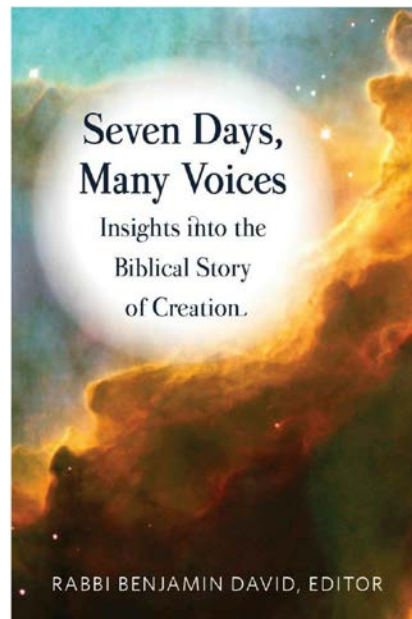


Seven Days, Many Voices: Insights into the Biblical Story of Creation



Editor: Rabbi Benjamin David

Study Guide by Hilly Haber, with Andrue Kahn

ccarpress.org

This study guide is divided into two sections:

- [Organized by Study Tracks](#)
- [Study Questions by Chapter](#)

Study Tracks

Track	Notes
<u>Justice</u>	Intended for audiences interested in investigating the relationship between human justice, divine justice, and the natural world.
<u>Sacred Time</u>	Intended for audiences interested in investigating the way in which time influences life and nature in Judaism and beyond.
<u>Sacred Space</u>	Intended for audiences interested in investigating the relevance of space in Judaism.
<u>The Environment</u>	Intended for audiences interested in investigating contemporary environmental issues through a Jewish lens.
<u>Food Ethics</u>	Intended for audiences interested in investigating the relationship between Judaism, food, and nature.
<u>Theology</u>	Intended for audiences interested in investigating the many different understandings of divine creation in Judaism.
<u>Gender and Sexuality</u>	Intended for audiences interested in investigating diverse approaches to understanding the relationship between gender, sexuality, and nature.
<u>Science and Judaism</u>	Intended for audiences interested in investigating the relationship between nature, science, and Judaism.
<u>Rethinking Jewish Observance</u>	Intended for audiences interested in creative ways of renewing Jewish observance in relationship to the natural world.
<u>Shabbat</u>	Intended for audiences interested in diversifying their understanding of the meaning, role, and idea of Shabbat.

Justice

Chapter 1: Cosmic Disorder, by Rabbi Oren J. Hayon

Chapter 11: Water Conservation as Biblical Imperative, by Rabbi Kevin M. Kleinman

Chapter 14: The Jewish Imperative of Healing the Land, by Alex Cicelsky

Chapter 17: The Third Day and Our Oceans, by Liya Rechtman

Chapter 18: From the Third Day to the Song of Songs: The Eco-Torah of an Indigenous People, by Rabbi Arthur Waskow

Chapter 25: Global Swarming: Can We Become Worthy of Creation?, by Rabbi Matthew Soffer

Chapter 27: The Animal Kingdom, by Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz

Chapter 34: Created in God's Image: Protecting Even the Least Deserving of Protection, by Rabbi Jill Jacobs

Chapter 36: Paradise on Earth, by Dr. Rachel Havrelock

Chapter 41: Shabbat and Social Justice, by Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner

Chapter 42: Shabbat and Workers' Rights, by Rabbi Ellen Lippmann

1. How does your impulse to act justly in the world intersect with your Jewish identity? Do your ethical principles come from Jewish tradition? If so, which texts or thinkers have been most influential to you? If not, where else do you draw inspiration and wisdom from when it comes to justice work?
2. In many ways, the story of Creation provides a blueprint for just and righteous action in this world. In what ways do you draw moral and ethical values from the story of Creation? How do questions and issues of justice inform your Jewish identity?
3. Which days and aspects of the Creation story inspire or call you to action today? In what ways does the Creation story fall short, in your opinion, when it comes to justice work?

