



Bereshit

One More Child

Why the Torah Treats Every Birth as the Creation of a World

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Bereshit

G-d 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 He 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 are commanded not to eat from the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." The serpent persuades Eve to violate this command, and she shares the forbidden fruit with her husband. Because of their sin, it is decreed that all humans will experience death,

returning to the soil from which they were formed, and that all gain will come only through struggle and hardship. Adam and Eve are 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 and Eve. Seth's eighth-generation descendant, Noah, is the only righteous man in a corrupt world.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Why should I give birth to another child? What do parents “gain” from a new descendant?

How did having a child enrich your life, and do you think it is a sufficient reason to bring a child into the world?

The Torah addresses the concerns of parenthood, recognizing the fears and the challenges that come with it.



TEXT 1

Genesis 3:16

אֶל הָאִשָּׁה אָמַר: הִרְבָּה אֲרֻבָּה עֲצָבוֹנָךְ
וְהִרְבִּיתְךָ, בְּעָצָב תֵּלְדִי בָנִים.

To the woman G-d said, "I will greatly increase your sorrow and your pregnancy; in sorrow you will bear children."



The Torah uses the word **sorrow** for childbirth, reflecting a sense of grief and emotional weight rather than physical pain.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

Can you point to an element of regret or grief in childbirth?



TEXT 2

*The Pentateuch,
Translated and
Explained by Rabbi
Samson Raphael
Hirsch*, rendered into
English by Isaac Levy
(Gateshead, England:
Judaica Press Ltd.,
1982), Genesis 3:16

Aztav is a mental pain and hurt feeling, or worry. If the word does once occur with physical bodily pain, it refers to the result of the psycho-emotional impact of pain.

The root, *atzav*, is a modification of *azav*, forsaken, . . . [connoting] leaving something against one's will. . . . *Atzav* is the feeling that we have to give something up that we would have liked to keep or to have attained. [It refers to] renouncing, forgoing. . . .

Throughout her life, from her earliest girlhood, the woman finds joy in devotion, setting herself aside for others. Then comes "*heronech*, your pregnancy," where a woman gives up her whole existence to make her own flesh and blood a contribution for a new human growth.

There is no higher happiness for a woman than to have children, and this highest happiness can only be bought with the greatest sacrifices.

עֲצַב — sorrow

atzav

עָזַב — to forsake

azav

The word **sorrow** is used for childbirth since it involves a woman **forsaking** independence and personal goals for her child, showing that the Torah acknowledges real sacrifice.

TEXT 3A

Mishnah, Yevamot 6:6

הָאִישׁ מְצֻנָּה עַל פְּרִיָּה וְרִבְיָה אֲבָל
לֹא הָאִשָּׁה.

The obligation to be fruitful and to multiply is incumbent on the man, not the woman.

QUESTION

Why does the Torah command the man and not the woman, even though she is an equal partner and bears the main burden of childbirth?

TEXT 3B

Rabbi Chaim David
Halevi, *Hatzofeh*,
26 Tishrei, 5756

בּוֹרָא עוֹלָם הַטְּבִיעַ אֶת הַתְּשׁוּקָה לְהַבִּיא צְאָצְאִים בְּכָל הַחַיִּים עָלֵי אֲדָמוֹת, וּבְכָל־זֶה
בָּאָדָם, וּבְמִיּוֹחַד בְּאִישָׁה . . .

אֲלֹא שְׂמִצְוָה זֹו קָנְשָׁה בְּיוֹתֵר וּבְמִיּוֹחַד עַל הָאִישׁ, שֶׁהַכֹּנֶת הַתְּשׁוּמִית הַכְּלָלִית לְבִנְיִין הַבֵּית
מוֹטְלָת עָלָיו . . . וַיְהִיָּה מִתְגַּבֵּר עַל הַתְּשׁוּקָה הַטְּבִיעִית לְהַעֲמִיד צְאָצְאִים.

לְכֵן הִטִּיל נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה חַיּוּב עַל כָּל אִישׁ מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל לְקַיֵּים מְצֻוֹת פְּרִיָּה וּרְבִיָּה.

The Creator instilled the desire to bring offspring into all living creatures on earth,
including man and especially woman. . . .

