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Parshat *Bereshit*

Creation and Shabbat

בראשית א - ב: ג

The Torah teaches us that God created the world in six days and that He rested on the seventh day. However, the Torah is not a history book. It is a book of religious and moral teachings. Therefore, we must ask: What message is the Torah trying to teach us when it describes Creation and Shabbat in this way?

In order to understand this message, we must study the way the Torah describes the Creation.

Your objectives for this lesson are to understand:

- a) The structure of *Bereshit* 1-2:3
- b) Whether the description of Shabbat belongs in Chapter 1
- c) The message this structure is trying to teach

Question 1

Scan the first chapter of *Sefer Bereshit*. What does this Chapter describe?

Question 2

- a) Where does the description of the Seventh Day appear? (Give chapter and verses.)
b) According to this, do you think Shabbat is part of the Creation narrative?

a) _____

b) _____



Did You Know? The Biblical verse and chapter division we use today is not a Jewish creation. They were put in by the Church Fathers. The Jews eventually adopted this Christian division as a result of religious debates that were often forced on them by Christian authorities.

Question 3

Highlight the each time the following phrase appears in Chapter 1 of *Bereshit*:

- a) "ויאמר א-להים" – "God said"
b) "ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום" – "It was evening and it was morning"

Examine the pattern.

- (i) What do the words "ויאמר א-להים" introduce?
(ii) What do the words "ויהי ערב ויהי בקר" signify?

(i) _____

(ii) _____

Question 4

Read Chapter 2:1-3.

- a) Does the Seventh Day have the same beginning and end as the other six days?
 b) In your opinion is the Seventh Day a new day of Creation or is it the introduction of a new subject: Shabbat? Explain your answer.

a) _____

b) _____

Question 5

- a) Compare the text below and highlight the words that appear on both sections.
 b) Complete the third row, by finding the parallel word to “בְּרֵאשִׁית.”
 c) How are these two texts connected?

בראשית א:א <i>Bereshit 1:1</i>	בראשית ב:א-ג <i>Bereshit 2:1-3</i>
בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ	וַיִּכְלֹו הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם... אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת
In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.	Now the heavens and the earth were completed and all their host... that God created to do.
In the beginning/ בְּרֵאשִׁית	

c) _____

Question 6

- a) Compare the texts below.
 b) Complete the third row of the table.

בראשית א:ב <i>Bereshit 1:1</i>	בראשית ב:א-ב <i>Bereshit 2:1-2</i>
וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְתֵה תְהוֹ וְבוּהוּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם :	וַיִּכְלוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צְבָאָם וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
Now the earth was in chaos, and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the water.	Now the heavens and the earth were completed and all their hosts. God completed on the seventh day His work that He did
Chaos	

Question 7

- a) How is the universe described at the beginning of creation?
 b) How does the universe appear at the end of creation?

a) _____

b) _____

Question 8

Using the table below, explain the structure of the beginning of *Sefer Bereshit*.

Verse number	Quote	Meaning
1:1	In the beginning...	Introduction
		The state of the universe
	God said...	God brings order to the Universe
2:1-3		Conclusion

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Question 9


In your opinion, were there six or seven days of creation? Explain.

Question 10

- a) According to this structure, what does the creation lead up to?
- b) What message is the Torah trying to teach us?

a) _____

b) _____

 **Did you know?** The Seven Day week is not a natural division of time. The Jews are the first people recorded in history as having a seven day week – six days of work and one day of rest. The concept comes from the first and second chapters of *Sefer Bereshit*.