

Elul Series 5786 – The High Holiday Torah Readings

Class #1 – Breishit, Vayikra, or Bamidbar?

What is the best book to read from on Rosh haShana?

Source sheet for TIM shiur by Menachem Leibtag/

Introduction –

We are all familiar with the classic (almost technical) reasons for why we read the story of the birth of Yitzchak on the first day of Rosh ha'Shana, and story of the Akedah on Day Two. In our short series this Elul, we will explore how these two chapters in Sefer Breishit, may also relate to wider theme of "malchiot" and its relation to the Biblical theme of "bechira" – which is so central to Sefer Breishit and hence to our Rosh ha'Shana prayers.

I. The Torah readings for the Holidays – Mesechet Megilla 30b ->31a

בַּפֶּסֶח: קורין בַּפָּרֶשֶׁת מוֹעֲדוֹת שֶׁל תּוֹרַת כֹּהֲנִים

בְּעֶצְרָת: "שִׁבְעָה שָׁבוּעוֹת" (דברים ט"ז:ט')

בְּרֵאשִׁי הַשָּׁנָה: "בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ" ויקרא כ"ג:כ"ד

בְּיוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים: "אַחֲרֵי מוֹת" (ויקרא ט"ז:א')

בְּיוֹם טוֹב הָרֵאשׁוֹן שֶׁל חַג: קורין בַּפָּרֶשֶׁת מוֹעֲדוֹת שְׁבִתוֹרַת כֹּהֲנִים
וּבִשְׁאָר כָּל יְמֵי חַג הַחַג בְּקִרְבָּנוֹת חַג.

בְּתַנּוּכָה בְּנִשְׂאִים (במדבר ז'ב') - בְּפִזְרֵי "וַיֵּבֶא עִמְלֶק" (שמות י"ז:ח')

בְּרֵאשִׁי חֲדָשִׁים "וּבְרֵאשִׁי חֲדָשִׁיכֶם" (במדבר כ"ח:א')

בְּמַעֲמָדוֹת בְּמַעֲשֵׂה בְּרֵאשִׁית (בראשית א')

בְּתַעֲנִיּוֹת בְּרִכּוֹת וּקְלָלוֹת - אֵין מִפְסִיקִין בְּקְלָלוֹת אֲלָא אֶחָד קוֹרֵא אֶת כּוֹלֵן.

בְּשָׁנִי וּבְחֲמִישִׁי בַּשָּׁבַת בְּמִנְחָה קורין כְּסִדְרָן וְאֵין עוֹלִים לָהֶם מִן הַחֲשׁוֹבֹן

שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶת מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" (ויקרא כ"ג:מ"ד)

מִצֻּתָּן שִׁיהוּ קורין כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד בְּזִמְנוֹ.

גמ....

אָמַר אֲבִי וְהֵאִידְנָא נְהוּג עֲלֵמָא לְמִיקָרִי:

מִשָּׁד תּוֹרָא- קִידֵּשׁ בְּכִסְפָּא- פָּסֵל בְּמִדְבָּרָא- שְׁלַח בּוֹכְרָא.

בְּעֶצְרָת "שְׁבַעַה שְׁבוּעוֹת" (דברים ט"ז:ט) וּמִפְטִירִין בְּחֶבְקוֹק (חבקוק ג':א')
אַחֲרִים אוֹמְרִים "בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי" (שמות י"ט:א') וּמִפְטִירִין בְּמֶרְכָּבָה (יחזקאל א')
וְהָאִידְנָא דְּאִיכָּא תְּרִי יוֹמֵי עֲבָדִינָן כְּתִירוּיָהּ וְאִיכָּא.

בְּרֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה "בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי" (במדבר כ"ט:א')
וּמִפְטִירִין "הֵבֵן יִקִּיר לִי אֶפְרַיִם" (ירמיהו ל"א:י"ט)
וַיֵּשׁ אוֹמְרִים "וְה' פָּקַד אֶת שָׁרָה" (בראשית כ"א:א')
וּמִפְטִירִין בְּחֻנָּה (שמואל א א').

