

The Bulletin is sponsored by Saragail Chessin Carpe in memory of her mother, Fannie Shapiro Chessin ע"ה, her love was a Divine blessing.



CANDLE LIGHTING 7:42 PM | 22 IYAR | MAY 9, 2026 | HAVDALA 8:46 PM



שבת פרשת בהר-בחוקותי
SHABBAT PARSHAT
BEHAR-BECHUKOSAI

Haftorah is Jeremiah 16:19-17:14. Pirkei Avot Ch. 5.

יום ירושלים / FRIDAY, MAY 15

Full Hallel (no bracha). No Tachanun.

FRIDAY EVENING

MINCHA 7:30 PM

SHKIA 8:00 PM

TZAIT HAKOCHAVIM 8:40 PM

SHABBAT

HASHKAMA 7:45 AM

SHACHARIT - MAIN 9:00 AM

POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR ≈ 9:19 AM

LAST KRIAT SHEMA 9:19 AM

FUNDAMENTALS SHIUR ≈ 11:30 AM

PRE-MINCHA SHIUR 6:55 PM

MINCHA 7:35 PM

SHKIA 8:01 PM

MAARIV 8:46 PM

SEUDAH SHLISHIT

Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Amy & Stephen Agress for a siyum on Masechet Menachot and in a zechut for the neshama of Sybil Scheiner ע"ה, Shifra bat Yosef, and by Jewel & Robert Safren in memory of Jewel's Father, Dr. Stanley Mondshine ע"ה, Shmilka ben Avraham.

FROM THE RABBINIC FEEDBACK COMMITTEE

Final opportunity to provide feedback this year will be this Monday, May 11, from 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM online via Google Meet; click here register: [Rabbi](#)



SUNDAY 5/10

MONDAY 5/11

TUESDAY 5/12

WEDNESDAY 5/13

THURSDAY 5/14

FRIDAY 5/15

WEEKDAY MINYANIM AT AHAVAT ACHIM

	SUNDAY 5/10	MONDAY 5/11	TUESDAY 5/12	WEDNESDAY 5/13	THURSDAY 5/14	FRIDAY 5/15
SHACHARIT	8:00 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	6:15 AM
2ND SHACHARIT MINYON - YISHTABACH AT 7:40 AM		7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM	7:25 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV	7:51 PM	7:52 PM	7:53 PM	7:54 PM	7:55 PM	6:26 PM
ZMANI						
Earliest Talit	4:41 AM	4:40 AM	4:38 AM	4:37 AM	4:36 AM	4:35 AM
Gedolah	1:29 PM	1:29 PM	1:29 PM	1:29 PM	1:29 PM	1:29 PM
Shkia	8:03 PM	8:04 PM	8:05 PM	8:06 PM	8:07 PM	
Tzait	8:43 PM	8:44 PM	8:45 PM	8:46 PM	8:47 PM	

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 17 - Boker Tov Sivan - Musical Hallel & Breakfast, sponsored by the Czinnis in honor of Judah's 5th Hebrew Birthday. RSVP here: [Hallel](#)

June 14 - Bowling!

June 23 - Annual Membership Meeting, 8:45 PM.

IN OUR FUTURE - KIDDUSH, SEUDAH SHLISHIT, & ETC.

May 16 - Ruth 1/2-Perek-By-1/2-Perek Shiur at Seudah Shlishit. Sign up: [Round-Robin](#)

May 23 - Kiddush is sponsored by Ilana & Nate Schwitzer with thanks to Hashem.

May 23 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Eli Zezion in memory of שלמה בין אליהו.

May 30 - Kiddush is sponsored in honor of Barbara & Ziv Farajun to wish them bracha, hatzlacha and yishuv tov on moving to Israel

May 30 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Eli Zezion in memory of שלמה בין אליהו.

June 6 - Birthday and Anniversary Kiddush

June 6 - Seudah Shlishit is sponsored by Eli Zezion in memory of ברוך מפציר בן שמואל.

June 20 - Kiddush is sponsored by Shelly & Steve Winchester celebrating Daniel's Avuf Ruf and upcoming wedding to Yael Simons.