Sacred Time

Chapter 2: Creation; Responsibility, Blessing, and Sanctity, by Rabbi Dr. Yehoyada Amir

Chapter 4: Creating Worlds One Day at a Time, by Cantor Amanda Kleinman

Chapter 12: What If? The Sacred Potential of Water, by Shaina Herring and Rabbi Sara Luria

Chapter 19: If Not Now, Why? Celebrating Festivals at Their Set Times, by Rabbi Jill L. Maderer

Chapter 21: The Physics of Jewish Time and the Fourth Day of Creation, by Loui Dobin

Chapter 22: Diaspora Time, by Rabbi Michael G. Holzman

Chapter 23: Separate, Mark, and Season—Just Don't Yawn: The Lesson of the Fourth Day of Creation,
by Rabbi Edwin Cole Goldberg, DHL

Chapter 24: Music and the Punctuation of Time, by Cantor Ellen Dreskin

Chapter 37: What a Group of Cloistered Nuns Taught Me about Shabbat, by Rabbi Shoshanah Conover

Chapter 38: Determining the Path Ourselves: What Might Shabbat Look Like for Us?, by Rabbi Jack P.
Paskoff

Chapter 39: The Loneliness of Time: What We Can Learn from That First Shabbat, by Rabbi Richard F.
Address

Chapter 40: Shabbat and Parenting, by Rabbi Benjamin David

Chapter 41: Shabbat and Social Justice, by Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner

Chapter 42: Shabbat and Workers' Rights, by Rabbi Ellen Lippmann

1. Much of the Creation story is dedicated to narrating the ways in which God first created and marked time in the world. In what ways do you separate and organize events in order to mark sacred time in your life?
2. The entrance to sacred time is often sanctified through ritual. Which rituals do you practice in your own life to make time special or to create boundaries from moment to moment? If you were to create a ritual to mark sacred time in your life based on the Creation narrative, what would it look like?
3. The story of Creation provides a foundation with which to connect with the present, past, and future. If you were to envision a better future for the world, would you ground in the story of Creation? Would you change certain aspects of our beginning in order to reach new ends?

Sacred Space

Chapter 2: Creation; Responsibility, Blessing, and Sanctity, by Rabbi Dr. Yehoyada Amir

Chapter 4: Creating Worlds One Day at a Time, by Cantor Amanda Kleinman

Chapter 12: What If? The Sacred Potential of Water, by Shaina Herring and Rabbi Sara Luria

Chapter 13: The Holiness of Wild Places, by Rabbi Jamie Korngold

Chapter 19: If Not Now, Why? Celebrating Festivals at Their Set Times, by Rabbi Jill L. Maderer

Chapter 21: The Physics of Jewish Time and the Fourth Day of Creation, by Loui Dobin

Chapter 22: Diaspora Time, by Rabbi Michael G. Holzman

Chapter 23: Separate, Mark, and Season—Just Don't Yawn: The Lesson of the Fourth Day of Creation,
by Rabbi Edwin Cole Goldberg, DHL

Chapter 28: Creation as Intimate Partner, by Rabbi Mike Comins

1. The Creation story focuses on the act of separation in order to create distinct space. In what ways do you set space apart for particular use? What places do you hold as special, and therefore sacred, in your heart?
2. There are two somewhat contrasting views of sacred space in Judaism: that God is everywhere, and that God dwells in particular locations. In what ways is it more meaningful to view God as dwelling everywhere? In what ways is it more meaning to view certain spaces as the particular dwelling place of God?
3. Time and space are often contrasted in Judaism. In what ways does sacred time influence our view of sacred space? In what ways are they distinct and disconnected?

The Environment

Chapter 11: Water Conservation as Biblical Imperative, by Rabbi Kevin M. Kleinman

Chapter 14: The Jewish Imperative of Healing the Land, by Alex Cicelsky

Chapter 16: *Bal Tashchit*: God's First and Most General Call, by Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb, DMin

Chapter 17: The Third Day and Our Oceans, by Liya Rechtman

Chapter 25: Global Swarming: Can We Become Worthy of Creation?, by Rabbi Matthew Soffer

Chapter 28: Creation as Intimate Partner, by Rabbi Mike Comins

Chapter 36: Paradise on Earth, by Dr. Rachel Havrelock

1. The Creation story strikes a balance between God's power and humanity's power. God created the world and humanity but also gave humanity the responsibility to oversee the world. In what ways are we responsible for our environment? In what ways does our environment have power over us?
2. How does your personal connection to Judaism influence the way in which you conceive of the environment? How does it influence the way you interact with it?
3. How does the Creation narrative's presentation of the relationship between divinity and nature affect your understanding of the environment? What is sacred about the environment? What is not?

Food Ethics

Chapter 27: The Animal Kingdom, by Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz

Chapter 29: Creation: An All-You-Can-Eat Buffet, by Rabbi Mary L. Zamore

Chapter 30: Forging a Path Back to the Garden: A New Kashrut for Today, by Rabbi Karen Deitsch

1. Which forces, ideologies, dietary restrictions, and ethical and moral issues shape and inform the foods and ways you choose to eat? In what ways are your dietary practices connected to traditional Jewish practices of kashrut?
2. How might the Creation narrative, specifically the moments in which God creates animal and plant life, inform your eating habits? If you were to imagine an intentional practice of eating inspired by the story of Creation, what would it look like?
3. Many of the rabbinic voices within *Seven Days, Many Voices* advocate for nontraditional practices of kashrut. How do you feel about this?