However, this *mitzvah* is very difficult, particularly for the man, because [in many
households] the responsibility for preparing the economic basis of the home rests primarily
upon him, . . . and he may override the natural desire to bring children due to this.

Therefore, G-d placed an obligation on every Jewish man to fulfill the *mitzvah* of
procreation.

ANSWER

Women naturally desire childbirth, while men carry the financial burden and may be hesitant. The Torah therefore commands the man, recognizing his potential economic struggles.

TEXT 4A

Genesis 8:18

וַיֵּצֵא נֹחַ וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְנָשֵׁי בָנָיו
אִתּוֹ.

And Noah and his sons emerged, and
his wife and his sons' wives emerged
with him.



After the Flood, Noah and his sons came out separately from the women, showing hesitation about having more children.

TEXT 4B

Rabbi Meir Leibush
Wisser, ad loc.

שֶׁלֹא רָצָה לְהִזְדַּוֵּג לְאִשְׁתּוֹ פֶּן [יִחַטְּאוּ
הַיְלָדִים] וַיָּבֹא מִבּוֹל וַיֵּלֶד לְבֶהֱלָה.

Noah did not want to have marital relations with his wife, lest the children sin and another flood come, and his child would be born for a life of terror.

Noah and his sons are afraid
to bring children into a world
that may face danger again,
but the Torah still tells them
to continue creating life.



TEXT 5A

Genesis 1:28

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים,
"פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ וּכְבֹּשׁוּהָ".

And G-d blessed them, and G-d said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it."



The first chapter of the Torah is all about the Creation, yet right when Adam and Eve appear, they are told to have children.

TEXT 5B

Rabbi Avraham ibn
Ezra, ad loc.

"פְּרוּ". שִׁפְרָה וְיוֹלִיד דְּמוּתוֹ וְהוּא פְּרִיו.

"וַרְבוּ". שֶׁאֶחָד יוֹלִיד רַבִּים.

"Be fruitful" means that we must bring forth and beget a child in our image; this is our fruit.

"And multiply" means that one must beget many.

The first commandment given to humans is to have children and multiply.



TEXT 6

Rabbi Chezkihah ben
Mano'ach, *Chizkuni*,
ad loc.

יֵשׁ מִפְּרָשִׁים שְׁ[בַרְק] לְאַחַר שְׁפָרְחוּ בְּעֵץ הַדַּעַת וְנִגְזְרָה מִיתָה נֶאֱמַר לָהֶם 'פְּרוּ
וּרְבוּ' [דְּכִינוּן שְׂיָמוּתוֹ צְרִיכִים לְלֶדֶת].

דָּאם נֶאֱמַר קוּדֶם הַחֲטָא הָיָה צָרִיךְ לְכַתּוּב "פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הַגֶּן" וְלֹא "וּמְלֵאוּ
אֶת הָאָרֶץ", שֶׁהָרִי הָיָה בְּגֵן עֵדֶן . . .

[וְאִם כֵּן] לָמָּה נִכְתָּב הַצִּיּוּי כֹּאן בְּפָרָשַׁת הַיְצִירָה?

Some explain that only after Adam and Eve sinned with the Tree of Knowledge, and death was decreed upon them, were they told to “be fruitful and multiply” [for since they would die, they would need to bear children].

The proof is that if this commandment had been given to them before the sin, it should have said “fill the Garden,” not “fill the earth,” for they were still in the Garden of Eden. . . .

If so, why is the command written here, in the chapter devoted to Creation?

QUESTION

Why does the Torah interrupt the story of Creation with this commandment instead of putting it later when it happens, why is it here?

TEXT 7

Genesis 9:1, 7

וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת נֹחַ וְאֶת בָּנָיו, וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם: פְּרוּ
וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ . . . וְאַתֶּם פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ,
שִׂרְצוּ בָאָרֶץ וּרְבוּ בָּהּ.

And G-d blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. . . . And you, be fruitful and multiply; swarm on the earth and multiply on it."

QUESTION

Why does the Torah repeat the same command to Noah that was first given to Adam?



TEXT 8A

Mishnah, Yevamot 6:6

לֹא יִבְטֵל אָדָם מִפְּרִיָּה וּרְבִיָּה אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן יֵשׁ לוֹ
בָּנִים.