BIRTHDAY & ANNIVERSARY KIDDUSH

To add a birthday or anniversary to our April list (next Kiddush on Shabbat, May 2), click here: [SIMCHA](#). Listings/sponsorships are \$36 per family per month. RSVP for the May birthday/ anniversary Kiddush by Sunday night, April 26.

SHIURIM

- PESHAT OF THE PARSHA, Tuesdays at 1:00 PM, click here: [Parsha](#).
- POST-HASHKAMA SHIUR, analyzing Mishlei (Proverbs)
- FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT, after Kiddush.
- SHABBAT SHIUR, **SANHEDRIN CH. 8**, 40 minutes prior to mincha.
- TZURBA M'RABANAN w/ Zack Doberman, Wednesdays at 8:30 PM. In-person at the shul and via Zoom.
- SEDER ON THE SIDDUR, at Seudah Shlishit.

GITA COOPERWASSER ע"ה

YOUTH EVENTS

May 22 - First Day of Shavuot, Edison Playground, 3:45 PM.

May 23 - Shul Playground, followed by an Interactive youth program and dinner, 3:45 PM.

GITA COOPERWASSER ע"ה

SHABBAT YOUTH INFO



● SHABBAT YOUTH LEADERS:

3RD - 5TH: ARIELYS & SOPHIA

K - 2ND: & ABBY & CASSANDRA

3 YRS - PRE-K: ZOE & NICOLE

- Youth groups for 3rd through 5th Graders starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on left on entering the social hall.
- Youth group for children 4 years old through 1st Grade starts at 9:00 AM (Drop Off) in the Youth Room on the right upon entering the social hall.
- Parent & Me, 9:00 AM in the Beit Midrash.
- Rabbi Meet & Greet, Friday night, kids can come over to the Rabbi after davening to receive a cup of grape juice and a ticket!
- Children earn tickets for coming to minyan (Friday night and/or Shabbat day), asking the rabbi questions or attending parent-child learning programs! Tickets can be redeemed for prizes.
- Children's corner at Seudah Shlishit, 1st to 5th graders will get 10 Torah questions in 10 minutes from Rabbi Shestack, with special snacks, tickets and more.

BOARD MEETINGS 8:15 PM

May 26 - At shul w/Zoom option, 8:45 PM (after Mincha-Maariv).

Friday Evening, May 8



Saturday Evening, May 9



Sunday Evening, May 10



Monday Evening, May 11



Tuesday Evening, May 12



Wednesday Evening, May 13



Thursday Evening, 14



18-25 Saddle River Road
Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
201.797.0502

<http://www.ahavatachim.org>

Mishlei/Proverbs
Post-Hashkama Shiur 27 – A Taste of Kohelet

”גם־בְּשִׂחֹק יִכָּאֵב־לֵב וְאֶת־רִיתָהּ שִׂמְחָהּ תוֹגֶה: ”מִדְרָכָיו יִשָּׁבַע סוּג לֵב וְיִמְעָלוּ אִישׁ טוֹב: ”יִפְתֵּי יֶאֱמִין לְכָל־דְּבָר וְעֵרוֹם יִבְנֶן לְאִשְׁרוֹ: ”חֲכָם יֵרָא וְסָר מִרַע וְכֹסֵל מִתַּעֲבָר וּבֹטֵחַ: ”קִצְר־אֶפֶס יַעֲשֶׂה אֲגָלָת וְאִישׁ מְזֻמּוֹת יִשָּׁא: ”נִחְלוּ פְתָאִים אֲגָלָת וְעֵרוֹמִים יִכְתְּרוּ דַעַת: ”שָׁחוּ רַעִים לִפְנֵי טוֹבִים וְרָשָׁעִים עַל־שַׁעְרֵי צְדִיק: ”גַּם־לְרַעוּהוּ יִשָּׁא רָשׁ וְאֶהְיֶי עֹשֵׂיר רַבִּים: ”בְּזִדְלִרְעוּהוּ חוֹטֵא וּמְחוֹנֵן עֲנָוִים (כְּתִיב עֲנָוִים) אִשְׁרָיו: ”בְּהִלּוֹא־יִתְעוּ תְרָשִׁי גַע וְתָסֵד וְאֶמֶת תְּרָשִׁי טוֹב: ”בְּכָל־עֶצֶב יִהְיֶה מוֹתֵר וּדְבַר־שִׁפְתָּיִם אֲדִלְמַחֲסוֹר: ”עֲטַרְתַּת חֲכָמִים — עֲשָׂרָם אֲגָלָת פְּסִילִים אֲגָלָת: —

