within the human heart and mind?

These are not only ancient questions. They are as alive today as ever they were in the past. The question raised by serious thinkers – ever since Nietzsche argued in favour of abandoning both God and the Judeo-Christian ethic – is whether justice, human rights, and the unconditional dignity of the human person are capable of surviving on secular grounds alone? Nietzsche himself thought not.

In 2008, Yale philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff published a magisterial work arguing that our Western concept of justice rests on the belief that "all of us have great and equal worth: the worth of being made in the image of God and of being loved redemptively by God." [2] There is, he insists, no secular rationale on which a similar framework of justice can be built. That is surely what John F. Kennedy meant in his Inaugural Address when he spoke of the "revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought," that "the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God." [3]

Momentous ideas made the West what it is, ideas like human rights, the abolition of slavery, the equal worth of all, and justice based on the principle that right is sovereign over might. [4] All of these ultimately derived from the statement in the first chapter of the Torah that we are made in God's image and likeness. No other text has had a greater influence on moral thought, nor has any other civilisation ever held a higher vision of what we are called on to be.

[1] What I take to be the meaning is of the story of Adam and Eve and the Tree of Knowledge is for another time. In the meantime, see Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, I:2. [2] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 393. [3] John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, Washington, DC, 20 January 1961. [4] Read Rabbi Sacks' Introduction to his *Essays on Ethics* to understand his expanded thoughts on this notion.

[Our Troubled Origins: Creating Something from Something: Breishit 5782 by Rabbi Aviva Richman](https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/our-troubled-origins)
<https://www.hadar.org/torah-resource/our-troubled-origins>

Where do we come from? Are our human origins pure and innocent? Or do we stem from the most unspeakable act of violence one can imagine?

As Parashat Bereishit traces our earliest origins, we see a conflicted picture of what lies at the core of humanity. This tension about whether humanity has pure or troubled origins parallels an age-old debate about whether God created the world from scratch or from a preexisting mess. Giving voice to the messier, more troubled origins of humanity can actually bring us into closer relationship with God, and more fully part of the divine work of creating something beautiful from a terrible mess.

Bereishit has echoes of two different origins stories of humanity. The earlier genealogy (starting in 4: 17) stems from Kayin and ends abruptly with a cryptic story about Lemekh. In the next chapter we meet a Lemekh who is the father of Noah (5:29). If we had only this first genealogy, we would conclude that Noah descends from Kayin, and the entirety of humanity born after the Flood traces our lineage back to a forefather who committed the first act of murder.

Yet, the genealogy of Kayin is interrupted with Adam fathering a third child, Shet (4:25), who knows nothing from the fatal conflict between Kayin and Hevel. This blessed third son gives way to a more dominant and kinder genealogy where Noah—and hence all of humanity—descend from him (5:6), and not from Kayin. Besides the identical name of Lemekh on both 1 lists, other names are quite similar, suggesting that these are two alternate versions of the origins of humanity. A fundamental difference is embedded in these competing stories. The first account beckons us into the troubling possibility that we descend from a murderer. Discovering this tainted lineage requires us to confront the dangerous and destructive proclivities we have inherited, and to fear the violence we are capable of. Knowing that I descend from Kayin makes me aware that I harbor Kayin's jealousy and impetuosity, that I could become a murderer too.

The more dominant genealogy from Shet shuts down these troubling implications of Kayin as our forefather. Humanity as we know it stems from innocence, from the third son, who was a manifestation of God's benevolence to bring repair (4:25). I can gain comfort and inspiration from origins in a progenitor who represents purging violence and making a fresh start.

The tension between these two origin stories of humanity parallels the age-old debate about whether God created the world from nothing (yesh me-ayin, "ex nihilo") or from preexisting formless matter (yesh me-yesh). A number of medieval commentaries stress the theological importance of acknowledging God's power to create the world from scratch, and vehemently push back on any indication that God merely gave form to preexisting shapeless material. 2

Yet, many (mostly earlier) commentaries conclude that the plain meaning of Bereishit is that God created the world from a preexisting mess, the chaos of *tohu va-vohu*. A midrash in Bereishit Rabbah certainly falls in this camp, and expresses shock at the opening line of the Torah, comparing God's creation from "void and darkness," to a King who announces that his palace is built upon sewers, trash, and refuse:

Bereishit Rabbah 1:5 In the way of the world, if a king of flesh and blood builds a palace in the place of sewers, trash, and refuse, anyone who comes and says, "This palace is built in the place of sewers, trash and refuse," wouldn't that be considered an insult? So too, one who comes and says, "This world was created from void and darkness, wouldn't that be considered an insult? R. Huna in the name of bar Kappara: Were it not written [in the Torah] it would have been impossible to say! God created the heavens and the earth from what? From "and the earth was void etc."

