

ראשון | FIRST

Daily Synopsis: The Torah begins with its account of how G-d created the world in six days. On the first day, G-d created the earth, as a core of solid matter submerged in water, and then created light.

פרק א

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: א In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth,¹

The
First
Week

ONKELOS

א בְּקִדְמִין בָּרָא יי ית שְׁמַיָא וְיַת אֶרְעָא:

RASHI

א בְּרֵאשִׁית. אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק, לֹא הָיָה צָרִיךְ לְהַתְחִיל אֶת הַתּוֹרָה אֶלָּא מִ'הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם' (שְׁמוֹת יב: א) שֶׁהָיָה מִצְוָה רִאשׁוֹנָה שֶׁנִּצְטָווּ בָּהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּמֵה טַעַם פָּתַח בְּ'בְרֵאשִׁית', מִשּׁוּם "כַּח מַעֲשֵׂיו הִגִּיד לַעֲמּוֹ לַתֵּת לָהֶם נִחְלַת גּוֹיִם" (תְּהִלִּים קיא: ו), שֶׁאִם יֹאמְרוּ אֲמוֹת הָעוֹלָם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, לִסְטִים אַתֶּם שֶׁכִּבְשִׁתֶּם אֲרָצוֹת שִׁבְעָה גּוֹיִם, הֵם אוֹמְרִים לָהֶם, כָּל הָאָרֶץ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא הִיא, הוּא בָּרָאָהּ וְנִתְּנָה לְאִשְׁרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵינֵינוּ, בְּרִצּוֹנוֹ נִתְּנָה לָהֶם, וּבְרִצּוֹנוֹ נִטְלָה מֵהֶם וְנִתְּנָה לָנוּ:

א IN THE BEGINNING OF. Rabbi Yitzchak said: The Torah which primarily teaches God's commandments need only have begun with the verse: "This month is for you the foremost of the months" (*Shemos* 12:2), which is the first commandment given to the people of Yisrael. For what reason, then, does it begin with the Book of *B'reishis*? Because it wishes to communicate the concept expressed in the verse: "The strength of His actions (i.e. an account of Creation) He told to His people, so as to give them the inherited land of the nations" (*Tehillim* 111:6) – for if the nations of the world were to say to the people of Yisrael, "You are bandits because you conquered the lands of the seven nations of Kena'an," they would answer them, "The entire earth belongs to the Holy One, Source of Blessing; He created it and gave it to whom He saw fit. When He wanted, He gave this land to them, and subsequently when He wanted, He took it away from them and gave it to us."

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא. אֵין הַמִּקְרָא הַזֶּה אוֹמֵר אֶלָּא דְרִשְׁנִי, כְּמוֹ שֶׁדִּרְשׁוּהוּ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ, בְּשִׁבְלֵי הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ "רֵאשִׁית דְּרָכּוֹ" (מִשְׁלֵי ח: כב) וּבְשִׁבְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ "רֵאשִׁית תְּבוּאָתָהּ" (יִרְמְיָה ב: ג). וְאִם בָּאתָ לְפָרְשׁוֹ כְּפִשּׁוּטוֹ, כֵּן פָּרְשׁוֹ, "בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרִיאַת שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תְּהוֹ וְבָהּ וְחֹשֶׁךְ, וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר."

א – (lit.) IN THE BEGINNING OF, GOD CREATED. This verse calls out for an explanation,¹ as indeed our Rabbis explained it: God created the world for the sake of the Torah which is called "the beginning of (רֵאשִׁית) His way" (*Mishlei* 8:22), and for the sake of Yisrael who are called "the first of (רֵאשִׁית) His produce" (*Yirmeyah* 2:3).² If, however, you wish to explain it according to its plain meaning, explain it as follows: At the beginning of creation of the heavens and the earth, when the earth was astonishingly desolate and void, with darkness... God said, "There shall be light."³

1. The difficulties arising in this verse are detailed by Rashi in the course of his explanation here: 1) The impossibility of the word בְּרֵאשִׁית having its usual meaning of "the beginning of," followed by a past tense verb, i.e. "in the beginning of, God created...". 2) It cannot indicate a missing word לְ – "at the beginning of everything" – since the waters already existed as we see in the following verse. 3) It cannot mean בְּרֵאשִׁית "at first" because: a) the waters already existed; b) every time בְּרֵאשִׁית is mentioned in Scripture it is in the construct form (*Mizrachi*).

2. According to this explanation the prefix ב means "for the sake of," and רֵאשִׁית refers to Torah and Yisrael which are elsewhere described by this noun.

3. I.e. the previous verses lead in to: וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר – God said, "There shall be light," which is the principal verse.