13Even in laughter the heart aches, and the end of joy is sorrow. 14Those with an impure heart shall reap the fruit of their ways, but a good man [shall reap] from his deeds. 15A simpleton believes anything, but a shrewd man ponders (understands) his course. 16A wise man fears and turns away from evil, but a fool rushes in confidently. 17A hothead commits folly, and a scheming man is hated. 18Folly is the inheritance of simpletons, but the shrewd are crowned with knowledge. 19The evil will grovel before the good, and the wicked will stand [humbly] at the gates of the righteous. 20The pauper is hated even by his friends, but the lovers of a rich man are many. 21He who despises his fellow is a sinner, but he who pities the poor is fortunate. 22Surely those that plot evil shall go astray, but those that plan goodness [shall reap] kindness and truth. 23In all labor there is gain, but a word from the lips can lead to loss. 24The wealth of the wise is their adornment [crown]; but the stupidity of fools is mere stupidity.¹

A. Verses 14:13-14, taken together, begin with an almost Kohelet-like feel to it, creating existential observational tension, but then later returning to Mishlei’s core underpinnings by providing practical moral observations/guidance.

- V. 13 → Even in laughter the heart aches, and the end of joy is sorrow.
 - o Many translations, to make the thought expressed seem less absolute, add the word “may” (*i.e.*, the heart may ache or the end of joy may be sorrow).
 - o The idea of a heart aching while laughing immediately created an image for me of a person masking pain with laughter, or as Sheryl Crow sings: “If it makes you happy, then why the hell are you so sad?”.
 - o Traditional commentators often understand the laughing not as masking pain, but either (1) as its cause (*e.g.*, the Metzudot), as it says in Pirkei Avot 3:13 “Jesting and frivolity accustom a person to promiscuity,” or (2) resulting from the sinner having a “happy life”, all the while his heart aches knowing what was in store in the world to come (*e.g.*, Rashi).
 - o Vilna Gaon suggests that joy is illusory, and there can be no real joy in this world, as that is reserved exclusively for the world to come. What would the Vilna Gaon think of the expression “only simchas”, spoken knowing that there must yet be sorrow to come.
- V. 14 → Those with an impure heart shall reap the fruit of their ways, but a good man [shall reap] from his deeds.
 - o Compare the first half of the couplet to Yirmiyahu 12:1 where it is asked: “Why has the way of the wicked prospered, all who deal with treachery have peace?” One interpretation is that the second half supplies the answer, *i.e.*, the good man’s true reaping is still to come.

B. After looking inward at hidden pain, and then at the seeming injustice of sinners prospering from their own chosen “ways”, the next ten pasukim offer concrete portraits of different human types.

- V. 15 → A simpleton believes anything, but a shrewd man ponders his course.
 - o In a world of required ideological conformity, is intelligence what separates a simpleton from the shrewd, or is it one’s ability to question the decision making underpinnings.

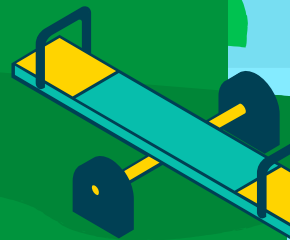
¹ Mishlei Chapter 14.