Theology

Chapter 3: “In the Beginning” of BT *B’rachat*: Another Creation, by Alyssa M. Gray, JD, PhD

Chapter 7: The Second Day: A Pilot’s Perspective, by Rabbi Aaron Panken, PhD

Chapter 8: Holding the Waters at Bay, by Rabbi Mira Beth Wasserman, PhD

Chapter 10: The Night Sky, by Rabbi Scott M. Nagel

Chapter 20: A Light for the Nations, by Rabbi Denise L. Eger

Chapter 26: Reading Sacred (Con)Texts Today: Historical Background, Modern Interpretations, by Rabbi Rifat Sonsino, PhD

Chapter 28: Creation as Intimate Partner, by Rabbi Mike Comins

Chapter 31: Finding Meaning as God’s Servant: Consulting the Design Specs for Humankind, by Rabbi David E. S. Stein

Chapter 32: In the Image of God: God Is the Queer Role Model I Always Wanted, by Rabbi Rachel Grant Meyer

Chapter 33: Male and Female God Created Them: The Everyday Life of the Creation Myth in Israeli Society, by Rabbi Noa Sattath

Chapter 35: The World As It Is, by Rabbi Dr. Rachel S. Mikva

1. In what ways are you like the God who created the world? How do the daily acts of creating in your life connect you with a divine source of being?
2. In what ways is the God of the Creation story the God who you believe in, struggle with, or reject? What about the God of Creation moves you? Terrifies you? Angers you? Inspires you?
3. How have you built worlds in your own life? Is the process of world-building one that has a definitive end, or is the process of creation for you ongoing and ever-changing?

Gender and Sexuality

Chapter 31: Finding Meaning as God's Servant: Consulting the Design Specs for Humankind, by Rabbi David E. S. Stein

Chapter 32: In the Image of God: God Is the Queer Role Model I Always Wanted, by Rabbi Rachel Grant Meyer

Chapter 33: Male and Female God Created Them: The Everyday Life of the Creation Myth in Israeli Society, by Rabbi Noa Sattath

Chapter 35: The World As It Is, by Rabbi Dr. Rachel S. Mikva

1. The Creation story has multiple approaches to gender. What does it mean for man and woman to have been made simultaneously? What does it mean for woman to have been made from man? What does it mean for the first human to have been genderless? How does each understanding affect your own perspective on gender today?
2. What does being created in the image of God mean to you? How does it affect your self-perception? Your perception of others?
3. How does the Creation story view of production and reproduction affect your understanding of sexuality? What does *p'ru ur'vu* (be fruitful and multiply) mean to you?

Science and Judaism

Chapter 5: The Why and the How of Creation: Harmonizing Genesis and the Big Bang, by Rabbi Geoffrey A. Mitelman

Chapter 16: *Bal Tashchit*: God's First and Most General Call, by Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb, DMin

1. Where do you see points of intersection between science and Judaism? Are these points marked by friction? Conflict? Harmony?
2. In what ways do you synthesize scientific facts and religious beliefs? In what ways does the story of Creation conflict with your scientific understanding of the Earth's genesis?
3. Do religious myths ever inform or help shape your scientific questions? How so?

Rethinking Jewish Observance

Chapter 6: Light and Darkness: The Human Condition in Buddhist and Muslim Texts, by Rabbi Joshua M. Z. Stanton

Chapter 9: Separating the Waters, by Rabbi Kinneret Shiryon, DD

Chapter 12: What If? The Sacred Potential of Water, by Shaina Herring and Rabbi Sara Luria

Chapter 15: Why We Must Teach Our Children to Care for All Living Creatures, by Rabbi Rayna Gevurtz

Chapter 24: Music and the Punctuation of Time, by Cantor Ellen Dreskin

Chapter 27: The Animal Kingdom, by Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz

Chapter 29: Creation: An All-You-Can-Eat Buffet, by Rabbi Mary L. Zamore

Chapter 30: Forging a Path Back to the Garden: A New Kashrut for Today, by Rabbi Karen Deitsch

Chapter 31: Finding Meaning as God's Servant: Consulting the Design Specs for Humankind, by Rabbi David E. S. Stein

Chapter 40: Shabbat and Parenting, by Rabbi Benjamin David

1. In what ways is your Jewish practice today a continuation or departure from the home in which you grew up? How is your Jewish practice connected with your family's creation story? Is your practice one of continuation or rupture? Perhaps both?
2. In what ways has the Creation story shaped your observance of traditional Jewish practices and rituals? In what ways has the story of Creation sparked the desire for creativity when it comes to Jewish practice?
3. What is your creation story? How has your genesis shaped your understanding of Judaism? The world?