בֵּית שַׁמַּאי אוֹמְרִים, שְׁנֵי זָכָרִים. וּבֵית הֵלֵל אוֹמְרִים,
זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה.

One may not refrain from having children unless they
already have children.

The school of Shamai said two sons. The school of
Hillel said a son and a daughter.

Having **two children** fulfills the **obligation**.

SCHOOL OF SHAMAI



Derives from Moses that two sons fulfill the obligation.

SCHOOL OF HILLEL



Derives from Creation that a son and daughter fulfill the obligation.

TEXT 8B

Talmud, Yevamot 62B

רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ אֹמֵר, "נָשָׂא אָדָם אִשָּׁה בְּיָלְדוּתוֹ, יִשָּׂא אִשָּׁה בְּזַקְנוֹתוֹ. הָיוּ לוֹ בָּנִים בְּיָלְדוּתוֹ, יִהְיוּ לוֹ בָּנִים בְּזַקְנוֹתוֹ. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, 'בִּבְקָר זָרַע אֶת זֶרְעֶךָ וְלָעֶרֶב אַל תִּנַּח יָדְךָ, כִּי אֵינְךָ יוֹדֵעַ אִי זֶה יִכְשָׁר, הַזֶּה אוֹ זֶה, וְאִם שְׁנֵיהֶם כְּאַחַד טוֹבִים' (קֹהֶלֶת יא, ו)."

Rabbi Yehoshua says, "If a man married a wife in his youth, he should marry a wife in his old age. If he had children in his youth, he should have children in his old age. As the passage states, 'In the morning, sow your seed, and in the evening do not let your hand rest, for you do not know which will succeed, this or that, or if both together will be equally good (Ecclesiastes 11:6).'"

We are commanded to have as many children as possible, as long as the parents are healthy, and to go beyond just a son and a daughter.



TEXT 9

The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, *Likutei
Sichot* 30, p. 25

כְּאַשֶׁר יֵשׁ לוֹ כַּמָּה בָּנִים וּבָנוֹת, אֵין טַעַם שְׂיָחֹל עָלָיו הַחַיּוּב דְּרַבָּנָן,
שֶׁהָרִי לְמִיתָה שָׁל שְׁנַיִם לֹא חוֹשְׁשִׁים? וְאֵלּוֹ מְסַתִּימָת לְשׁוֹן רַבִּי
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, "הָיוּ לוֹ בָּנִים בְּיָלְדוּתוֹ יִהְיוּ לוֹ בְּזִקְנוּתוֹ", מִשְׁמָע בְּפִשְׁטוֹת
שְׁמָצוֹת חֻכָּמִים הִיא אֶפִּילוֹ שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה בָּנִים?

After someone has several sons and daughters, the rabbinic obligation should not apply, since we do not fear the death of two children. Yet from the simple reading of Rabbi Yehoshua's words, "If he had children in his youth, he should have children in his old age," it appears that the rabbinic *mitzvah* applies even when one has many children.

TEXT 10

Maimonides, *Mishneh
Torah*, Laws of Family
Life 15:16

אֵף עַל פִּי שְׁקִיּוֹת אָדָם מִצְּנוּת פְּרִיָּה וְרִבְיָה [בֶּן וּבַת],
מִצְּנוּה מְדַבְּרֵי סוּפְרִים שְׁלֹא יִבְטֵל מִלְּפָרוֹת וְלִרְבוֹת
כָּל זְמַן שֵׁישׁ בּוֹ כֹּחַ, שְׁכָל הַמוֹסִיף נֶפֶשׁ אַחַת
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּאִילוּ בָּנָה עוֹלָם.

Even though one fulfills the *mitzvah* of procreation [with a son and a daughter], there's a rabbinic *mitzvah* not to refrain from procreating as long as one has strength, for whoever adds a single soul to Israel, it's as if they built an entire world.

ANSWER

The *mitzvah* “Be fruitful and multiply” was commanded because having children is part of continuing the world G-d started. It’s not just a *mitzvah*, it’s how the world keeps being built and sustained.

Every child is an entire world,
with their own unique
strengths, so each one—no
matter how many there are—
is completely irreplaceable
and essential to Hashem's
plan for the world.