- V. 16 → A wise man fears and turns away from evil, but a fool rushes in confidently.
 - o Ralbag translates מְתַעֲבֵר as “enraged”, such that the fool is strengthening himself through anger to move forward confidently in his transgression (see also Rashi).
 - o Interestingly, Rav Freedman, our scholar-in-residence two weeks ago, mentioned using self-generated anger as a psychological technique to overcome fear and doubt in order to move forward aggressively in combat. So using anger to overcome hesitation can even be a tool used with premeditation, and perhaps the fool is doing so here.
- V. 17 → A hothead commits folly, and a scheming man is hated.
 - o Ralbag understands this couplet as describing people that are opposites, the one who acts impulsively and the other that excessively prolongs deliberations. As for the latter, Kohelet 11:4 tells us that “one who watches the wind will never sow, and one who keeps his eyes on the clouds will never reap”.
 - o As relates to the scheming (procrastinating) man as understood by Ralbag, consider whether knowing that “the end of joy is sorrow” (verse 14:13) can have a debilitating impact.
- V. 18 → Folly is the inheritance of simpletons, but the shrewd are crowned with knowledge.
- Ibn Ezra says that because a simpleton will believe anything (verse 14:15), folly is passed down from simpleton to simpleton like an inheritance.
- V. 19 → The evil will grovel before the good, and the wicked will stand [humbly] at the gates of the righteous.
 - o Harkens back to verse 14:15, as the deeds of a good man will ultimately reign supreme.
- V. 20 → The pauper is hated even by his friends, but the lovers of a rich man are many.
 - o “Standing in line, marking time. Waiting for the welfare dime, 'cause they can't buy a job. The man in the silk suit hurries by, as he catches the poor old ladies' eyes -- Just for fun, he says, ‘Get a job’.” *The Way It Is*, by Bruce Hornsby & The Range.
 - o Query whether the many lovers of the rich are merely sycophants?
- V. 21 → He who despises his fellow is a sinner, but he who pities the poor is fortunate.
 - o Rabbeinu Yonah sees this as the response to the previous verse.
 - o Note that unlike the previous verse, here I translated לְרֵעֵהוּ as “fellow”, as that seems to be more of an accurate depiction in this context.
- V. 22 → Surely those that plot evil shall go astray, but those that plan goodness [shall reap] kindness and truth.
 - o Also harkens back to 14:15, as the deeds of a good man will ultimately reign supreme.
- V. 23 → In all labor there is gain, but a word from the lips can lead to loss.
 - o Again harkens back to 14:15, reinforcing the idea that all will reap what they sow (“all labor”), regardless of whether the laborer is himself “good”, but now this verse perhaps adds a new insight in that what prevents this laborer from benefitting from his deeds in the world to come may be evil emanating from his mouth.
- V. 24 → The wealth of the wise is their adornment [crown]; but the stupidity of fools is mere stupidity.
 - o Ibn Ezra and others see the individuals referenced in both halves of this pasuk as being rich, with the wise using it to adorn themselves in righteousness, while fools cannot help but squander this advantage.
 - o In that regard, Rabbi Bachya sees the double mention of stupidity as indicating that the fool is harming himself in two different ways, *i.e.*, physically (for example, perhaps excessive drinking), and spiritually (for example, perhaps, contributing to causes not aligned with Torah values, etc.).

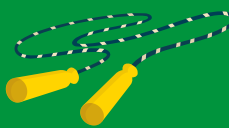


Save the Date!

Playdate in the Park: Shavuot Edition



Join us at Edison Park on
Friday, May 22nd at 3:45 P.M.



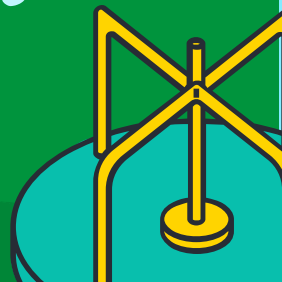
Fruit & snacks will be provided!
Bring your own water.

please do not bring snacks containing nuts



AHAVAT ACHIM
קהלת אהבת אחים

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SUNDAY MAY 17TH

9:15 AM SHACHARIT (Hallel at 9:40)

10:00 AM ARTS & CRAFTS for Kids

10:30 AM BREAKFAST

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Covenant & Conversation

Jonathan Sacks
THE RABBI SACKS LEGACY

BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI • בהר-בחוקתי

FROM THE TEACHINGS AND WRITINGS OF RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS זצ"ל

With thanks to the Schimmel Family for their generous sponsorship of Covenant & Conversation, dedicated in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel.

"I have loved the Torah of R' Chaim Schimmel ever since I first encountered it. It strives to be not just about truth on the surface but also its connection to a deeper truth beneath. Together with Anna, his remarkable wife of 60 years, they built a life dedicated to love of family, community, and Torah.

An extraordinary couple who have moved me beyond measure by the example of their lives." — Rabbi Sacks

This year's series of essays were originally written and recorded by Rabbi Sacks זת"ל in 5773 (2012–2013). These timeless messages are accompanied by a new [Family Edition](#) created to inspire intergenerational learning on the Parsha.