Shabbat

Chapter 37: What a Group of Cloistered Nuns Taught Me about Shabbat, by Rabbi Shoshanah Conover

Chapter 38: Determining the Path Ourselves: What Might Shabbat Look Like for Us?, by Rabbi Jack P. Paskoff

Chapter 39: The Loneliness of Time: What We Can Learn from That First Shabbat, by Rabbi Richard F. Address

Chapter 40: Shabbat and Parenting, by Rabbi Benjamin David

Chapter 41: Shabbat and Social Justice, by Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner

Chapter 42: Shabbat and Workers' Rights, by Rabbi Ellen Lippmann

1. The work of Creation culminates in a day of rest. Creation is not complete until Shabbat comes into the world. In what ways are your acts of creation punctuated or concluded through moments of Shabbat? Is Shabbat crucial to your work?
2. In what ways is your Shabbat practice enhanced by family and community? In what ways is your Shabbat practice limited by your family or community (or lack thereof)?
3. In what ways does Shabbat shape or define your own Jewish identity? How do you bring Shabbat into your week in order to remain connected with the Jewish aspects of your self?

Section Two: Study Questions by Chapter

Chapter 1: Cosmic Disorder

Rabbi Oren J. Hayon

1. Using the work of the medieval commentators, Rabbi Hayon contends that the divine impulse to separate darkness from light was motivated by God's desire to construct and establish a "sustainable system of justice" on earth (p. 4). What is the connection between justice and bringing order to a world of chaos? In what ways do you bring order to your local and global communities in order to create a better world?
2. As Rabbi Hayon notes, in the Creation narrative, and indeed across Jewish tradition, the arrival of divine justice in our world is often paired with or represented by thunder and strong wind. What are the sources of divine thunder in our world today? When have you heard the call of divine thunder? Have you ever experienced justice in quiet ways?
3. Rabbi Hayon posits that God encoded our universe with a just and righteous DNA. How, then, does Jewish tradition explain evil and suffering in our world? In uncovering the light of Creation, the *or ganuz*, today, how do we alleviate and assuage the realities of inequality, violence, and pain in our lives?

Chapter 2: Creation: Responsibility, Blessing, and Sanctity

Rabbi Dr. Yehoyada Amir

1. In what ways does the Creation narrative complement and support scientific theories about the creation of the world? What insights into the purpose of human life does the Creation narrative offer?
2. Rabbi Amir points out that the concept of divine blessing within the Creation narrative appears for the first time in connection with the creation of animal and plant life. How can we build a system of ethical and sustainable dietary practices that recognizes the inherent sacred status of all living creatures?
3. How does Shabbat provide the time and space for you to envision a more holy and blessed future for yourself and those around you? If you do not have a regular Shabbat practice, is there another time in the week in which you pause to define holiness in your own life? How does your personal theology affect the ways in which you conceive of the future?

Chapter 3: "In the Beginning" of BT *B'rachot*: Another Creation

Alyssa M. Gray, JD, PhD

1. Where do you see moments of rupture in your own story and that of your family? In what ways have you re-created or reinvented aspects of your life in an effort to heal those ruptures?
2. How does the image of a God who roars in mourning strike you? Where else could this image of God fit into Jewish history?
3. Are there other stories, verses, or moments in the Hebrew Bible that you have reclaimed or reenvisioned in order to heal or find strength for yourself? What are they? How can we, like the

rabbis of Tractate *B'rachot*, reimagine God and Jewish texts in an effort to allow tradition to speak relevantly and meaningfully today?

Chapter 4: Creating Worlds One Day at a Time

Cantor Amanda Kleinman

1. What mysteries exist for you in the Creation narrative? Which questions arise as you read the first chapter in Genesis, and how do you explain them?
2. How do you measure and mark time your life? Are there certain benchmarks or specific dates to which you assign special significance? What do these benchmarks say about you and your story?
3. What opportunities for renewal do you see in your life? How does the cyclical nature of the Jewish calendar help you reflect on the past in order to craft a vision for the future?

