

# פרשת בראשית

Prepared by Kfir Marcus, Jack Goldberg,  
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and Ianne Sherry, and **Yankele Berkowitz**

**Summary:** There were 7 days of creation. On the first, God created light and darkness. The second, sky and water; third, land and plants; fourth, sun, moon, and stars; fifth, birds and fish; sixth, animals and humans. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day, God rested and created Shabbat. God said to Adam and Chava not to eat from the tree in the middle of the garden. The snake convinces Chava to eat from it, and Chava makes Adam eat, too. God tells them, as a punishment, that they have to leave Gan Eden. Next, Kayin and Hevel gave korbanot (sacrifices). Hevel's was accepted and Kayin's was not. Kayin murdered Hevel and was punished. The parsha ends with a list of generations from Adam to Noach.

**If you were Chava, would you have done what she did?** Most people in our group said they would eventually eat the fruit, like she did, out of curiosity. Sometimes when we're told not to do something it makes us want to do it more, especially when someone is persuading us. We did not blame Chava for what she did. **Would you blame Chava for the decision she made?**

**If God had threatened Adam and Chava with their lives if they ate the fruit from the tree, why didn't God punish them with death as God had promised?**

**Why do you think God did not want Adam and Chava to eat from the tree in the first place?**

**If God did not want humans to eat from that tree, why do you think God even created the tree and its fruit to begin with?**

**Why do you think God asked, "Where are you?" Do you think God knows where we are even if we do not tell God of our location?**

**Why do you think there are two different stories of how women were created? How are these stories similar or different?**

# פרשת נח

Prepared by Koby Nachenberg, Thomas Meyers, Talia Feinberg, Camerin Elkin, Jordan Miller, and Tali Mandlekern

**Summary:** Noah had three sons (Shem, Ham, and Yafet). God said to Noah to make a very specific gopher wood ark to save Noah, his family, two of every animal, and seven pairs of every kosher animal to save them from a 40 day flood. Noah was 600 years old. This won't be hard! Everyone that was not in the ark died. At the end of the flood he sends out a raven which doesn't come back. He sends out of the ark a dove which comes back. The dove returns with an olive branch the second time Noah sends it out. Noah sends it out a third time and it doesn't come back. God said that the ground is dry and to unload the ark. God promises to never destroy the world again and gives a rainbow as a sign to not make a flood again.

Do you think it was really necessary for God to spring the flood across the earth?

Why were the measurements and requirements for the ark so specific?

Why does God repeat all of the instructions? Don't you think Noah understood the directions enough the first time around?

Do you think it is fair that the animals that weren't on the ark died? Do you think that those animals were evil?

Why did they send out the raven before the dove? Why do you think they sent out two different kinds of birds?

Why do you think the raven did not come back?

What does it mean to you that God promised that the world would never be destroyed again?

# פרשת לך לך

Prepared by Jeremy Kaplan, John Byrne, Galia Bernat, Adina Heisler, Batsheva Labowe-Stoll, Erica Gelfand, and **Becca Gordon**

**Summary:** God said to Avram, "Go from your native land to the land that I will give you" (which is Canaan). God promised him that God will make his name great and he will be a big nation and his children will be plentiful. Avram took Sarai, Lot, and their belongings and went to Canaan. God appears and God tells Avram that he will assign the land to his offspring. Then Avram built an altar, and he went to Beth El and built a tent and another altar. When Sarai and Avram go to Egypt because of a famine, the Pharaoh wanted to take Sarai as his wife. Avram lied and said that she was his sister so that Pharaoh wouldn't hurt Avram. God punishes Pharaoh for taking Sarai. Pharaoh gets mad at Avram because he did not know that Sarai was his wife. The Pharaoh sends Avram and his family away from his land.

What do you think went through Avram's head when he heard God talking to him for the first time? What would you have done if you were Avram?

Why did Sarai follow all of the decisions that Avram made? Do you think that she believed in God also or that she just went with Avram because he was her husband?

What do you think it may have felt like to be the first Jews?

Avram lied to Pharaoh saying that Sarai was his sister. Under what circumstances is it ok to lie?

Where is Lot in the rest of the parsha? After they go down to Egypt, only Avram and Sarai are mentioned. Do you think he was still with them?