וְהָאִידְנָא דְּאִיכָּא תְּרִי יוֹמֵי יוֹמָא קָמָא כִּיֵּשׁ אוֹמְרִים
לְמַחֵר "וְהָאֱלֹהִים נָסָה אֶת אַבְרָהָם" (בראשית כ"ב:א')
וּמִפְטִירִין "הֵבֵן יִקִּיר" (ירמיהו ל"א:י"ט).

בְּיוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים קוֹרִין "אַחֲרֵי מוֹת" (ויקרא ט"ז:א') וּמִפְטִירִין "כִּי כֹה אָמַר רָם וְנִשְׂא"
(ישעיהו נ"ז:ט"ו) וּבְמִנְחָה קוֹרִין בְּעֶרְיוֹת וּמִפְטִירִין בְּיוֹנָה.

Discuss:

What's the logic of the source / Vayikra 23:44 [note how it concludes a unit]

Breishit chapters 21 & 22 as options for Rosh ha'Shana

Is it by chance that one story continues to the next

Is 21 simply a lead up to 22, or is 22 a conclusion to 21

II. The classic reasons - AI Overview

We read Genesis (Bereishit) chapter 21 on the first day of Rosh Hashanah because the Talmud states that Sarah was "remembered" by God and conceived Isaac on Rosh Hashanah. This text highlights the core Rosh Hashanah theme of *Zichronot* (divine remembrance) and God fulfilling His promises.

Key Themes of the Reading

- Divine Remembrance: The chapter opens with *"And the Lord remembered Sarah as He had said,"* mirroring how God reviews and remembers all creation on the Day of Judgment. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)]

- The Power of Prayer: According to tradition, Sarah and Hannah (whose story is read in the companion Haftarah from 1 Samuel 1) both had their prayers for children answered on this day, inspiring us to pray during the New Year. [[1](#), [2](#)]
- The Power of Sincerity: God hears the cry of Ishmael in the wilderness ("*God heard the voice of the lad*"), teaching that sincere, personal prayer in times of need is heard by God. [[1](#)]

Day 2

AI Overview

We read Genesis (Breishit) chapter 22—the story of the Akedah (Binding of Isaac)—on the second day of Rosh Hashanah to invoke the ultimate supreme test of faith, absolute devotion, and the enduring merit of our ancestors before God on the Day of Judgment.

Merits and Divine Mercy

- Akedat Yitzchak: Reading about Isaac being bound on the altar brings the spiritual credit (*zechut*) of that supreme sacrifice to the forefront. [[1](#)]
- Arousing Mercy: We ask God to remember Abraham's willingness to give up his only beloved son and show us mercy (*rachamim*) in the new year. [[1](#)]
- The Ram's Horn: The chapter concludes with the sacrifice of a ram instead of Isaac, which directly connects to our blowing of the shofar (ram's horn) on Rosh Hashanah.

Q. - Do any of these topics relate to "zichron truah" or "moadim"

III. The word "moed" in Breishit 21

א וַיִּהְיֶה פֶקֶד אֶת-שָׂרָה, כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר; וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה
לְשָׂרָה, כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר.

1 And the LORD remembered Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as He had spoken.

ב וַתֵּהָר וַתֵּלֶד שָׂרָה לְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן, לְזִקְנָיו,
לְמוֹעֵד, אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהִים.

2 And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

ג וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת-שְׁם-בְנוֹ הַנּוֹלָד-לוֹ,

3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.

אֲשֶׁר-יִלְדָה-לוֹ שָׂרָה--יִצְחָק.

ד וַיִּמַּל אַבְרָהָם אֶת-יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ, בֶּן-שְׁמֹנֶת יָמִים,
בְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֹתוֹ, אֱלֹהִים.

4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

ה וַאֲבְרָהָם, בֶּן-מֵאָת שָׁנָה, בָּהוּלָד לוֹ, אֵת יִצְחָק
בְּנוֹ.

5 And Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.

ו וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה--צַחֵק, עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים: כָּל-
הַשֹּׁמֵעַ, יִצְחָק-לִי.

6 And Sarah said: 'God hath made laughter for me; every one that heareth will laugh on account of me.'

ז וַתֹּאמֶר, מִי מָלֵל לְאַבְרָהָם, הֲיִנִּיקָה בָנִים,
שָׂרָה: כִּי-יִלְדֹתִי בֹו, לְזִקְנִי.

