

October 13, 2012

Bereshit (Genesis 1:1-6:8)

We looked at the opening verses of Genesis in several different contexts. The historical context tied the Hebrew creation story to a previous, Egyptian, creation story from which parts of it appear to have been drawn and altered to fit the monotheistic world-view. It was remarked that we don't have to wait for Exodus to arrive at one of the basic stories of Judaism. By separating our creation story from the Egyptian story, we Jews moved out of Egypt right from the very beginning.

In a spiritual context, we looked at rabbinic commentary which tied the beginning of the Torah to the end of the Torah, giving us an interpretation of the Torah as a single entity, a representation of wholeness and perfection.

And in a philosophical context, we looked at a question which the ancients seem to have thought about more often and in more depth than we do ourselves: *Why is there something rather than nothing?* Human existence is precarious, and if one of the many laws governing the creation of the physical universe had varied in any way, life might not have arisen at all.

Because so much of what we studied, looking at this portion, can only be characterized under the heading of "mystery," we spoke about our responses to the whole notion of mystery and its place in our lives.