

Parsha Q&A



Parshas Bereishis

For the week ending 27 Tishrei 5759
16 & 17 October 1998

Parsha Questions

1. Why does the Torah start with the account of Creation?
2. What happened to the light that was created on the first day?
3. Why isn't the word "good" associated with the second day?
4. How were the trees supposed to taste?
5. On which day were the sun and moon created?
6. Hashem blessed the birds to be fruitful and to multiply. Why did He not do so with the beasts?
7. In whose likeness was man fashioned?
8. What kind of food did Adam eat?
9. Why is "the sixth day" written with the definite article?
10. At the end of the sixth day what was the world still lacking?
11. Why was man made from dust gathered from the entire Earth?
12. How is man superior to the animals?
13. Why was it not good that man be alone?
14. Where do we learn that one must not add to a commandment from Hashem?
15. What does it mean that Adam and Chava "knew that they were naked?"
16. Why did Hevel choose to be a shepherd?
17. What was the marital practice of the generation who lived before the flood?
18. What did Tuval-Cain invent?
19. Why did Chanoch die at a young age?
20. What was the sign that Shem was born with great propensity for righteousness?

Sherlox Holmes and The Mystery of the Missing Planets

Two cloaked figures moved beneath the starry sky. "I'm in the dark about the following verse," said Watstein. Regarding the fourth day of Creation, the verse says: Yehi me'oros — Let there be luminaries in the heavenly firmament..." (Bereishis 1:14)

"Seems a simple enough verse," said world famous detective Sherlox Holmes.

"My question exactly!" said Watstein. "The verse is self-explanatory. Why, then, do we need Rashi's comment? Rashi writes: 'The word me'oros (luminaries) is written without a vav (and it can be read as me'eras — 'plague'). This indicates that the fourth day of the week is predestined as a day of me'era (plague), when children are prone to contract diphtheria.' Why does Rashi need to comment?"

"Rashi himself points out the problem," said Sherlox. "Me'oros is missing a vav; instead of 'let there be luminaries,' the verse can be read 'let there be a plague.'"

"You know as well as I, Mr. Holmes, that a 'missing' letter is no reason for Rashi to comment! In fact, the next 'missing' letter occurs in this very verse (Bereishis 1:14): 'Osos' — 'signs' — is written without a vav! Yet Rashi makes no comment there; nor does he comment in hundreds of such instances that occur throughout the Torah. So my question stands: Why does Rashi feel compelled to explain this instance? What's bothering Rashi!"

"There's more than one star in the sky, eh Watstein?"

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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Answer

“There’s more than one star in the sky, Watstein, yet the verse says *yehi me’oros* — let there be luminaries.”

“What’s wrong with that?” asked Watstein.

“*Yehi* — let there be — is a singular verb,” said Sherlock, “yet *me’oros* — luminaries — is a plural noun. *Yehiyu* would have been the proper verb.”

“Heavens!” shouted Watstein. “How could I have missed something so obvious! Yes, it should have said *yehiyu me’oros*; *yehiyu* is plural, and *me’oros* is plural. The verb should agree with the noun!”

“Hence,” said Sherlock, “Rashi offers a midrashic teaching which reads the plural noun *me’oros* as the singular noun *me’eras* — plague — thus accounting for the singular verb *yehi*.”

“Most enlightening, Mr. Holmes.”

(Gur Aryeh; “Sherlox” is by Reuven Subar, inspired by Dr. Avigdor Bonchek’s “What’s Bothering Rashi”)

I Did Not Know That!

All 49 “gates of understanding” which exist in the world were given by Hashem to Moshe. And all 49 are written in the Torah; some are written explicitly, some are hinted in the words, some are hinted in the gematria (numerical values) or in the shapes of the letters, or in the “crowns,” the ornamental frills written on top of the letters. All of King Solomon’s wisdom came to him through the Torah.

Ramban, Introduction to the Torah

Recommended Reading List

Ramban

1:1	The Need for Bereishis
1:14	The Sun and the Moon
1:26	Man
1:29	Vegetarianism
2:3	Shabbos
2:20	Names
3:16	Punishment of Chava
5:4	Length of Life

Sforno

2:3	The Blessing of Shabbos
2:25	Naked and Unashamed
3:17	The Curse of Work
4:26	Calling Out in Hashem’s Name
5:1	The Image of Hashem
6:8	Noach

Rashbam

1:27	What’s Missing?
2:23	The Birth of Chava

Answers to this Week's Questions

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated

1. 1:1 - So that when the nations accuse us of stealing Eretz Canaan from the Canaanites, we can respond that Hashem, as Creator, has the right to give the land to whomever He sees fit, and He gave Eretz Canaan to us.
2. 1:4 - Hashem saw that the wicked would be unworthy of it so He placed it in the World to Come for the righteous.
3. 1:7 - Because the work with the water wasn't completed until the third day. Anything that is incomplete is not "good."
4. 1:11 - The wood was to have the taste of the fruit.
5. 1:14 - They were created on the first day and suspended in the firmament on the fourth day.
6. 1:22 - He did not want the serpent, who was to be cursed, to receive a blessing.
7. 1:26 - In the likeness of the angels.
8. 1:30 - Man was vegetarian until Noach emerged from the ark.
9. 1:31 - "The" in Hebrew is the letter hey, which has a numerical value of five. Hashem created the world on the condition that it will endure only if the Jewish People accept the Five Books of the Torah.
10. 2:2 - Rest.
11. 2:7 - So that wherever he might die the Earth would receive his body.
12. 2:7 - He was given understanding and speech.
13. 2:18 - If he were alone, he would appear to be a god; The creation of woman emphasized man's dependence.
14. 3:3 - From Chava. Hashem commanded not to eat from the tree but she added not to touch it. Because she added to His command she eventually came to transgress it.
15. 3:7 - They had been given one commandment and they had stripped themselves of it.
16. 4:2 - Since the ground had been cursed he refrained from cultivating it.
17. 4:19 - They married two wives; Only one for bearing children. The other one was given a potion which prevented her from bearing children.
18. 4:22 - He perfected the work of Cain by making weapons for murder. Tuval comes from the word "tavlin" (spice).
19. 5:22 - Though he was righteous, he was easily influenced; therefore Hashem took him before his time to protect him from sinning.
20. 5:32 - He was born already circumcised.

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