

OFF-RAMP TORAH

A JUDICIOUS DEPARTURE FROM
THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION

October 17, 2026



**"Fostering diverse modes of attention to textual details cultivates
correlative forms of attention to the world and divine reality"**

Michael Fishbane (1943-), *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה:

TO START: Parashat-haShavu'a Stats

Weekly Portion: No'ach Genesis 6:9-11:32

Sequence in Torah cycle: 2nd of 54

Sequence in Genesis: 2nd of 12



WHERE WE'RE GOING INSTEAD, and why

Context: Next Wednesday is the **11th of Marcheshvan**, **41st** day of the still-new year that began on Rosh haShanah.

With the number 40 having such deep cultural significance for our Biblical forebears, in conceptual terms the subsequent number **41** represents the proverbial "next step." We will explore **some spiritual traditions that emerge around that day** and its associations.

40 = מ

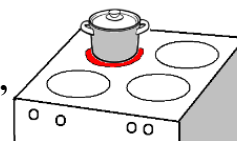
1 = א

41 is the numerical value of the letters in the words

אם "if"

and

אם "mother"



A) Leviticus 26:3-4 -

אם בְּחַקְתִּי תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת מִצְוֹתֵי
תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם

If you walk in My paths, following My
commandments and keeping them,

וְנָתַתִּי גֶשְׁמִיכֶם בְּעֵתָם וְנָתַתִּי

הָאֶרֶץ יְבוּלָה וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פֵּרוֹ

then I will furnish your rains in their
due season, so that the earth produces its
yield and the trees bear their fruit.

B) Genesis 4:7 -

אם תֵּיטִיב שְׂאֵת

If you do what is right, then it will go well
for you.

וְאִם לֹא תֵיטִיב לִפְתָּח חַטָּאת רֹבֵץ

וְאֵלֶיךָ תִּשְׁוֹקֶתוּ

And **if** you will not do what is right, then
sin crouches at the door, its desire for
you—

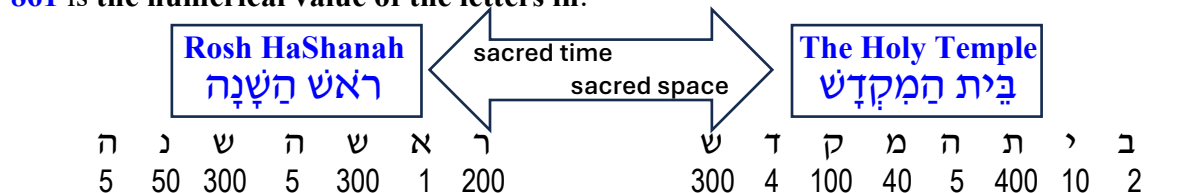
וְאַתָּה תִּמָּשָׁל בּוֹ

yet you may prevail over it.

The sum of all the whole integers from 1 to 41 is 861:

$$\sum_{1}^{41} = 41 \times (41+1) / 2 = 41 \times 42 / 2 = 1,722 / 2 = 861$$

861 is the numerical value of the letters in:



The square of 41 (1,681) is the numerical value of the 22-letter Name of God

אברהם יצחק יעקב שבטי ישראל

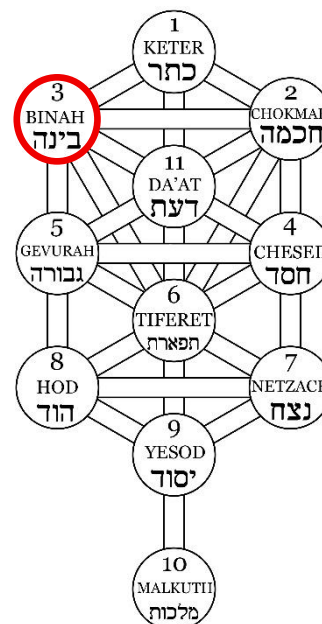
which constitutes our meditation before blowing the shofar on Rosh haShanah.

