

Foundations of
Torah

FOR ADULTS

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What Are Torah Portions?

What is a “Torah Portion”? As one Sabbath-keeping organization explains,

When God brought restoration and returned the Israelites from captivity [in Babylon], Ezra and Nehemiah and the men of their generation set to work creating a system to encourage Torah study. They wanted to ensure that the people would not slip into idolatry again. They created a system for the synagogue to ensure that the people heard the Torah read every week.

To this day, the Jewish world studies a portion of the Torah every Sabbath. Jews read the Torah aloud in synagogues on Sabbaths, Mondays and Thursdays. Monday and Thursday were the ancient market days when rural people came into town. At this time, they also had the opportunity to hear the Word of God. On Sabbath days, the people assembled according to the commandment.

Since the days of the Apostles, the Torah continues to be read every week in the same manner. An annual lectionary, the Torah reading cycle, allows all Israel to study the same passages of Scripture simultaneously as they work through the Torah from week to week. The lectionary divides the Torah into 2-6 chapter readings for each week. Corresponding readings from the Prophets are tacked onto the weekly Torah readings. The reading cycle begins in the fall, after the Feast of Tabernacles, with Genesis 1:1. Approximately twelve months later, it concludes with the last verses of the book of Deuteronomy.

Reading along with the weekly Torah readings is a great way to study through the Torah every year. When you do, you are studying in synchronization with all Israel. Synagogues, study halls, and Messianic congregations all over the world will be examining the same passages of Scripture along with you.

In each of the weekly readings, the portions (Hebrew: *parashot*) are named after the first word or distinctive phrase in the passage. In the days of the Apostles, the Bible was not divided into chapters and verses. People indicated different scripture passages by referring to the first Hebrew word or phrase of the passage. If a rabbi said, “In the place where it says, ‘After the death of Aaron’s two sons...’” he would be referring to parashat *Acharei Mot*, Leviticus 16:1-18:30. *Acharei Mot* means “after the death of.” In the same way, each portion (*parasha*) of Torah is named after its opening words, and each book of the Torah is named after its opening *parasha*.¹

¹ <https://torahportions.ffoz.org/info/about.html>

On the last day of each week, your journal references a *Haftarah* portion. What is this?

The most common explanation is that in 168 BCE, when the Jews were under the rule of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (of Chanukah infamy), they were forbidden to read from the Torah. The decree, however, was limited to the Five Books of Moses, so the sages instituted that a section of the Prophets be read instead, usually an idea that was related to the Torah reading that should have been read that week. This custom stuck even after it became safe to read from the Torah again.²

It sounds very complicated the first time we learn about it, because we are accustomed to English Bibles divided into chapters and verses. We are accustomed to pastors who teach topical sermons and skip around the Bible, from Old Testament to New Testament, basing their sermons on whatever needs they feel their congregation has.

The Torah and Haftarah Portions ensure that all believers will hear the entire Torah read each year. Most Messianic congregations (congregations who believe that Yeshua of Nazareth is the Messiah of Israel) will make a special effort to include the teachings of the Apostles (the New Testament) in their reading and study schedule as well.

“For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath” (Acts 15:21).

The Apostles were convinced that new Gentile believers would be attending synagogue each Sabbath day and would therefore hear the written Torah of Moses read and explained. They knew that all the rest of God’s commands would be learned week by week, slowly, in a way that wouldn’t be overwhelming.

Reading the Torah is going “back to basics.” This is true discipleship! As we read, chapter by chapter, through the first five books of the Bible, we can very naturally ask questions and learn how to apply the commands of God to our lives. Ideally, we can learn in a group environment, new believers with mature “old folks” who have been walking this road for a while.

If you’re new, there is nothing to worry about. Just by attending a congregation where the Torah is read each week, in a year you’ll know more than most people who have attended church for years.

If you take the time to read through each Torah portion at home throughout the week before Sabbath, you’ll be extremely well taught.

² https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/593314/jewish/When-and-Why-We-Started-Reading-the-Haftarah.htm

If you take the time to also read the “Writings and Prophets,” which is the rest of the Old Testament, you’ll become firmly grounded in Scripture and won’t be as easily deceived by false teaching.

If you take the time to also read the Apostolic Scriptures, you’ll understand how to apply your understanding of God’s Law to your need for a Savior, and you’ll be taught the most common things Gentiles need to learn.

The original discipleship method is easy and effective!

“You must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Messiah Yeshua.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine [teaching], for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Resources:

You can learn more at <http://www.torahcalendar.com/PARASHAH.asp>.

The schedule we use yearly is posted at our own congregation’s website, Solel Sabbath Fellowship at <https://SolelSabbathFellowship.com>. (Click the menu at the top and navigate to “Downloads.”) This schedule is based upon <https://www.hebcal.com/sedrot/>.

If you have no local congregation and would like to download additional Torah-portion study guides to use in weekly study with others, we recommend <http://restorationoftorah.org> or <http://www.hoshanarabbah.org>.