# פרשת וירא

Prepared by Alex Bauman, Matt Lavine, Claire Shoyer, Hadassah Riemer, Leanne Young, and Solomon Flax

**Summary:** Abraham is visited by three guests. He welcomes them and they said that Sarah was going to have a baby. Sarah laughed and was confronted about it. Abraham bargains with God about saving the cities of Sodom and Amorrhah. Two angels visited Lot and he invites them into his house but the other townspeople find out and they turn against him. Sodom and Amorrhah are destroyed, and Lot's wife looks back when they are escaping and she is turned into a pillar of salt. Sarah gives birth to Yitzchak and she tells Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. Abraham listens and sends his first wife and son away. An angel appears to Hagar and says that Ishmael will be the father of a great nation. God tests Abraham and tells him to sacrifice Yitzchak. Abraham listens but just as he is about to sacrifice his son an angel of God tells him to kill a ram instead of his son.

We felt as if God violated some part of the rainbow promise that we learned about in Parshat Noach by destroying Sodom and Amorrhah. One of the things that was particularly difficult was the idea that children were killed. Those children could have changed and it may have been their parents' fault that they were killed.

Why do you think Abraham cared so much about Sodom and Amorrhah?

Why may God have not tried to change Sodom and Amorrhah like God did with the story of the tower of Bavel?

Why didn't God give Sodom and Amorrhah a warning instead of just destroying them right away?

Why and how were the people so evil?

Why do you think Lot's wife looked back? Why is it significant that she turned into a pillar of salt?

# פרשת חיי שרה

Prepared by Ethan Meltzer, Sam Shoyer,  
Talia Weseley Miriam Katz, Annie Glass, and  
Joe Ornstein

**Summary:** We learn that Sarah dies in Kiryat-Arbah at the age of 127. Abraham goes out to find a burial place for her and decides on the cave of Machpela. The owner, Ephron, offers the cave for free, but Abraham buys it at full price anyway. When he gets back to Canaan he wants to find a wife for his son, Yitzchak. He tells Yitzchak's servant, Eliezer, to go out to his birth place and find a wife for Yitzchak there. Abraham reiterates that the future wife must come to Canaan and that Yitzchak cannot go live with her family. Eliezer goes and finds Rivka, and she gives water to him and his camels. Afterwards, she offers him a place to stay, and he knows that she is the one for Yitzchak. They eat and drink and Eliezer states what his mission is and offers gifts to Rivka. She accepts the offer and they leave the next day. She goes back and she and Yitzchak get married. Abraham gets a new wife who gives him many children, and he dies at the age of 175.

Why did Abraham pay full price for a cave offered to him for free for his wife's burial?

If you were Yitzchak or Rebecca, how would you feel about the arranged marriage and Eliezer's mission?

Why didn't Abraham go and find a wife for Yitzchak himself?

Why did Abraham make Eliezer find a wife for Yitzchak?

Why was Abraham so willing to give away so many of his possessions to get a wife for Yitzchak?

How would you feel if a loved one of yours was buried so far from where you lived?

# פרשת תולדות

Prepared by David Mayer, Joel Halpern, Ruth  
A. Sherman, Hannah Rabinowiz, Elena  
Schwartz, and **Cara Kaplan**

**Summary:** At the beginning of the parsha, Rebecca has twins. The twins grow up, and one's name is Jacob, and the other is named Esau. While Esau is out hunting, Jacob is cooking. Esau comes back and he is quite hungry. Jacob offers him the food and says, "If I give you my food, then you give me your birthright!" Esau agrees to trade his birthright. Many years go by, and Isaac is old and dying. Knowing this, Rebecca thinks he will give the birthright to Esau. Rebecca instructs Jacob to prepare a meal and to put on the sheepskins of the sheep he slaughters, so he will have the feel of Esau's hairy arms. Jacob does as he's told and goes to Isaac for his blessing and Isaac becomes suspicious. He asks of Jacob, "who is this that I'm blessing, for he has the feel of Esau but the voice of Jacob?!" But Isaac blesses him nonetheless. And once Esau returns, Isaac discovers Jacob's trickery, and in his anger, Esau makes up his mind to kill Jacob.

Did Jacob have the right to take the birthright from Esau?

What would you do if you were in Jacob's place?

Would you have tricked your brother and your father in order to take something that wasn't yours but that gave you power?

Do you think Isaac subconsciously knew it was Jacob?

Is there any evidence in the Torah that tells us that Esau was a dutiful (or not) son?

Do you think that Rebecca did the right thing?

What was God's role in allowing Jacob to trick Isaac?

What does it mean to get a blessing? Does a blessing have physical power?