על ידי תקיעת שופר יעוררו לבות בני אדם מתרדימת
שנת הזמן ולשוב בתשובה שלימה באמת

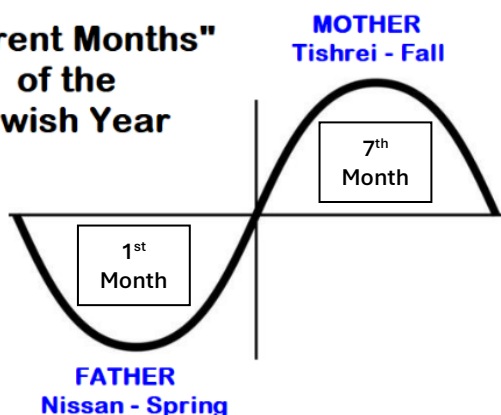
C) Kalonymos Kalman Epstein (1754-1823), *Ma'or VaShe-mesh*, Rosh HaShanah 2 - By means of the blast of the shofar, the hearts of human beings are awakened from their temporary sleep, to return in full and true penance.

אשר מקול השופר יחתו ויחרדו מאימת הדין והשב
בתשובה הוא מוזר לבחינת הרת עולם שהוא בינה
עולם התשובה שהתשובה קדמה לעולם

For they tremble from fear of judgment, because of the voice of the shofar, and repent in a penitence that draws them towards the aspect of The Impregnation of the World (which is Binah ["Discernment," אמא עלאה imma illa'ah "Supreme Mother," the Divine Emanation of] the ethereal Womb in which souls are reborn)—that realm of t'shuvah. (For teshuvah predates the world).



"Parent Months"
of the
Jewish Year



בתשרי נברא העולם בתשרי נולדו
אבות בתשרי מתו אבות

D) Babylonian Talmud, Rosh haShanah 10b-11a – [It was during the month] of Tishrei that the world was created; it was in Tishrei that the Patriarchs [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob] were born; it was in Tishrei that the Patriarchs died.

בראש השנה נפקדה שרה רחל וחנה
It was on Rosh haShanah that Sarah,

- continued

Racheil and Hannah were remembered [by God, to end their respective periods of infertility, in Genesis 21:1, Genesis 30:22, and I Samuel 1:19, respectively].

בראש השנה יצא יוסף מבית האסורין

It was on **Rosh haShanah** that Joseph went forth from the prison [in Genesis 30:14, to ascend as viceroy of Egypt];

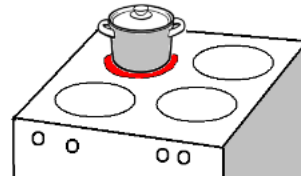
בראש השנה בטלה עבודה מאבותינו במצרים

It was on **Rosh haShanah** that our forebears in Egypt were relieved of their servitude [by virtue of their fearful taskmasters being distracted by the Ten Plagues].

בניסן נגאלו **בתשרי עתידין ליגאל**

They were redeemed [from Egypt in the springtime month of] Nissan— **but their future redemption will occur in Tishrei.**

41 is the numerical value of the letters in the word **אם** “mother”



E) Genesis 35:16, 35:17-20 -

וַתֵּלֶד רָחֵל וַתִּקַּשׁ בְּלִדְתָּהּ וַיְהִי
בְּצֵאת נַפְשָׁהּ כִּי מָתָה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ
בֶּן אוֹנִי וְאַבְיו קָרָא לוֹ בְּנִימִין

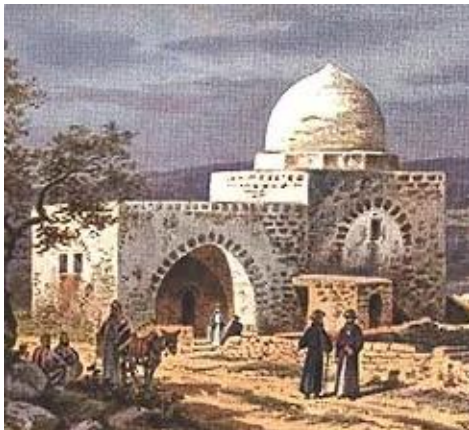
Racheil began birthing, and had a hard labor. As her spirit departed (for she died), she called him “Ben-‘Oni” [My Misfortune], but his father renamed him Bin-Yamin [“The Lucky One”].

וַתָּמָת רָחֵל וַתִּקָּבֶר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרָתָה
הוּא בֵּית לָחֶם

So Racheil died there, and was buried near Efrat (which is Bet-Lechem).