How to Use This Journal:

It is essential to establish a daily Bible-ready time, which is why this journal includes five daily Bible reading portions. You may want to write out the answers to the study questions in a separate journal. If you are unsure of an answer, we recommend discussing it with wise leadership at your local congregation (or those you've found who fit the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3).

You can practice Hebrew by copying the name of the Torah portion each week. You will remember what the portion is about if you'll write a 3-4 sentence summary at the end of each week.

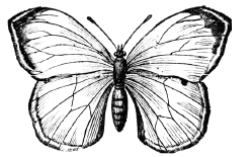
Keep track of how the Father is working in your life by writing down prayer requests and how He answers.

B'reisheet | "In the Beginning"
 Genesis 1:1 - 6:8

Copy the Hebrew letters:
 בְּרֵאשִׁית

Daily Readings:
 Genesis 1:1 – 2:3
 Genesis 2:4 – 3:24
 Genesis 4
 Genesis 5:1 – 6:8

Haftarah:
 Isaiah 42:5 – 43:10



Summary of B'reisheet:

Answers to Prayer:	Prayer Requests:

Study Questions:

Day 1 – Genesis 1:1-2:3

- According to Genesis 1:3, how did הָאֱלֹהִים create the world? Look up John 1:1-3, 9-10 and Hebrews 11:3. How did God create the world?
- Discuss some ways that we are made in the image of God. (See Genesis 1:27.) You may also wish to read Genesis 5:2, Psalm 8:1-9, and 1 Corinthians 11:7.
- Using a Strong's concordance, look up the words "ended" and "rested" in Genesis 2:2. What do these words mean in Hebrew? Why did God cease from His labor? (Note: We will frequently use a Strong's concordance in this curriculum. You may wish to use <http://blueletterbible.org> online.)

Day 2 – Genesis 2:4-3:24

- Look up the Hebrew meaning of the name "Adam." (See Genesis 2:19-20.)
- Look up the Hebrew meaning of the name "Eve." (See Genesis 3:20.)
- According to Genesis 1:26-30 and Genesis 2:15, what was man's job?
- One way the serpent tempted Eve was to cause her to doubt what God really said. (See Genesis 3:1.) Look up three kinds of temptation listed in 1 John 2:16. How did Yeshua defeat temptation in Matthew 4:4, 7, and 10? You might also wish to read Ephesians 6:10-18.

Day 3 – Genesis 4

- Why do you think הָאֱלֹהִים would not accept Cain's sacrifice? Read Hebrews 11:4.
- Name some inventions and first things that are listed in Genesis 4. For instance, the first city (verse 17), the first music (verse 21), etc.
- Read Genesis 4:26. What do you think it means to "call upon the name of הָאֱלֹהִים"?

Day 4 – Genesis 5:1-6:8

- Look up the meanings of the names listed in chapter 5. What do these tell you about what the world was like at this time?
- What does it mean to "walk with God"? (See Genesis 5:24. Compare to Genesis 6:9 and Genesis 17:1.)
- What does it mean that Noah "found grace in the eyes of הָאֱלֹהִים"? (See Genesis 6:8.) Read Hebrews 11:6-7.

Day 5 – Isaiah 42:5-43:10

- The "Haftarah" was compiled during the time of the Maccabees, when the Greek government over Judah would not allow the Jews to read from the Torah. Righteous men compiled a *Haftarah* schedule of passages outside the Torah that would help them remember what each Torah portion was about. Can you find the similarities between this week's Torah and Haftarah portions?
- As you read today, name some specific things which הָאֱלֹהִים ceased.

Note on Sacred Names:

We use the Hebrew letters throughout this book to refer to the Creator of the Universe, our Heavenly Father. His name in Hebrew is spelled יהוה. In your English Bible, His name is translated as “the LORD.” Common pronunciations are “Ye-ho-VAH” or “YAH-way.” Some earlier English translations of the Bible wrote His Name as Jehovah.

We also refer to Jesus by His Hebrew name *Yeshua* (pronounced “ye-SHOO-ah”). His name in Hebrew means “יהוה saves” (Matthew 1:21).

We often use the word *Messiah* in place of the word Christ. Both mean “anointed one” and refer to the prophesied King and redeemer of Israel.

The Golden Rule of Interpretation:

“When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate otherwise.”