Chapter 5: The Why and the How of Creation: Harmonizing Genesis and the Big Bang

Rabbi Geoffrey A. Mitelman

1. Which of the three more problematic modes of speaking about religion and science that Rabbi Mitelman identifies (conflict, contrast, or concert) do you most often encounter in everyday contexts? How does Rabbi Mitelman's framework of "contact" help you to better hold religious belief and scientific fact in harmony?
2. How does scientific knowledge help you to better connect with or understand Jewish teachings and stories?
3. When viewed together, how can the story of the world's creation and the big bang theory influence your guiding values and principles?

Chapter 6: Light and Darkness: The Human Condition in Buddhist and Muslim Texts

Rabbi Joshua M. Z. Stanton

1. How does the study of other religious traditions and teachings influence the ways in which you understand and connect to Judaism?
2. Do you see sacred texts as fixed and rigid teachings or more as growing, evolving, and breathing documents? If the former, how do you incorporate an ever-changing world into your religious framework? If the latter, how can the story of Creation be understood as ever evolving and changing?
3. How do you understand the concept and image of light as a metaphor? How does this understanding connect with your personal theology?

Chapter 7: The Second Day: A Pilot's Perspective

Rabbi Aaron Panken, PhD

1. Which everyday occurrences and actions fill you with awe? What helps you ascend toward the heavens in your life?
2. Describe a time when you completed a task to the best of your abilities and felt “the expanse of reaching for expertise” (p. 50). In this moment, how did you feel both the full force of your humanity and “beyond humanity” (p. 51)?
3. How can natural beauty and wonder help us to cultivate a sense and practice of gratitude in our lives?

Chapter 8: Holding the Waters at Bay

Rabbi Mira Beth Wasserman, PhD

1. In what ways do you embody the acts of arranging and creating in your own life? What must you arrange and order before engaging in the act of creation?
2. Does Rabbi Wasserman's reading of the story of Creation as “cosmic struggle” resonate with your own experience of trying to bring something new to the world? How has a sense of chaos ever prevented you from engaging in a new or daunting task?
3. What is your reaction to the idea of a God who struggles? How does the image of a God who struggles to bring order to the world before the act of Creation influence the ways in which you think about a divine presence in your life?

Chapter 9: Separating the Waters

Rabbi Kinneret Shiryon, DD

1. Which aspects of nature for you are both life-giving and life-affirming? How do you engage with these aspects of nature, and in what ways are they incorporated in or vital to your daily routine?
2. How do you feel about creating blessings and rituals to fit your own beliefs and practices? Are there specific blessings, either from tradition or that you have created, that help you ground yourself or articulate a sense of awe or gratitude in your life?
3. In what ways have you used rituals to tap into a greater power or universal truth? How do unique and specific aspects of Jewish tradition help you engage with universal ideas and questions in our world?

Chapter 10: The Night Sky

Rabbi Scott Nagel

1. What does the phrase “a light unto the nations” mean to you? How do you see this specifically Jewish task as relevant or meaningful in your life?
2. What do you think about Rabbi Nagel's ability to cultivate a practice of humility through being in nature? How do certain aspects of nature help you to cultivate a sense of humility in your life? What makes you feel both finite and infinite at the same time?

3. In what ways does the experience of feeling both small and mighty impact your thinking about or relationship with God?

Chapter 11: Water Conservation as Biblical Imperative

Rabbi Kevin M. Kleinman

1. In what ways does your Jewish identity compel you to engage in social justice work? Which biblical stories or commandments influence your practice of justice in the world?
2. Rabbi Kleinman explains that ancient Israelites interpreted the presence of rain as divine reward. Do you feel that God rewards or punishes us based on our actions? If yes, what in your life is worthy of divine reward? If not, what motivates you to bring goodness into our world?
3. How does the story of Creation influence the ways in which you think about our planet? In what ways does Judaism teach us about stewardship and our role as guardians of the earth and all of its inhabitants?

Chapter 12: What If? The Sacred Potential of Water

Shaina Herring and Rabbi Sara Luria

1. Describe a time in which engaging with ritual was a transformative experience for you. How did this experience impact you spiritually, physically, emotionally, and mentally?
2. How do you mark transition or transformation in your life? In what ways do these markers of transition connect you with those around you, with history, or with a greater community?
3. If you could create a ritual to use in your everyday life, what would it be?

Chapter 13: The Holiness of Wild Places

Rabbi Jamie Korngold

1. What helps to keep you grounded in the present moment? How have mindfulness practices played a role in your daily routine, or how might they in the future?
2. Which spaces or places are holy or sacred to you? What makes these places special, and how do they impact your thoughts and actions?
3. How does spending time in a holy space continue to inspire and influence you once you have left that place? How do you transition in and out of sacred spaces in your life?

