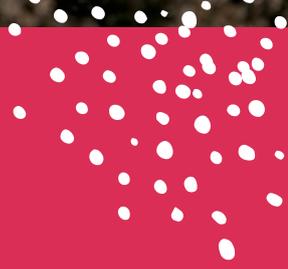




BEGINNINGS

Rosh Hashanah Classroom





Teachers: Please remember that since these text studies are made with foster care and adoption themes in mind, these sessions could be particularly sensitive for kids in non-birth families. Our hope is that kids who are impacted by foster care and adoption will see their lives reflected as authentically Jewish experiences. That said, if fostered or adopted youth want to share any connections to their own lives, that is fine, but it's important not to create an expectation that any particular children do so.



Creation of the World and New Beginnings

Rosh Hashanah is referred to as “The Birthday of the World.” The following texts focus on the first moments of creation as recorded in the biblical book of Genesis.

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ:

This first verse in the Torah is widely understood in Jewish thought to signal the beginning of existence as we know it.

- Describe a time when you began something.
 - What were some of the feelings that went along with this experience?

Jewish tradition teaches that God created the universe *ex nihilo*, from nothing.

- Can you think of a time when it felt as though you were starting “from nothing?”
 - Was it exciting? Exhilarating? Intimidating? Overwhelming?
 - Do you think we ever have a new beginning? Or do we always carry our pasts with us? Or both?





Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, a leader of the Chasidic movement in Judaism understood the first verse in the Torah differently:

B'reshith can be understood bet reishit there are two beginnings...

עוד יבואר בראשית ב' ראשית...

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak teaches that B'reishit can be understood as bet reishit, "There are two beginnings." The first beginning is what God made. The second beginning is how we develop and interact with what God made. God creates language and we form it into prayer. God creates sound and we form it into the blasts of the shofar.



- **Can you think of an aspect of your life that involved two—or more— beginnings?**
 - Maybe each new school year feels like a new beginning?
 - How does it feel to start again?
 - In every relationship there are moments of connection and moments of growth with new kinds of connection.
 - Was the second beginning like the first? Different?
 - Was it good? Hard? Exciting? Scary? Bad? Some or all those things at once? Something else?
- **Name a time when a second beginning would be a negative thing. Why do you think so?**
- **Name a time when a second beginning would be a positive thing. Why do you think so?**



Brokenness is Inherent in Creation, Our Responsibility as Repairers of the World

Text Study and Reflection for 7th-12th grades
Genesis 1:6-8, Genesis Rabbah 5:4,
Deuteronomy 24:19-22, Exodus 22:21-23,

Genesis 1:6-8

God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water." God made the expanse, and it separated the water which was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse. And it was so. God called the expanse Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי רָקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהִי מַבְדִּיל בֵּין מַיִם
לְמַיִם: (ז) וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַרָקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר־
מִתַּחַת לַרָקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לַרָקִיעַ וַיְהִי־כֵן: (ח) וַיִּקְרָא
אֱלֹהִים לַרָקִיעַ שָׁמַיִם וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם שֵׁנִי:



Genesis Rabbah 5:4

Rabbi Berechiah said: The lower waters did not separate from the upper waters without weeping. They called out, "Woe to us that we were separated from our Creator".

אמר רבי ברכיה, לא פרשו המים
המתחתונים מן העליונים אלא בבכי



In the text above, the waters must be separated in order for the earth to emerge. Separation is a natural part of growing up -children separate from their parents as they move from childhood to adulthood.

- When children are young, parents or caregivers make most of the decisions: what they eat, what they wear, where they go, who they spend time with, etc. As children get older, they make some of these decisions for themselves.
 - In what ways are you differentiating or separating yourself from parents?
 - How does the relationship change over time?
- Even when it's natural and important, sometimes this separation process is painful or difficult for parents and teens.
 - Does it make you feel better to know that separation is understood in our tradition as inherent to creation and necessary for growth? Why or why not?

Musician Leonard Cohen (known for his composition, Hallelujah) wrote, "There's a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in." What does that mean to you?

D'var Acher- Another Thing: Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, another Chasidic leader, is credited as having said: "The day you were born is the day God decided that the world couldn't exist without you.



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- "Do you believe that this is true? Why or why not?
 - Would knowing this make you feel better on a bad day?
 - Do you think that there are some times in life that it is more important to remember this?
 - Why or why not?





Our community can be a place in which fostering and adoption are a norm. Whether you want to foster, adopt, or be part of our community support system, there is a role for you.

- Our community can be a place in which fostering and adoption are a norm. Whether you want to foster, adopt, or be part of our community support system, there is a role for you
- Families are supported before, during, and after the licensing and adoption processes
- Foster and adopted children have peers in our community with similar backgrounds
- The values of foster and adoption are integrated into our community culture
- Our whole community wraps around the families in support as they become foster and adoptive parents
- We partner with the best and most well-aligned local social service partners
- We are all enriched—both by our new, young members and our growing capacity as a synagogue to support our foster and adoptive families



Second Nurture creates a community within our community — and expands our vision of what family and belonging truly mean.
- Cohort Member