

## Bereshit 2021 Jeff (Yefim) Zhuk

the honor to begin the new cycle and talk about Bereshit. The parsha covers about 14 hundred years and it is read like a poem. In the first 6 days G-d created the whole world with heavens and solid grounds and then G-d created us, so we can partner in this project. 6 days each week we continue moving this project ahead and we rest in the seventh day on Shabbat. You can correctly guess that most of the ideas you are about to hear came from commentaries. While preparing to this discussion I was reading and listening to many. My favorites are still by Jonathan Sachs. Creating light and dark, heavens and earth, animals and humans, each time followed 3 steps: holy words "Let it be", the action, and finalized with the words "and G-d saw that this was good". What was the engine of the creation? One of the first cabbalists, Lurie, described a very interesting picture of a powerful light that spread faster and faster and created the matter. Today, after about 1000 years, science pronounced a very similar thing. But Torah focuses on the holy words as such an engine. G-d created natural universe with words. Now we continue this project by creating social universe with words. Words express ideas and describe the future. That makes us closer to the "image of G-d", because we know that there is no image and there is nothing physical about G-d. The very first actions of people loudly remind us about individual responsibility: Eve, who ate the prohibited fruit, brave Adam, who immediately betrayed her by telling "No, this is not me, my wife gave me the apple", Kain, who murdered his brother, and said "I am not my brother keeper". We learn from the parsha about uniqueness of every individual. Every individual deserves G-d blessing without any boundaries of groups or categories. These words were repeated by Gorge Washington. John Kennedy in his first speech underlined that freedom is given to individuals not by state but by G-d. Besides the creation there was one major event: revelation, when G-d at Sinai revealed that we, Jews, are chosen people, chosen to lead the way, to navigate, become a sample of living life according to rules, chosen to bringing joy and hope. Leading the way means making mistakes and suffering. And still, we are here to bring joy and hope despite suffering. I was very touched on Thursday night listening to Phil Phiser story about his grandma. All my family from my father side was killed in July 41. My grandpa, Peysah sent my father, then bar mitzva boy, alone to Russia by train, two days before Nazi entered the village. And still we are chosen to bring hope and joy. I keep repeating joy. Where is it coming from? Directly from Bereshit: "and g-d saw that this was good". This is repeated several times. Trying to be closer to G-d means do good and enjoy. For some religions being a religious person means not to pay attention to daily life, more on prayers and services. But for Jews this means focusing on daily life, elevate every simple step by doing that according to the rules, bring more joy to life. Talking of Bereshit caused so many associations. I think it is a good place to stop. I would like to end with several questions. - Should we look for correlations between the science and Torah, describing creation of the world? - Bereshit contains several inconsistencies, like creating male and female, and then creating Eve from Adam flesh. What is your explanation? Or should we even try to resolve inconsistencies? Abbreviated discussion points. Jonathan Katz: it is interesting to investigate current physic and biology science and find new correlations. Neiel Baronberg: I try to focus on ethical side of the story to learn important lessons from Torah. David Flitter: we are lucky that in the Kohelet congregation we can discuss such questions, this would not be possible in some other communities. Misty Davidson: I think that Torah and the scientific views are two sides of the same coin that can coexist without conflicting. Chuck Jacobs: on correlation to science, I found the attached article in the IJN after our discussion Saturday. I think it is right on. Rabbi Angel is replacing Rabbi Sacks.