The midrash brings our attention to the embarrassing fact that God didn't make the world from pure origins, but from a mess so gross that its stench continues to be detectable such that it would be insulting to remark upon it. But the text does not explain why the Torah leads this way, laying bare what an architect would usually take great pains to bury.

We have much to learn from an analogy between the messy origins of the world and the messy origins of humanity. Perhaps God reveals the unlikely origins of the world's creation to teach us that it is in fact a profound miracle to build from what exists, "something from something," over and above building from scratch. The midrash teaches that God's work in creation was to face a stinking mess and build something beautiful and good, *ki tov* (1:4 etc.).

So, too, the echoes of humanity's origins in Kayin paint a picture of human growth rooted in the most horrible act of violence, not evading

our murderous origins to build from scratch with Adam's third son. We shouldn't think of creating "something from something"—especially from something bad—as a lesser and unideal form of creation. It is rather what it means to be in the image of God (tzelem Elohim), who loudly announces that the world comes from a dark and chaotic mess. Seeing ourselves in the image of God is not necessarily about sensing a spark of purity and perfection. It is about adapting what is into what could and should be.

This creation of "something from something" is difficult, profound, and nothing less than miraculous, and it is also ingrained in us. Psychologist Gary Marcus describes the human brain as a "kluge," a kind of ad hoc contraption that has to constantly adapt old parts to new circumstances, rather than being designed perfectly for our present needs. We make errors **3** constantly, forget, and mess up, because we are asking our brains to do things they weren't designed to do. This mode of working with what we are given, even if it is far less than ideal, might seem like an affront to the concept of tzelem Elohim. But our embrace of divine creation as "something from something" changes that picture. The agility and determination involved in working with the subpar materials we have is like God's palace built upon sewers. Like Kayin, we mess up. And, like God, we won't be deterred from envisioning how we can nonetheless will beautiful things into being. The dominant genealogy of humanity from Adam's blessed third son reenvisions the origins of humanity as pure and innocent. But the echoes of our genealogy from Kayin, and the stench of tohu va-vohu as the origins of the world, remind us that in fact our lives are not written on a blank slate but etched on "rubbed out parchment." The residue of past blunders **4** lingers as part of the texture of who we are. Rather than pretend that we can purge the errors and mess we have inherited—from our own experiences, from our families, from the larger social histories in which we are embedded, from disasters beyond our control—creating "something from something" teaches us to notice the contours of this residue, work with it and work through it, and discover a catalyst for recreation.

May we draw from Bereshit to find the willpower to confront the messes we face anew each year, internally and externally, and be strengthened in our insistence to create something more beautiful.

1 The traditional way of harmonizing these two lineages is to posit that there were two unrelated people called Lemekh. For discussion of these genealogies from an academic textual perspective, see Tzemah Yoreh, *Genesis: Israel's Origins*, pp. 38-39, 50. **2** Two examples: Ramban stresses that one who denies creation ex nihilo is a heretic for this leads to undermining God's ability to perform miracles (1:1, s.v. bereishit bara Elohim). Hizkuni goes to great lengths to demonstrate that every item mentioned was created by God, rather than something that preexisted God's creation

(1:1, s.v. bereishit bara Elohim; 1:2, s.v. ve-ha-aretz haytah tohu va-vohu; s.v. ve-ruah Elohim). 3 Gary Marcus, Kluge: The Haphazard Evolution of the Human Mind (Mariner Books, 2009). 4 See Mishnah Avot 4:20. (*Rabbi Aviva Richman is a Rosh Yeshiva at Hadar, and has been on the faculty since 2010. A graduate of Oberlin College, she studied in the Pardes Kollel and the Drisha Scholars' Circle and was ordained by Rabbi Danny Landes. She completed a doctorate in Talmud at NYU.*)

The Book of Bereishit: Becoming Partners in God's Creation by Rabbi Boaz Pash

<https://ots.org.il/the-book-of-bereishit-becoming-partners-in-gods-creation/>

Once again, we find ourselves reaching for the first volume on the far right of the shelf – the Book of Genesis, Bereishit. A new year has begun; a new beginning, new weekly portions to be read, and maybe, if we are lucky enough – new insights will be gained. Hopefully we will open the Book of Bereishit week after week, read it with new eyes, as if we have never read it before, never perused its exegesis nor contemplated its significance. New thoughts will blossom. New life rekindled.