7 And she said: 'Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should give children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age.'

ח וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד, וַיִּנְמַל; וַיַּעַשׂ אַבְרָהָם מְשֻׁפָּה
גָּדוֹל, בְּיוֹם הַנְּמִל אֶת-יִצְחָק.

8 And the child grew, and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.

ט וַתִּרְאֵה שָׂרָה אֶת-בֶּן-הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית, אֲשֶׁר-יִלְדָה
לְאַבְרָהָם--מִצְחָק.

9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne unto Abraham, making sport.

י וַתֹּאמֶר, לְאַבְרָהָם, גֵּרֶשׁ הָאִמָּה הַזֹּאת, וְאֶת-
בְּנָהּ: כִּי לֹא יִירָשׁ בֶּן-הָאִמָּה הַזֹּאת,
עִם-בְּנֵי עַם-יִצְחָק.

10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham: 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.'

יא וַיֵּרַע הַדָּבָר מְאֹד, בְּעֵינֵי אַבְרָהָם, עַל, אֹדֹת בְּנוֹ.

11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight on account of his son.

יב וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-אַבְרָהָם, אַל-יִרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ
עַל-הַנֶּעֱר וְעַל-אִמָּתְךָ--כָּל אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵלֶיךָ
שָׂרָה, שִׁמְעָה בְּקוֹלָהּ: כִּי בְיִצְחָק, יִקְרָא לְךָ זֶרַע.

12 And God said unto Abraham: 'Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall seed be called to thee.'

יג וְגַם אֶת-בֶּן-הָאִמָּה, לְגוֹי אֲשִׁימָנּוּ:
כִּי זֶרַעָהּ, הוּא.

13 And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.'

IV. The connection to "brit Milah" & Breishit chapter 17

Note the "brit" of "brit Milah" in 17:7-8

Note the word "moed" in 17:21-22 as well 18:14 - Relate to 21:2!

God's Names in the first nine chapters of Breishit

1 – Elokim

2 - 4 Hashem Elokim

5 – Elokim

6-> 9 a mixture of Hashem & Elokim - /very complicated

9 - brit Milah [the last time Elokim speaks until chapter 17 !]

10 thru 16 no mention of Elokim !

17 - brit Milah - b'shem Elokim

18-19 primarily Hashem [Elokim towards the end of chapter 19

20-22 - mixture of both Names

Note connection between Elokim and zikaron

Brit keshet - see 9:14-17 / see also 19:29

וְהָיְתָה הַקֶּשֶׁת בַּעֲנָן וּרְאִיתִיהָ לְזִכָּר בְּרִית עוֹלָם בֵּין אֱלֹהִים וּבֵין כָּל נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה בְּכֹל בֶּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר עַל הָאָרֶץ - ט"ט:ט
וַיְהִי בְשַׁחַת אֱלֹהִים אֶת עָרֵי הַכְּבֹד וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת אֲבֹרָהֶם וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת לוֹט מִתּוֹךְ הַהֶפְכָּה בַּהֲפֹךְ אֶת הָעָרִים
אֲשֶׁר יָשָׁב בָּהֶן לוֹט). בראשית י"ט:כ"ט

V. Review : Discussion – Prophetic purpose of Sefer Breishit & how it relates to the theme of "malchiot"

Note the two sections of the book : Universal/ Particular

First 11 chapters setting the stage for the primary story

UNIVERSAL

- 1 - Creation -----establishing one Creator of nature & man (in God's image)
 - 2-3 Gan Eden
 - 4 Kayin & Hevel
 - 5-9 The Flood
 - 10 Dispersion of 70 nations
 - 11 Tower of Babel
- God is consistently upset with man's behaviour
and reacts to man's deeds

PARTICULAR

- 11 Genealogy of Shem to Terach
 - 12-24 Stories re: Abraham
 - 25-27 Stories re: Yitzchak
 - 28-35 Stories re: Yaakov
 - 36 Genealogy of Esav
 - 37-50 Story of Yosef & his brothers
- God chooses a Nation
& establishes an eternal covenant