

# SHABBOS BEREISHIS -- BRIDGE

*by Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann*

Hopefully, the Days of Awe were a time of inspiration and encouragement. Between the fear of Rosh Hashanah, the purity of Yom Kippur, the simchah of Sukkos, and the celebration of Simchas Torah, it is almost impossible not to get some kind of a boost.

All of a sudden, the chazzan was once-again chanting the familiar "Ve-Hu Rachum...", we all went home, and it was all over. Shacharis the next morning, for the first time in more than a month, seemed to just fly by. Back to work, to school, and to routine. No more days full of yiddishkeit: festive se'udos, joyous mitzvos, and inspiring song. One can't help but feel a certain void.

In the era of Moshiach, all our days will be spent immersed in Torah, joyous celebration, and mitzvos. But until Hashem, in his infinite wisdom, decides the time has come, we are bound by the curse that was placed upon the World's ancestors, Adam and Chavah: "By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread, until you return to the ground from which you were taken. (3:19)" Still, there must be some way of bringing at least a little of the kedushah (holiness) of the Yamim Tovim into our everyday lives.

This is the function of Shabbos Bereishis. Although Shabbos Bereishis is the first parshah of the new year, and the beginning of a fresh cycle, it remains connected to the Holy Days just past. Shabbos Bereishis is usually the last Shabbos in the month of Tishrei. As such, it is a bridge between the elevated times of the 'spiritual season,' and the mundane days that lie ahead as the winter peeks out from around the corner.

For this reason, many people have the custom to continue eating round challas, whose roundness symbolizes the returning path of the penitent, straight through Shabbos Bereishis. Some Jews even dip their challah in honey on this Shabbos. Jewish customs come from very holy sources, and in the words of Chazal, our sages, are to be given the same importance as the laws of the Torah. So if many Jews have a custom of conducting themselves on Shabbos Bereishis in the same manner as during the Holy Days, there is a genuine relationship between the times.

Sefarim explain that the reason the Days of Judgement begin on Rosh HaShanah is because it is the "anniversary of creation." Creation in fact began on the 25th of Elul, but its centre-point and principle focus was the creation of man, who was created on Rosh HaShanah.

In Jewish literature, however, we find that to every creation and every occurrence there are two parts: thought and deed. Thought is the potential creation, the dormant conception of the final

product. Deed is when it becomes actuality; a tangible event.

Rosh HaShanah is the anniversary of the creation of man in deed. His conceptual anniversary, however, is in parshas Bereishis.

The Torah existed, to the extent we can understand it, two-thousand years before the creation of the world (Bereishis Rabbah 8:2). Hashem, "gazed into the Torah and created the world." It was the "blueprint of creation." To the extent we can express it, the Torah was the thought of Hashem before the deed. Thus, this week, when we read parshas Bereishis, it is a commemoration of the creation of the world, and most importantly man, in the indescribable and unfathomable thought of Hashem. If so, the connection of Shabbos Bereishis to the Holy Days just past is not just because of their proximity, but because of a deep inner-similarity of purpose, to remind us of Creation and its purpose, and to evaluate how we, as objects of His Creation, are fulfilling our roles in this world.

This Shabbos, in a way, is one last chance for anyone who feels he still needed more time to do teshuvah... that the Days of Awe passed-by too quickly... and now they're gone. To him Shabbos Bereishis says: It's not too late! There's still time to repent, to change, to start anew, and to erase any adverse judgement that may have been rendered against you by the Heavenly Court.

And it's more. It's a bridge which can connect the earthly days now upon us with the holy days just gone by. Shabbos Bereishis can bind the spiritual sensitivity of the Yamim Noraim to our day-to-day lives. If so, it's ideal, and imperative, that we honour this Shabbos not only with good foods and fine clothing, but also with warm, heart-felt tefilos, self- reflection, and Torah study.

*Have a good Shabbos.* Text Copyright © 2006 by [Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann](#) and **[Torah.org](#)**