— D.L. Cooper

B' reishet | "In the Beginning"

Genesis 1:1 - 6:8

Copy the Hebrew letters:

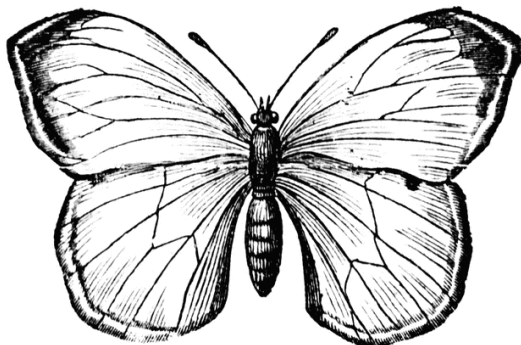
בְּרֵאשִׁית

Daily Readings:

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- Genesis 2:4 – 3:24
- Genesis 4
- Genesis 5:1 – 6:8

Haftarah:

- Isaiah 42:5 – 43:10



Summary of B'reisheet:

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1. According to Genesis 1:3, how did אֱלֹהִים create the world?
Look up John 1:1-3, 9-10 and Hebrews 11:3. How did God create the world?
2. Discuss some ways that we are made in the image of God. (See Genesis 1:27.) You may also wish to read Genesis 5:2, Psalm 8:1-9, and 1 Corinthians 11:7.
3. Using a Strong's concordance, look up the words "ended" and "rested" in Genesis 2:2. What do these words mean in Hebrew? Why did God cease from His labor? (Note: We will frequently use a Strong's concordance in this curriculum. You may wish to use <http://blueletterbible.org> online.)

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2. Look up the Hebrew meaning of the name "Eve." (See Genesis 3:20.)
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1. Look up the meanings of the names listed in chapter 5. What do these tell you about what the world was like at this time?
2. What does it mean to "walk with God"? (See Genesis 5:24. Compare to Genesis 6:9 and Genesis 17:1.)
3. What does it mean that Noah "found grace in the eyes of אֱלֹהִים"? (See Genesis 6:8.) Read Hebrews 11:6-7.

Day 5 – Isaiah 42:5-43:10

1. The "Haftarah" was compiled during the time of the Maccabees, when the Greek government over Judah would not allow the Jews to read from the Torah. Righteous men compiled a *haftarah* schedule of passages outside the Torah that would help them remember what each Torah portion was about. Can you find the similarities between this week's Torah and Haftarah portions?
2. As you read today, name some specific things which אֱלֹהִים created.

Memory Verse:

With pen in hand, illustrate this Scripture verse to help you visualize its meaning. While you draw, you can meditate on God's Word and memorize the text.

By faith, we understand that the universe has been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not been made out of things which are visible. Hebrews 11:3

What did you learn?

This Week's Memory Verse: Hebrews 11:3 (WEB) – “By faith, we understand that the universe has been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not been made out of things which are visible.”
What error should I avoid?
What example should I follow?
What promises are given?
What commands did I learn?
How does this passage point to the Messiah?
What do I need most to apply to my life today?

Noach | “Noah”

Genesis 6:9 – 11:32

Copy the Hebrew letters:

נח

Daily Readings:

- Genesis 6:9-8:22
- Genesis 9
- Genesis 10
- Genesis 11

Haftarah:

- Isaiah 66:1-24



Summary of Noach:

Answers to Prayer:

Prayer Requests:

Study Questions:

Day 1 – Genesis 6:9-8:22

1. How was Noah described in Genesis 6:9? What was written about Noah in Genesis 6:22 and 7:5?
2. How many of each animal went into the ark (see Genesis 7:2-3)? How do you think Noah knew which animals were clean and which were unclean? What did Noah do with some of the clean animals in Genesis 8:20?

Day 2 – Genesis 9

1. Why do you think הָיָה allowed Noah and his sons to eat meat after the flood?
2. People often say that Genesis 9:5-6 is the first time man was given the right to rule over other men. What things were men allowed to do to other men?
3. What command was given in Genesis 9:7? Do you remember when this command was first given?
4. What covenant did God make with Noah? What was the sign of His covenant?
5. What warnings does God give us about wine in Proverbs 23:20-21, 29-35?

Day 3 – Genesis 10

1. Read Deuteronomy 32:8. What did God do to the nations and the sons of Adam?
2. Traditionally, it is said that 70 nations are represented in this chapter. Would you like to try to count them?

Day 4 – Genesis 11

1. Where is Shinar? See <https://answersingenesis.org/tower-of-babel/where-in-the-world-is-the-tower-of-babel>
2. Who is the author of human language? What did הָיָה do to languages at Babel, and why?
3. What does the word “Babel” mean? (Look it up in a dictionary or a Strong’s concordance.) Compare this to the word “confound” in Genesis 11:9.

Day 5 – Isaiah 66:1-24

1. Compare Genesis 6:5 to Isaiah 66:17-18.
2. What are some of the nations mentioned in this chapter?

Memory Verse:

With pen in hand, illustrate this Scripture verse to help you visualize its meaning. While you draw, you can meditate on God's Word and memorize the text.

Indeed, he says,
“It is too light a thing
that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
and to restore the preserved of Israel?
I will also give you
as a light to the nations,
that you may be my salvation
to the end of the earth.”

Isaiah 49:6

What did you learn?

This Week's Memory Verse: Isaiah 49:6 (WEB) – Indeed, he says, “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel? I will also give you as a light to the nations, that you may be my salvation to the end of the earth.”
What error should I avoid?
What example should I follow?
What promises are given?
What commands did I learn?
How does this passage point to the Messiah?
What do I need most to apply to my life today?