The Chronological Imagination

I want, in this study, to look at one of Judaism's most distinctive and least understood characteristics – the chronological imagination.

Sometimes a modern discovery so changes our ways of looking at things that it allows us to revisit ancient truths that have become deeply obscured and see them with pristine clarity as if for the first time. That is surely the case with quantum physics. What it allows us to do is to understand afresh a biblical way of thinking about truth that is profoundly different from the way we have been accustomed to think in the West. I call the Greek approach the *logical* imagination, and the Jewish approach, the *chronological* imagination.

Niels Bohr famously said about quantum mechanics that if it hasn't profoundly

shocked you, you haven't understood it yet. Without entering the details of this tangled territory, the most profoundly shocking thing about the subatomic reality it exposed is that it does not fit our standard logical categories. Is light a wave or a particle? Do subatomic particles have position or momentum? Is Schrödinger's cat alive or dead?¹

The answer to each of these questions reminds us of the story about the rabbi who listens to a husband's account of an unhappy marriage and says, "You're right." He then listens to the wife's conflicting account and says, "You're right." His disciple, who has been present at both meetings, says to the rabbi, "But they can't both be right," to which the rabbi replies, "You're also right."

¹ Schrödinger's cat is the name given to the thought experiment proposed by the Austrian physicist Erwin Schrödinger in 1935 to dramatize the paradoxical nature of quantum physics. It involves thinking about a cat in a sealed box whose fate depends on an earlier random event involving subatomic particles. According to the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum theory, the particles exist only in a state of probability until they are measured. It follows that the cat is only alive or dead once the box is opened. Until then, it is equally true to say that it is alive and that it is dead.

There are phenomena, from subatomic particles to domestic disputes, to which the standard rules of Aristotelian logic do not apply. Chief of these is the principle of contradiction that states that a proposition and its negation cannot both be true. Two contradictory statements cannot be true at the same time. Bohr's complementarity theory, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, and other counterintuitive ideas, challenge this head-on. Light is both a wave and a particle. Schrödinger's cat is both dead and alive. There are phenomena that bear contradictory characteristics until we, the observer, enter the scene, at which point the contradiction is resolved retroactively.

Bohr tells the story of how he came to his theory. It happened after his young son was caught stealing sweets from a local store. Niels experienced mixed emotions towards his son and was conflicted as to the best way to approach him in light of this event. First he found himself thinking about this as a judge would. His son was guilty of a crime and justice must be done. But he also felt parental emotions of love and compassion. He realised that he could not hold both thoughts equally in his mind at the same time, and this led to his research on complementarity theory. As a fair judge of the situation, he had to think impartially. As a father he could not help but have compassion for his son, who had made a mistake. One way of thinking leads to justice, the other to mercy, but these are conflicting perspectives and involve different kinds of relationships.

The same is true about the well-known drawing that can be seen as a duck or a rabbit, but not both at the same time. The multi-dimensionality of reality may simply be too complex for us to grasp it all at one time. But what we cannot think simultaneously we can often think sequentially. That is what I mean by the chronological imagination.

We owe our concepts of logic to the ancient Greeks. The Greeks thought of knowledge as a special kind of seeing. We still, in Western languages, preserve this visual metaphor. We speak of foresight and insight, of people of vision, and of 'making an observation'. When we understand something we say, "I see." For Plato, knowledge was deep insight into a world beyond the senses, where you see not the physical embodiments but the true form of things. The guiding metaphor for Greek epistemology, buried deep in the culture, was the image of Zeus, chief of the gods, looking down on the affairs of human beings from his lofty perch on Mount Olympus.

The worldview of the Torah is quite different. True knowledge is acquired less through seeing (God is not visible, and throughout the Hebrew Bible appearances deceive²) than through listening. The keyword is *shema*, meaning, "listen, hear, understand, respond." Knowledge, *daat*, is not detached observation but intimate personal engagement: "And Adam *knew* his wife and she conceived." God in the Torah is not a detached observer of the affairs of humankind, but an active participant. In

² Think of Joseph, seen by his brothers but not recognised, or the spies sent by Moses who saw the land but misinterpreted what they saw.