In fact, anytime we take a new book in hand, a moment before opening it and reading it, we wonder: What are our expectations? What do we hope to find in it? If it's a suspense novel, the answer is pretty straightforward – we expect to be excited; we want to be swept into the plot, in which the good guys always win and the bad guys are defeated forever. If it's a classic literary work, we expect to be inspired by lofty literary forms, complex characters, exalting expressions as well as values and dilemmas that will highlight the fact that humans are superior to all other living creatures. If it's a non-fiction work, we might pay less attention to the language or the emotions the work evokes, and focus mainly on the information it provides – in this case, the input is paramount. In short, every book has its unique features.

What are our expectations of Bereishit, which we have just pulled off the shelf? And what do we generally expect when reading the weekly Torah portions? Superficial excitement? A convoluted plot? Lofty language? Reading about a crime that doesn't pay off? I don't think any of the above are what the Torah wishes to convey or evoke.

If so, what does the Torah wish to teach us?

Our Sages, as can be expected, gave this matter their attention as well. Rabi Akiva's words are well known: "'Love thy neighbor as yourself' – this is a fundamental Torah principle."

Less known, but no less important, are the words of Ben Azzai (disciple and friend of Rabbi Akiva), which either follow or precede Rabbi Akiva's words: "'This is the book of the generations of Man' – this is a fundamental Torah principle." (*Midrash Rabbah* 24:7). Or more simply put: "This is a core principle in understanding the Torah."

Ben Azzai was probably referring to the entire verse he was quoting – “This is the book of the generations of Man. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him; male and female created He them, and blessed them, and called their name Man, in the day when they were created.” (Genesis 5:1-2)

This is the story of Man, says Ben Azzai – not as an individual, but as mankind, the pride of God’s creation.

The Book of Genesis tells the story of the universe, of humanity in its initial stages – a tale that will be told and retold in different versions throughout history, sometimes as a tragedy and sometimes as a comedy, as historians like to put it. The book will give a vivid description of the “germinal humanity” with the clear objective of letting humanity shape itself, based on very clear options: catastrophic apocalypse or utopian Messianic times; the consoling prophecies of Isaiah, or Jeremiah’s prophecies of doom and destruction. Humanity’s great adventure begins right here, but how will it end? There are a great many possibilities.

But it is not humanity that is telling its story. Rather, God almighty, who makes His appearance at the start of the human story, is the playwright who weaves the plot, chooses the genre and determines how His creation will play out. It is He who knows the purpose of all creation; foresees all that is hidden; pulls the ropes behind every scene; and also knows – perhaps even decides – what will be the final scene of the human saga. This means that although the story is told from the standpoint of Man, the protagonist, the plot is directed and navigated by (supposedly implicitly; de facto – quite explicitly) by the Creator Himself.

This notion is expressed in many of our Sages’ words. Here is one such example:

“The light created by the Almighty on the first day was of such a nature that Man could look through it and see the world until eternity. When God looked and saw how flawed are the deeds of the generations to come, He took that light and concealed it. And for whom did he conceal it? For the righteous, in the world to come.” (Babylonian Talmud, *Chagiga* 12)

The Midrash, too, describes the primal moment of Man’s creation, and how at that point in time, the so-called Big Bang, the encounter between the Great Artist and His creation – the history of all future creation is embedded. This is how the Midrash portrays it in its picturesque and figurative manner:

“When the Blessed One created the first Man, he extended him from one end of the earth to the other, from East to West and from North to South, such that Man filled all spaces and voids...and this first Man lay before the Creator as a lifeless lump. And God showed him all

generations to come; each generation and its scholars; each generation and its sages; each generation and its scribes; each generation and its leaders. All, with no exception, had already been inscribed in the Book of the Generations of Man. As is written: 'This is the book of the generations of Man.'" (*Bereishit Rabbah* 8).

The book was written by God. He may even have written the outline of the plot. However, the details are written by Man himself. Man's mission is to discover the Divine Intent in all of creation and in every historical event, and make these compatible with the Creator's primal intent.

The Book of Genesis teaches us that we continue God's act of creation in this world; we are partners – whether of equal standing or secondary – to God's great enterprise. In much the same manner that God had created worlds and destroyed them, Man, too, has the ability to do so, and put the wheels of history into motion. Man can either be a partner in God's creation by doing justice, keeping the Sabbath, telling the truth, lending money to the needy and so forth; or else Man can become a destructive force by preventing the study of Torah, by being impulsive and malicious; by acting miserly; by spreading words of gossip and harming others...