# פרשת ויצא

Prepared by Daniel Bard, Ben Roberts, Shara Safer, Zoe Mann-Weiner, Anna Golub and Rebecca Larrison

**Summary:** Jacob leaves Be'ersheva, beginning his journey which ends in Haran. In Haran, he meets Lavan, his uncle. Going to meet him he goes to the well and meets Rachel, Lavan's daughter. Jacob says to God that he has fallen in love and he is very happy. He tells Rachel to go back to her father and tell him that he is Rebecca's son. Lavan tells Jacob to come live with them for a month, because they are relatives. Jacob goes and asks for Rachel's hand in marriage and Lavan agrees, under the condition that Jacob works for him for 7 years. Jacob agrees to do so and after 7 years, Lavan gives Leah (Rachel's older sister) to Jacob instead of Rachel. Jacob could not tell at the time that they were switched. Jacob is very angry and still wishes to marry Rachel. He works for 7 more years to get to marry Rachel, and God saw that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. God gives Leah children: Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and Yehudah. Rachel asks God for children, and her maid Bilah has Dan and Naphtali; Leah's maid, Zilpah, has Gad and Asher. Leah has more children: Isachar, Zevulun, and Dina. Finally God gives Rachel children and she has Joseph. Jacob and Lavan get in a fight and Lavan is jealous of Jacob's flock of sheep. Finally they make a truce and both go on their way.

Lavan tricked Jacob so that Leah would be married before Rachel because she was the oldest daughter. Is it fair to trick someone who's helped you even if it's to benefit someone you love?

Why, if Lavan had good intentions, do you think that he made Jacob work for seven more years in order to marry Rachel?

Jacob was tricked because Leah was wearing a veil so she looked like Rachel. How do you feel about us still using this object in a wedding when it was harmful in the past?

Why didn't God intervene when God knew that Leah was getting married the first time instead of Rachel? Do you think there was any good that came from this situation?

Why do you think Lavan did not make a deal with Jacob in the first place to marry Leah first and then Rachel?

# פרשת וישלח

Prepared by Jacob Baskin, Marcus Apter,  
Noa Dotan, Maddie Dworkin, Eva Gerber, and  
Tova Stark

**Summary:** In Vayishlach, the prince of Shechem fell in love with Dina and raped her. Simon and Levi wanted revenge. The prince of Shechem wanted to marry Dina and so the brothers told the prince that in order to marry her everybody in Shechem must convert to Judaism. All the males had to be circumcised, and while this happened they were all very weak. Meanwhile, the brothers came into the town and killed everyone and stole their possessions.

Then, Jacob needed to divide his camp into different parts. He crossed over the river and in the middle of the night a man started wrestling with him. They wrestled until dawn, and Jacob got hit in the hip muscle. They had a discussion, and Jacob's name is changed to Israel. The man was actually an angel. From here we learn not to eat the thigh muscle called gid hanasheh.

Esav came to visit Jacob. Jacob gives him the gift of animals, and Esav finally hugged him and kissed him.

We don't read about Dina's perspective of the story. What do you think her thoughts were? Did she like the prince? Was she conscious of what was going on with her brothers?

Why do Simon and Levi want revenge? Shouldn't Dina want revenge more because she was the one hurt?

Was it moral or okay for the brothers to hurt all of the men of Shechem in order to defend their sister? What type of situation can warrant physical violence?

Why do we not eat the gid hanasheh? Do you think it is because it is something bad or because it had to do with an interaction with an angel?

Why was Esav hugging Jacob when they were expected to fight? Do you think that Esav was pretending?

# פרשת וישב

Prepared by Tyler Baturin, Michael Fine, Gabi Orbach, Ruth S. Sherman, Tova Benson-Tilson, Jake Levitt, and Sam Gardenswartz

**Summary:** Joseph was Jacob's favorite son and he dreamt dreams that his brothers thought were arrogant. Out of indignation, they threw him in a hole to kill him, but Reuben convinced them to sell him to slave-owners going to Egypt.

Judah had three sons and the oldest married Tamar and then died. The second son had to have a child with her but chose not to so he also died. Judah didn't want to give her his 3<sup>rd</sup> son so he made her wait, and Tamar realizes this and deceives Judah (by covering up her face), steals his staff, and he has a child with her. Later, Tamar shows Judah the staff she stole and he realizes that he was tricked. Judah wants to punish Tamar but then realizes that she is righteous. Tamar gives birth to twins who fight with each other out of the womb.

Joseph serves in Potiphar's house, and Mrs. Potiphar tries to seduce him. Joseph refuses so Mrs. Potiphar frames him and Potiphar sends Joseph to jail. In jail, Joseph interprets the dreams of the baker and the butler. The butler, who is going to back to Pharaoh, promises to remember Joseph.