Chapter 14: The Jewish Imperative of Healing the Land

Alex Cicelsky

1. When have you witnessed a “Genesis moment” in your life? How did it inspire or move you?
2. What are the spiritual and physical resources you need to sustain and enrich your own life? In what ways do these resources overlap and connect with one another?
3. What does “inhaling the third day of Creation” mean to you (p. 99)? In what ways do the story of Creation and the experience of nature break down barriers between people?

Chapter 15: Why We Must Teach Our Children to Care for All Living Creatures

Rabbi Rayna Gevurtz

1. How do issues and questions of morality, ethics, and kashrut impact the ways in which you eat and the products you purchase? Do the traditional laws of kashrut ever conflict with your own ethical guidelines concerning dietary restrictions?
2. How do protecting animal life and sustaining our planet fit into your Jewish identity?
3. In what way, if any, do you feel your Jewish community falls short in its obligation to protect animal and plant life? If you could create guidelines for your Jewish community concerning the well-being of our planet, what would they be?

Chapter 16: *Bal Tashchit*: God's First and Most General Call

Rabbi Fred Scherlinder Dobb, DMin

1. In what ways could the Jewish prohibition against waste play a central role in your life? In what ways does the reading of the Creation story as a story decrying waste impact the way in which you view Genesis?
2. How are we apart from rather than a part of Creation? How does Rabbi Dobb's teaching on closed systems align with your own relationship to the natural world around us?
3. How does the metaphor of "God as cosmic scientist" strike you? What do you think of Rabbi Dobb's synthesis of scientific knowledge and Creation myth in this piece?

Chapter 17: The Third Day and Our Oceans

Liya Rechtman

1. What is the difference between "holding sway over" or "tending" the land and owning land? How could this biblical distinction impact your relationship to plant and animal life?
2. How is our relationship to the sea different from our relationship to plant and animal life on land if the sea is not the dominion of humankind, according to the story of Creation? In what ways do you understand this distinction when it comes to translating the biblical story into relevant guidelines for our lives today?
3. In what ways has Torah influenced your political beliefs? In what ways might it do so?

Chapter 18: From the Third Day to the Song of Songs: The Eco-Torah of an Indigenous People

Rabbi Arthur Waskow

1. As members and stewards of the planet's many eco-systems, how do we balance the roles of consumer and guardian?
2. How does our abuse and overuse of natural resources relate to the ways in which we treat other human beings? In what ways does our desire to master the land and its inhabitants translate into our desire to create hierarchies and divisions within human society?

3. How do the parallels between divinely inspired plagues in the Bible and man-made crises like climate change create a Jewish platform from which to organize for changes to environmental policies?

Chapter 19: If Not Now, Why? Celebrating Festivals at Their Set Times

Rabbi Jill L. Maderer

1. What in your life constitutes sacred time? Are there Jewish or secular ways in which you mark time in order to bring a sense of holiness to your life?
2. How might the observance of Jewish holidays connect you with the greater Jewish community across time and space?
3. In addition to connecting us to Jewish people around the world, Jewish holidays ground us in the present moment. What does it feel like for you when you mark time through observing Jewish festivals?

Chapter 20: A Light for the Nations

Rabbi Denise L. Eger

1. In addition to the sun, what brings enlightenment and illumination into your life? In what ways are you a source of light in your community?
2. How does it feel to be, at times, overwhelmed by a period of darkness? When this happens, how do you find light in your life?
3. In what ways do you see yourself as a carrier of divine light? What sources, both Jewish and non-Jewish, inspire you to fight for justice in the world?

Chapter 21: The Physics of Jewish Time and the Fourth Day of Creation

Loui Dobin

1. How is your relationship to the past shaped by the Jewish calendar and perception of time? In what ways does Judaism push you to draw inspiration from the past?
2. How does your practice of Judaism allow you to feel the passing of time in multiple ways? Which aspects of “Jewish time” resonate most with your experience of marking Jewish holidays?
3. How do you and your family observe Jewish time? In what ways does your community mark the passing of time through Jewish rituals and holidays?

Chapter 22: Diaspora Time

Rabbi Michael G. Holzman

1. How do the narratives and rituals of Jewish history influence and shape your identity? How do you respond to the idea of feeling drawn to other Jewish people based on a collective narrative and shared history? Does that idea speak to you? Why or why not?
2. How do Jewish rituals transform time for you? In what ways do rituals allow you to make time sacred?
3. Some argue that there is no longer such a thing as “Diaspora life.” How does the distinction between Jewish life in the Diaspora and Jewish life in Israel strike you?

