

Torah Portion for B'reishit

Shabbat beginning October 21, 2022

We know B'reishit Chapters 1-4: God creates in six days, rests on the seventh, molds Eve from Adams rib, who succumbing to a serpent, eats from the tree of knowledge. Then Cain the grower kills Abel the shepherd over jealousy that God preferred animal sacrifice. The rest of B'reishit has less-known stories. Five generations after Cain, Lamech fathers Jabel the tent dweller, Jubal the lyre and flute player, and Tubal-Cain the smith. Next, generations live nearly a millennium before God limits lifespans to 120. The portion ends with divine giants mating with women to bear heroes, God regretting the creation of humans, but Noah finding favor.

After telling (in *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*) of three authors of these stories, Tamara Eskenazi gives us a framework for their oft-retold ideas. "A careful reading of Genesis offers insights into how ancient Israel constructed its identity at different points in its history." First, God created men and women. Next, God made Eve from Adam's rib and later punished them for eating from the tree of knowledge. Finally, diverse ways of living emerged but conflict between sinfulness and Godliness remained, showing how getting from one to the next is an eternal challenge.