If we revert to our original question – what should we be looking for when reading the Book of Genesis once again? The answer that must follow is – ourselves. Where is my personal Book of Man's Generations? How does this book tell my own story, as a human, as a nation, as a tiny atom in the humungous and infinite mosaic of the entire cosmos? Are my ideas in keeping with the ideas expressed therein? How will I find the Man inside me, my individual personality within the Book of Man's Generations? And perhaps the most disconcerting question: How can I, on the personal, family, national and universal level, contribute to the continuity of this divine-human plot? Have I, as an individual or as part of a collective, left a mark on one of its pages? Have I left an impression on a single line, a word, or even a letter?

In the Book of Genesis there are hardly any practical commandments; so much so, that our Sages question the necessity of this book and its inclusion in the Five Books of Moses – a composition comprised mainly of Israel's binding laws and commandments. Rashi, in his opening exegesis on the book, begins with this very question: "The Torah should have opened with 'This month shall be for you the first of all months' (Exodus 12, 2), as this is the first commandment given to the People of Israel. Wherefore did the Torah begin with Genesis?" (Rashi on Genesis 1,1).

Nonetheless, there are a few commandments in this book, among which is the first Torah commandment to "Be fruitful and multiply and

fill the land” (Genesis 1, 28). One cannot but turn to the end of the Torah to find the last written commandment; surely the first and last mitzvah must be connected in some way, as any end is connected to its beginning, as any flame connects to its wick. The last mitzvah is “And now write for you this song,” whereby every Israelite is commanded to write his very own Torah scroll. Is this perhaps the Book of the Generations of Man mentioned in the beginning of Genesis? If so, perhaps the message to us is that the general story titled ‘The Generations of Man’ in the book of Genesis, as well as the unique story of the history of the People of Israel mentioned in the following four books of the Torah – which together make up the foundation for humanity’s entire historical account – should serve as a framework or mold into which we must pour our own personal human account, and which we are commanded to write with our very own hands. In fact, Ben Azzai fulfilled his own words quite literally, when he set aside the fulfillment of the Torah’s first mitzvah in favor of the last – the latter was viewed by him as the loftiest expression of the former, being fruitful and multiplying through Torah.

Thus, when we take the book of Bereishit in hand once again, on the eve of Shabbat *Bereishit*, and reread the ancient book which is forever relevant, we might find ourselves engaged in a different sort of reading: one through which I try to find myself in the book; a reading that shows me a reflection of who I am; a reading that makes me feel that I belong in the story and that the story belongs to me – both on the personal-emotional level, as well as on the national and universal level; so much so, that I feel I myself have written it. If one toils and searches – one finds; so our Sages taught us. We might not find exactly what we are looking for, but we are sure to find some of what the Divine wisdom wanted us to find and make it our own.

The Book of Genesis, Bereishit, is indeed the Book of the Generations of Man, and one rule of thumb when it comes to Torah reading – read it with the aim of finding your own human story in it. (*Rabbi Boaz Pash is the Rosh Kollel of the Joseph and Gwendolyn Straus Rabbinical Seminary’s Torat Yosef Kollel.*)

YAHRTZEITS

Motti Benisty remembers his mother Rachel Benisky on Wednesday October 6 (Tishri 30)

Elaine Berkenwald remembers her father Israel Berkenwald on Thursday October 7 (Cheshvan 1)

[Coming Up at Kol Rina](#)

Janet Mandel on Marc Chagall

Kol Rina is delighted to welcome back local art historian Janet Mandel for a series of two lectures on the incomparable Marc Chagall. These lectures will take place on Sunday, October 3 and Sunday, October 10 at 7:30 pm via Zoom. Marc Chagall lived a long and fruitful life, producing paintings, etchings, book illustrations, stained-glass windows, ceramics, tapestries, and stage sets and costumes—all infused with poetry. His works have a lyrical, emotional resonance informed by his love of humanity.

These programs are PRESENTED AND UNDERWRITTEN by the SUSAN MARX FUND for ADULT EDUCATION at KOL RINA. They are free and open to the entire community. Register via Eventbrite to receive the Zoom link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/kol-rina-brunch-learn-marc-chagall-painting-poetry-tickets-179545935727>

About Janet Mandel:

Janet Mandel taught in New Jersey's public schools for 32 years, the last eighteen of them at Columbia High School in Maplewood, where she taught English, art history, and World Languages and Cultures. In October of 2003 she was named runner-up for the New Jersey Council for the Humanities (NJCH) Teacher of the Year award, and was formally recognized by the New Jersey State Legislature and Governor Codey for this achievement. Now retired, Janet presents illustrated talks on a variety of art history topics at adult schools, libraries, museums, senior centers, community centers, and similar venues.