Chapter 23: Separate, Mark, and Season—Just Don't Yawn: The Lesson of the Fourth Day of Creation

Rabbi Edwin Cole Goldberg, DHL

1. How does Judaism enable you to distinguish between everyday and special times? Which Jewish rituals and holidays shape and inform your experience of time?
2. Praying regularly and observing Jewish holidays can feel like restrictive demands on our limited time. In what ways do you find rituals liberating?
3. In what ways might marking time through the Jewish calendar cultivate a sense of humility in you?

Chapter 24: Music and the Punctuation of Time

Cantor Ellen Dreskin

1. In what ways does music “decorate and commemorate” time for you (p. 179)? How does music help you access Jewish time?
2. Describe a time in which a song or melody had the power to bring you into another time and place. What song or melody was it? What was your connection to the music?
3. Which Jewish melodies and songs have the power to help you transcend toward the heavens?

Chapter 25: Global Swarming: Can We Become Worthy of Creation?

Rabbi Matthew Soffer

1. In what ways do you see tension between the biblical account of Creation and the ways in which we treat the environment today? How different would the world look if we served as true stewards of the planet and all of its inhabitants?
2. Rabbi Soffer writes that human beings, unlike other animals, blur the boundaries between heaven and earth. How do you see this distinction playing out in your life, and what does it mean for how we should act while on earth?
3. In what ways do you see humans as swarming on the earth, and in what ways do we transcend through fixing and repairing our planet?

Chapter 26: Reading Sacred (Con)Texts Today: Historical Background, Modern Interpretations

Rabbi Rifat Sonsino, PhD

1. In what ways does your relationship to sacred texts change when they are placed in their original historical contexts? How does your reading or understanding of the Creation story change when it is placed in the literary context of the ancient Near East?
2. How does an understanding of the Bible's historical context influence your thinking about God? Does it change your thinking? Why or why not?
3. What makes texts sacred? Are there modern literary texts that you consider sacred or holy? Why or why not?

Chapter 27: The Animal Kingdom

Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz

1. In what ways are vegetarianism and veganism Jewish ideals? Do you agree with this interpretation of the text? Why or why not?
2. How can the foods we eat help us to cultivate greater wells of compassion, awe, and humility within our souls?
3. In your opinion, is there a difference between animal rights and human rights? Why or why not?

Chapter 28: Creation as Intimate Partner

Rabbi Mike Comins

1. The Israelites received Torah at Sinai. Rabbi Comins suggests that it was not an accident that revelation occurred in the wilderness. Where do you connect with divine wilderness?
2. In what ways does nature help you to feel God's presence, or does it not? In what ways does new technology hinder or support your relationship with God? Do you believe that humankind has become more alienated from God as we become increasingly disconnected from nature?
3. How might a stance of curiosity or wonder help you to connect with God through nature?

Chapter 29: Creation: An All-You-Can-Eat Buffet

Rabbi Mary L. Zamore

1. How might biblical wisdom be a source of guidance in your daily life? In what ways do you draw moral and ethical values from biblical stories and teachings?
2. How do you understand the connection Rav Kook draws between vegetarianism and peace in the world? What values or teachings from other parts of your life guide the food choices you make?
3. How can intentional food choices help us to cultivate a daily practice of humility?

Chapter 30: Forging a Path Back to the Garden: A New Kashrut for Today

Rabbi Karen Deitsch

1. Do you follow any traditional Jewish dietary laws? If so, what are they? Are there any nontraditional ways in which you observe the spirit of kashrut?
2. In what ways do you feel a tension between secular culture and Jewish tradition and commandments? In what ways have you adapted traditionally Jewish observances to fit your cultural context?
3. How do you see your daily food choices as fitting into the greater context of your life, your community's values, and Jewish history? Are there any tensions between these layers of community?

Chapter 31: Finding Meaning as God’s Servant: Consulting the Design Specs for Humankind
Rabbi David E. S. Stein

1. What do you “serve” in your life? In what ways do you feel called or obligated to serve today?
2. In what ways, if any, do you see yourself as serving God in your daily life? Who are your partners in that service?
3. Would you consider engaging in a daily practice of service and partnership similar to that of Rabbi Stein (p. 239)? What would service look like in your life?

Chapter 32: In the Image of God: God Is the Queer Role Model I Always Wanted
Rabbi Rachel Grant Meyer

1. What does it mean to you to be created in God’s image? What does the idea of being created in God’s image teach you about God? What does that idea mean for your relationship with other people?
2. What do you think about Rabbi Meyer’s description of God as queer? Does this image of God broaden or constrict your own understanding of God?
3. In what ways do aspects of your own identity come to challenge, define, and inform your own notions of God?

