

# BACK TO THE BEGINNING

*by Torah.org*

When I finish a book, I most often have little desire to read it again. I even feel somewhat relieved that I've made it through the few hundred pages, even if I enjoyed the journey. It is rare to find a book so rich with ideas or intriguing characters that I might want to read through it again, at least quickly, to remind myself of the storyline and message.

This week we turn back to the beginning of Genesis, starting the story of the Torah once again. And unlike other books, this one I look forward to starting again each time. After a year of life experience and Torah study, I'm excited to go back with fresh eyes, asking new questions and appreciating the infinite nuances of the text and its classic commentaries.

Jewish tradition aligns the cycle of the Torah readings with that of the Jewish calendar year. While we are now almost a full month into the year, the succession of the High Holy Days and the Sukkos holiday form an extended holiday season, an initiation of sorts for the new year. It is now, after that season, that the year is truly underway.

This new period of time is reflected in the opening words of the Torah: "In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth. And the earth..." G-d created the heavens, prepared the world to come for us, and then He created the physical world. The heavens are only mentioned once, and the rest of the Torah continues with the story of the earth, the world of practical life. The Creation of the heavens was only the preparation. Our mission on earth is to live productively and meaningfully, so we can earn a place for eternity in the next world.

This week we start Genesis again, and we start living our lives again. May our past experiences and the inspiration we gained from the High Holy Day season lead to meaningful growth for all of us in the new year.