TEXT 11

The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, *Sichot*
Kodesh 5740:3, p. 285

דער גרעסטער נחת רוח וואס א פרוי, און על
דורך זה א מאן, קענען האבן איז ווען זיי האבן
קינדער, און זיי זעהן ווי זייערע קינדער
וואקסן אויף און לעבן בדרך התורה והמצוות.

און ס'איז נישט דער פשוט אז ב'שעת מ'האט איין
קינד קען מען נישט האבן מערער נחת און
תענוג. נאר אדרבה, דער טבע האדם איז אז מי
נשיש לו מנה רוצה מאתם. וואס אזוי דארף
זיין דער טבע פון א מענטשן על פי תורה אין
גוטע זאכן. איז ב'שעת א מאן און א פרוי האבן
א קינד, ווילן זיי האבן מערער קינדער. און
פון יעדער קינד בפני עצמו האבן זיי נחת
ותענוג. פון איין קינד אין קו התורה, פון דעם
צווייטן קינד אין קו העבודה, און פון דעם
דריטן קינד אין קו הגמילות חסדים, וכו'.

The greatest pleasure parents can
have is seeing their children grow up
and live a life of Torah and *mitzvot*.

To claim that once we have one
child, we have no capacity for more
pleasure and *nachat* is just false. On
the contrary, it's human nature never
to be content and always to want
more. The Torah instructs us to
yearn for more in all good things.
When parents have one child, they
want more, and they delight in each
child separately: from the Torah
study of one, the character
refinement of the other, the
generosity of the third, etc.



A child takes effort, but gives deep meaning in return. Created in G-d's image, we are meant to build, love, and give. There is no greater joy than raising a child and watching them grow into who they are.

TEXT 12

The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, *Likutei
Sichot* 30, p. 28

בְּפֶרֶשֶׁת בְּרָאשִׁית נֶאֱמַר זֶה לְאָדָם הָרָאשׁוֹן, וּמִכֵּיּוֹן שֶׁלִּפְנֵי אֲמִירַת (בְּרָכָה) צִוּוּי זֶה
לֹא הָיוּ לְאָדָם בָּנִים, מוֹבָן, שֶׁכֵּזֶה מְדוּבָר בְּעִיקָר קִיּוּם פָּרוּ וָרָבוּ (הוֹלֵדֶת בֶּן וּבֵת).

מָה שֶׁאֵין כֵּן בְּפֶרֶשֶׁתנוּ נֶאֱמַר "פָּרוּ וָרָבוּ" לְנֹחַ וּבָנָיו, כְּלוּמַר, לֹא רַק לְבָנֵי נֹחַ שֶׁעָדִין
לֹא הָיוּ לָהֶם בָּנִים, אֲלָא גַם לְנֹחַ עֲצָמוֹ שֶׁכִּבָּר הָיוּ לוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָנִים, גַּם לוֹ נֶאֱמַר "פָּרוּ
וָרָבוּ וּמָלְאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ".

In the first chapter of Genesis, this was said to Adam. Adam had no children before he received these commandments, so we understood that this commandment obligated him to have a son and a daughter.

In the Torah portion about Noah, "Be fruitful and multiply" was addressed to Noah and his sons. It wasn't said only to Noah's children who had no children yet but also to Noah, who already had three children. He, too, was told, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."

ANSWER

Adam had no children yet, but Noah had sons already and might have thought they were enough. The Torah repeats it to show that every child matters, and each one brings something new and special to the world.



We do our part to open the channels for livelihood and G-d fills them. So too with children, each one a miracle, we trust that He provides what is needed to raise them.

KEY POINTS

1. The first commandment given to Adam and Eve was to “be fruitful and multiply.” This commandment is repeated several times in the Torah.
2. The Torah acknowledges that this obligation poses several challenges, including loss of freedom, financial pressure, and concern for the future.
3. Nevertheless, the Torah instructs and empowers us to set our fears aside and have more children.
4. The biblical obligation is fulfilled when we have two children, especially if one is a boy and the other a girl. Our sages imposed a further obligation to continue having children so long as we can.
5. This is because each child is an entire world and will contribute to the world in incalculable ways. Every new child brings immense joy to the parents and grants purpose and endurance to G-d’s Creation.