Chapter 33: Male and Female God Created Them: The Everyday Life of the Creation Myth in Israeli Society
Rabbi Noa Sattath

1. Does your family have any special stories that have shaped your identity? What “creation myths” inform who you are?
2. How have your Jewish practice and community influenced the ways in which you understand gender roles? How have Jewish texts and tradition influenced the ways in which you understand your gender?
3. Have you encountered differences in cultural and religious understandings of gender between Israeli and American Jewish communities? How are Israeli views of gender roles different from or similar to those in your Jewish community? How are they different from those in your life in general?

Chapter 34: Created in God’s Image: Protecting Even the Least Deserving of Protection
Rabbi Jill Jacobs

1. How does the idea that all human beings are created in God’s image influence the ways in which you treat other people?
2. How do you react to the idea that the murder of another person diminishes God’s presence on earth? In what circumstances might you believe that murder is just?
3. In what ways do Jewish texts and values influence your political and social beliefs?

Chapter 35: The World As It Is
Rabbi Dr. Rachel S. Mikva

1. In what ways do you see yourself as separate from or part of nature? How does the concept of human “mastery” of the earth manifest in your life?
2. How does your Jewish community fit into its local community? How about the global community?
3. How does a gender-neutral understanding of God correspond with or challenge your personal theology?

Chapter 36: Paradise on Earth
Dr. Rachel Havrelock

1. Dr. Havrelock notes that “humanity emerges in the balance struck between flooding and drought” (p. 268). Looking back at your life, when have you experienced or witnessed this balance both literally and figuratively?
2. Describe your “Eden” and what the road there looks like.
3. Where do you see the privatization of water sources affecting your community? What other natural resources have you seen taken over and abused to make a profit?

Chapter 37: What a Group of Cloistered Nuns Taught Me about Shabbat
Rabbi Shoshanah Conover

1. How do you and your family mark Shabbat? In what ways do you differentiate between Shabbat and the rest of the week?
2. What would it look like to allow the spirit of Shabbat to permeate through your week and daily activities? What would a “Shabbat moment” during the week look like?
3. Describe the ways in which Shabbat provides you with a moment in time to reimagine and reenvision a new way of being during the weekdays.

Chapter 38: Determining the Path Ourselves: What Might Shabbat Look Like for Us?
Rabbi Jack P. Paskoff

1. What are the “meta-ethics” (the principles that inform the laws) of Shabbat for you?
2. In what ways, large and small, do/could you recognize and make Shabbat holy in your life?
3. How can you create opportunities for rest to bring a greater sense of joy to your Shabbat?

Chapter 39: The Loneliness of Time: What We Can Learn from That First Shabbat
Rabbi Richard F. Address

1. How does your Shabbat practice connect you with the story of Creation and with God?
2. In what ways has Shabbat helped or changed the ways in which you engage with the broader world?
3. Does Shabbat allow you time to reimagine the world as it could be?

Chapter 40: Shabbat and Parenting
Rabbi Benjamin David

1. Describe the Shabbat of your childhood. How has your Shabbat observance changed since you were a child? In what ways is your Shabbat observance connected with family?
2. What does sacred time outside of everyday life look like for you? Describe your ideal Shabbat. In what ways does the ideal of Shabbat challenge your reality?
3. In what ways does Shabbat fit into and punctuate the everyday rhythm of your life? How does Shabbat provide you with a time and space in which to find consistency, meaning, and rest in your life?

Chapter 41: Shabbat and Social Justice
Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner

1. What is broken and in need of healing in our world today? In what ways does Shabbat allow you to envision the world as it should be?
2. When have you experienced prayer as a subversive act? What would it look like for you to understand Shabbat as a call to action? What would you be called to?
3. What is the connection for you between freedom and rest? How can Shabbat be a time in which we bring freedom to all inhabitants of the world?

Chapter 42: Shabbat and Workers' Rights
Rabbi Ellen Lippmann

1. Rabbi Lippmann writes about Shabbat as a day “of labor and sacred service, of perspiration and aspiration” (p. 308). In what ways does the shift resonate with your current understanding of Shabbat?
2. What would it look like for you to host a Shabbat experience that encouraged your guests or whole your community to view Shabbat as a time to engage with issues of justice in our time, like questions of workers' rights?
3. What would it look like for you to engage with Shabbat as a worker, as an employer, and as an advocate?