Was it right for Joseph to share his dreams with his brothers? Why?

It was commonplace to impregnate a brother's wife if he died, so should Onan (the second child) have given Tamar a child, even though in modern times we would not do this?

Should Judah have given Tamar his third son?

Does Tamar's right to have a child justify her acting and disguising herself and sleeping with Judah?

Could Judah have handled things differently with the third son?

What purpose do the twins at the end of the story serve?

Was being sent to jail too harsh a punishment for God to bestow on Joseph? Why?

Do you think what happened to Joseph was part of God's master plan for him?

# פרשת מקץ

Prepared by Ezra Hurvitz, Ari Miller, Elena Rubin, Dani Davidoff, Mali Rubin and **Gavin Sidman**

**Summary:** One night Pharaoh had a dream about seven healthy cows eaten by seven sick cows. He had a similar dream about corn the following night. When no one knew what the dreams meant the butler suggested Pharaoh get Joseph to interpret them. Joseph said that it meant seven good years of harvest would come followed by seven years of famine. They both decided, in order to prevent total starvation, they would store half of the crops from the seven years of good harvest for the time of famine. During the next 14 years, people came from all over the land to collect food.

Why couldn't anyone interpret Pharaoh's dreams? Do you think there was something special about Joseph that made him able to interpret Pharaoh's dreams?

How might you have interpreted his dreams?

What is significant about the number seven? Why did this number come up in both dreams? Where else in Judaism is the number seven important?

Why do you think the butler waited so long to help Joseph get out of jail?

Why was Joseph raised up by God after the bad events in his life?

Why did the bad years come after the good years and not the other way around?

# פרשת ויגש

Prepared by Sam Unitas, Jacob Cantor, Maia Harrison, Rachel Dembo, Ariella Liebman, and Rafi Spitzer

**Summary:** Judah pleads Benjamin's case so he is not harmed, and Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. Jacob and his family move to Goshen where they are shepherds. Egyptians, however, don't like shepherds. God tells Jacob not to worry about going to Egypt. Joseph meets up with his father. Jacob meets Pharaoh, and takes all the Egyptians' animals and land and makes them into serfs in return for food.

Joseph hears of his own death from his brothers when they came to beg for food. What do you think that experience was like for Joseph? What would you like to hear people say about you after you pass away?

Do you have anyone in your life whose life is "bound up" with yours?

How do the brothers go from hating Joseph to being so happy to see him in Egypt? How do you think their thoughts may have changed over the years?

Why is Jacob sometimes called Jacob and sometimes called Israel? Does this have to do with his mood or state of mind? Can our name affect the way we act or the way we feel about ourselves?

What does it mean that Joseph will "close Jacob's eyes?"

Egypt is in very serious economic trouble. How is their situation similar or different from our economic situation currently?

Why does Joseph favor Benjamin with how much stuff he gives him when favoritism is what got him in Egypt in the first place?

# פרשת ויחי

Prepared by Ilan Stier-Cohen, Sarah Binney,  
Sally Klapper, Jeslyn Dinowitz, Ethan Smith  
and Ilana Rosenbaum

**Summary:** In this parsha Jacob acknowledges that he is about to die. Jacob goes to his sons and blesses them each and tells them that he wants to be buried in the burial place of his fathers. After Jacob's death, Joseph asks for Pharaoh's permission to go to Israel and bury his father there, as he requested. Jacob's other sons, and Pharaoh's guards, go with Joseph to the elders of Egypt. Joseph's brothers apologize for everything they have done and say that Jacob asked that Joseph would forgive his brothers. Joseph forgives his brothers because he believes it was God's plan. Joseph and his family lived in Egypt until Joseph was 110 years old. At 110 Joseph died. Joseph says to his brothers and his brother's children that when he dies God will take care of them. Joseph dies and is buried in Egypt, and asks for his bones to be taken up (to Israel) later on.

Why do you think Jacob requested to be buried with his ancestors so far away?  
Does it matter where someone is buried after they die?

Jacob's sons became the twelve tribes of Israel, and they are the ones that continue Judaism. What do you think it was like for them when their father, the leader of their Judaism, was dying?

Do you think it was difficult for Joseph to forgive his brothers? What can change the hurtful things that someone does to you? Should we always forgive people? Would you have forgiven the brothers?

Do you think Joseph actually forgave his brothers in his heart or he just said what he felt was right?

Do you think Jacob actually told Joseph to forgive his brothers, or were they using that as a tactic to persuade Joseph to apologize?

Why do you think Joseph didn't request to be buried in Israel right away, like his father, but rather asked to be taken up later?