Judaism, words are not just pictures of reality, the “forms” of things. They affect relationships. Words can injure and inspire. Words can bless or curse. Words can create new moral facts, such as when we make a promise. Words shape the reality they describe. This is more like Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, in which the observer affects the reality he observes, than like Greek-inspired theories of knowledge in which a sentence can be true or false but not both.

The psychotherapist Viktor Frankl pointed out that what can be a contradiction in two-dimensional space need not be when we add a third dimension. So a square cannot be a circle, and a circle cannot be a square. But they can both be shadows cast by a single object, a canister, lit first from the side, then from above. Add the third dimension and the contradiction disappears. Nor is this a mere mathematical curiosity. As Niels Bohr, one of the masters of quantum physics put it, “The opposite of a trivial true is a falsehood, but the opposite of a profound true may well be another profound truth.”

This is absolutely fundamental to Judaism. There is more than one valid way of looking at the universe. Minimally, there is the point of view of God and there is the point of view of humankind, and they are radically distinct. The only time in the whole of Tanach in which a human being is invited to see the world from the vantage point of God occurs in the last four chapters of the book of Job, when Job finally understands that the universe is not anthropocentric. Not everything exists for

the benefit of humankind. God is at the centre, not us.

No less significantly, though the Torah has a single Author, it does not speak in a single voice. I have argued throughout these studies that there are at least three discernible voices – a wisdom voice, a priestly voice, and a prophetic voice – corresponding to the three modes in which God discloses Himself: through creation, revelation, and redemption. Each captures something of reality but none, on its own, portrays it all. That is why the Torah is such a complex interplay of different genres and tones of voice. The book of Numbers, for example, is structured as a fugue between law and narrative. There is no other book in the whole of literature that is quite like it. Throughout Numbers we see the interplay between prophetic and priestly sensibilities, and we begin to understand how law – the “ought-ness” of things – grows out of, and in turn influences, history, the “is- or was-ness” of things.

How then do you represent the three-dimensional nature of reality with its conflicting perspectives and multifaceted truths? One way in which the Torah does it is through what I call the *dialogical imagination*. We are shown a situation from two radically opposed viewpoints at the same time.

Two powerful examples occur in Genesis 21 and 27. In Genesis 21, first we see Sarah and her joy as at last she holds her long-awaited son. Then we see the pathos of Hagar and Ishmael, dismissed from the household and on the brink of death under the heartless desert sky. In Genesis 27, first we see Rebecca arrange for her beloved son Jacob

to be blessed, then we see Isaac and Esau, bound together in shock and dismay, as they realise what has happened.

These narratives subvert any simplistic tendency to moralise, to divide reality into black and white. They force us to see the world from more than one point of view. The only way of bridging these perspectives is through conversation. Hence the idea of truth as dialogue. In Genesis, when speech breaks down, violence – the attempt to impose my version of the truth on you by force – is often waiting in the wings.

The other way is through the chronological imagination. Conflicting propositions may both be valid – the opposite of a profound truth may be another profound truth – but not at the same time. A classic example of this is the interpretation by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in *The Lonely Man of Faith* of the two Creation accounts in Genesis 1, and in chapters 2-3. In the first, man is created in the image of God and given dominion over all other life forms. In the second, man is formed from the dust of the earth, and told to “serve and conserve” the garden. In the first, man and woman are created simultaneously, side-by-side. In the second, woman is created in the wake of the loneliness of man, and they exist face-to-face.

Rabbi Soloveitchik argued that the first account describes the ‘majestic’ man, whereas the second depicts the “covenantal” man, and we are both. The result, he explained, was that to be human is to be conflicted, torn between the different facets of our being. In fact, though, the Torah resolves this

contradiction in the simplest and most elegant way: through time.

‘Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day to the Lord your God.’

Ex. 20:9-10

For six days we are majestic; on the seventh we are covenantal.

The chronological imagination – what Bohr meant when he said he could see his son through the eyes of a judge and a parent, but not both at the same time – was one of the great gifts of *Torat Kohanim*. The priest guards the border between sacred and secular, eternity and mortality, the physical and the spiritual, the infinite and finite. He knows these are two different orders of reality and is all too conscious of the danger that awaits and blurring of the boundary. At one level of reality, all that exists is God. At another, all that exists is human beings and their devices and desires. The separation between heaven and earth is what makes the universe and human life possible. But their connection is what makes human life meaningful.

