

GATHER THE PEOPLE

Torah-Based Community Organizing and Development

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FAMILY SIDDUR STUDY: LESSON PLAN 20

IN THIS SESSION WE'RE GOING TO CONTINUE STUDYING THE FRIDAY NIGHT עֵמֶדָה.

- We're at וַיִּכְלּוּ on page 36, which is the first word in the second Hebrew paragraph.
- Someone please read the first five words of וַיִּכְלּוּ in Hebrew at the beginning of that paragraph: וַיִּכְלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צְבָאָם.
- I'm not going to ask you to read the English, because the translation is not ideal.
- I suggest that the translation should read:
 1. וַיִּכְלּוּ—they were finished
 2. הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ—the heaven and the earth
 3. וְכָל-צְבָאָם—and all . . . well, this is the part that's tricky to translate.
- Usually צְבָאָם is translated as “legion” or “host,” and sometimes as “army.”
- ***Does anyone know what a legion or host is?***
- Maybe the place to begin is to look for the שׁוֹרֵשׁ of the word that tell us its basic meaning.
- ***What do you think those three letters of צְבָאָם might be?***
- The root letters are: צ-ב-א, which means “a group that's *acting together with a leader.*”
- So the first five words of the prayer say: “They were finished, the heaven and the earth, and all those acting together with God as the leader.”

WHO OR WHAT MIGHT BE INCLUDED IN THE צְבָאָם, THE GROUP THAT GOD CREATED WHOSE MEMBERS WERE ALL ACTING TOGETHER WITH GOD LEADING THEM?

- Here's a hint: this prayer is about the seventh day—it's taken from the first book of the Torah—when God rested after creating everything.
- ***Do the galaxies and their stars and planets all act together with God as their leader?***
 1. *How do they know what to do?*
 2. *Do they have to think about it?*

- ***Do the animals act together with God as their leader?***
 1. ***How do they know what to do?***
 2. ***Do they have to think about everything to know what to do?***
- ***Do we human beings act together with God as our leader?***
 1. ***How do we know what to do?***
 2. ***Are we like planets and dogs?***
 3. ***Does each one of us individually have to figure out what kind of person we want to be and what we're going to do?***
- No and yes.
 1. No, because the Torah tells us what kind of people to be.
 2. Yes, because unlike planets and dogs, we get to decide for ourselves if we're going to be a part of God's group and follow God as our leader—we have free will, unlike dogs and planets

SOMEONE PLEASE READ THE NEXT 14 WORDS IN HEBREW FOR US, BEGINNING WITH וַיְכַל AND STOPPING AT עָשָׂה.

- וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִלְאֲכָתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל-מִלְאֲכָתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
- I'm going to translate the sentence for you.
 1. וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים—And God, He finished
 2. בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי—on the seventh day
 3. מִלְאֲכָתּוֹ—his work
 4. אֲשֶׁר—that
 5. עָשָׂה—He had done
 6. וַיִּשְׁבֹּת—and he stopped (or ceased)
 7. בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי—on the seventh day
 8. מִכָּל—from all
 9. מִלְאֲכָתּוֹ—his work
 10. אֲשֶׁר—that
 11. עָשָׂה —He had done.
- So if we read all the words together as a sentence, it says: “God finished on the seventh day His work that He had done, and He stopped on the seventh day from all His work that he had done.”
- God finished creating *everything* and stopped creating.
- One of the things that's important here is that instead of celebrating the day that God *started* the Creation, we celebrate the day He finished and *stopped* the Creation—שָׁבַת!

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT GOD STOPPED THE CREATION?

- ***Does anyone have an idea why that would be important?***
- Let's see if I can explain it to you.

- Suppose you created something and sent it off into space, like a balloon.
- ***Once you set it off, can you get it back or control it?***
- Now our God could not only start the Creation but could stop it too.
- Once the whole Creation was complete, on the seventh day, God stopped it—and all the laws that govern the Creation, like gravity, were fixed.
- ***So when the Creation was finished—billions of years ago—if you jumped into deep water and didn't move your arms and legs, what do you think would happen?***
- ***What do you think would happen if you did that today?***
- ***Does anyone know what causes us to drown if we don't move our arms and legs?***
- So when God stopped the Creation, there was gravity—and gravity is the same now as it was then.

GOD HAS WHAT WE CALL “FREE WILL.”

- He could *choose* to let the Creation go on, so that new forces like gravity were continually created.
- Or God could *stop* the Creation—which God did.
- ***Does anyone have any idea why God's stopping the Creation is important for us human beings?***
- Since we were created in the *image of God*, we too have free will.
- That means that on the seventh day we can *choose* to continue creating like we do all week or, like God, we too can stop and rest on the seventh day.
- ***What do we call the seventh day—and what does that word mean?***