The priest resolves the contradiction between sacred and secular by seeing both as true and valid, but we can only experience them at different times. The times and places at which we focus on our human, mortal condition are *chol*, secular. Those in which we focus on God, the infinite Eternal, we call *kodesh*. They are integrated in the form of a precisely calibrated rhythm of time: six units (days, months, years) of *chol*, followed by a seventh that is holy. with the occasional

addition of a fiftieth (day, year) after a sequence of seven sevens.

Biblical texts using the priestly voice are conspicuous for their mathematical precision. So, as Umberto Cassuto pointed out,³ the creation account is not only divided into seven days. It also contains the word "good" seven times, "God" thirty-five times, and "earth" twenty-one times. The first verse contains seven words, the second fourteen, and the description of the seventh day, thirty-five. The whole passage is 469 (7x67) words. Likewise Leviticus 23, 25, and 26 are all structured around the repeated words "seven" and "Shabbat". Mathematical precision is essential to the priestly understanding of reality, just as we now know it is to the universe, almost unimaginably finely-tuned for the emergence of conscious life. Had any of the mathematical constants that govern the shape of the universe been even slightly different, the chemical elements necessary for life would simply not have formed.⁴

But the precision of the priest is different from that of the scientist. The division of time in the priestly calendar is a way of living out sequentially different and conflicting truths. We have already seen one in our study of Succot. Judaism embraces both the universal and the particular, the universality of our humanity, given religious force in the Noahide covenant, and the particularity of our people's relationship with God, epitomised in the covenant at Mount Sinai. The Jewish calendar gives weight to both. There is the

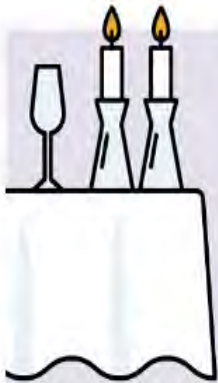
cycle of the three pilgrimage festivals; Passover, Shavuot, and Succot, representing the particularity of Jewish history - the Exodus, the Giving of the Torah, and the years of wandering the desert. And there is the cycle of festivals of the seventh month, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and again Succot, representing the universals of the human condition: Creation, Divine sovereignty, justice, judgment, life, death, rain, and the renewal of nature.

One of the most beautiful consequences of the chronological imagination - seen clearly in our parsha of Behar - is its ability to reconcile the real with the ideal. History is full of ideal worlds. We call them utopias, a word that means "no place" because no utopia has ever happened. Torah Kohanim has a different, indeed unique, approach to ideal worlds. We live them, periodically, in the here-and-now of real time. On Shabbat we engage in a full dress rehearsal for the Messianic Age when no one will exercise power, political or economic, over anyone else. Something similar is true of the two great institutions in the parsha: *Shemittah* and the Jubilee year, the seventh and fiftieth years. By cancelling debts, releasing slaves, leaving the produce of the land to be enjoyed by everyone equally, and restoring ancestral property to its original owners, we inhabit a world in which the inequities of the market economy have been redressed and, for a year, sometimes two, we suspend the world of competition and live in a world of co-operation and the fellowship of equals.

³ Umberto Cassuto, *Commentary on Genesis*, vol 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press 1961), pp. 12-15.

⁴ One classic account is Martin Rees, *Just Six Numbers* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999).

There is no other system quite like this, and it gives truth - not the truth we think or discover, but the truths we live and to which we owe loyalty - a three-dimensional character it does not have in the either/or world of Aristotelian logic.⁵ That is the power of dialogical and chronological thought, and it comes from the depth reality acquires when we add to the two-dimensional nature of humanity the third dimension that is God.



Around the Shabbat Table

1. Why is dialectical thinking (holding two different truths in your head or heart at the same time) so difficult?
2. Which truths do you live, and owe loyalty to?
3. How does taking off one day each week change how you view success and worth?

● These questions come from this week's **Family Edition** to Rabbi Sacks' Covenant & Conversation. For an interactive, multi-generational study, check out the full edition at <https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/behar/the-chronological-imagination/>

⁵ Not that Aristotle was narrowly Aristotelian. He was one of the first philosophers to realise that different intellectual disciplines had different criteria of truth and different internal logics.