וַיָּצֵב יַעֲקֹב מַצֵּבָה עַל קְבֻרָתָהּ
הוּא מַצֵּבַת קְבֻרַת רָחֵל עַד הַיּוֹם

Jacob established a monument atop her grave, which is the Pillar of The Grave of Racheil to this very day.



F) Jubilees (c. 130 BCE), 32:39-41 -

וַתֵּלֶד רָחֵל בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶּן אוֹנִי
בְּהַקְשׁוֹתָהּ בְּלִידְתָּהּ וְאַבְיו קָרָא לוֹ
בְּנִימִין **בַּעֲשֵׁתִי עֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ**
הַשְּׁמִינִי בַּשָּׁנָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה לַשְּׁבוּעַ
הַשִּׁישִׁי לַיּוֹבֵל הַהוּא

Racheil bore a son, whom she named “Son of my Sorrow”— for she suffered in bearing him (although his father renamed him Benjamin)— **on the 11th day of The Eighth Month** in the first year of the sixth week-year of that thirty-fourth Jubilee [= 2143 *anno mundi* = 1617 BCE].

וַתָּמָת רָחֵל שָׁם וַתִּקָּבֶר בְּאֶרֶץ
אֶפְרָתָה הִיא בֵּית לָחֶם

So Racheil died there, and was buried in the land of Efrat (which is Bet-Lechem), **וַיָּבֵן יַעֲקֹב עַל קְבֻרַת רָחֵל מַצֵּבָה**
בְּדֶרֶךְ עַל קְבֻרָתָהּ

and Jacob raised a monument-pillar on the roadside grave of Racheil.

The Tomb of the Matriarch Racheil

قبر راحيل קבר רחל אמנו

- more over

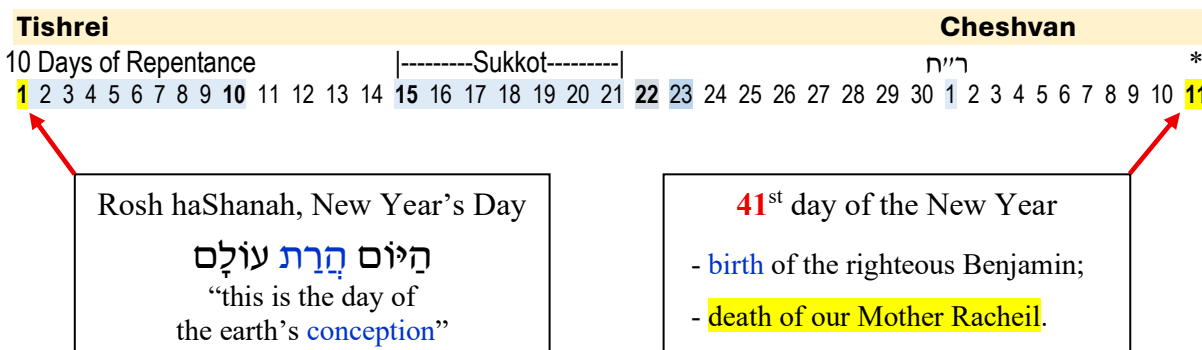
Death of Our Mother Racheil מות רחל אמנו

11 Marcheshvan י"א מרחשון

anno mundi 2143 - 1617 BCE

- Israelite historical dates recorded in Scripture -

text	event	date	
<u>Exodus 12:51</u>	Israelite departure from Egyptian servitude	15	Nissan
<u>Exodus 19:11</u>	the Covenant at Sinai	06	Sivvan
<u>I Kings 8:65</u>	consecration of the Temple in Jerusalem	22	Tishrei
<u>II Kings 25:1</u>	Babylonians besiege Jerusalem	10	Tevet
<u>Esther 9</u>	Jews stand in defense against imperial pogrom	13	Adar
<u>Nehemiah 10</u>	canonization of the Torah	23	Tishrei



- Glorious Traditions About Our Mother Racheil -

Book of Yashar 28:28 -

The wife of Lavan, 'Adinah, conceived and bore **twin daughters**: the elder, Lei'ah, and the younger, Racheil.

Midrash Genesis Rabbah 70:16 -

Racheil was renowned for her great physical beauty of form and face.

Babylonian Talmud, M'gillah 13b -

Racheil modeled self-effacing humility. Jacob had given her certain codes, so that she could make herself known to him on their wedding night— but, saying to herself "I cannot allow my sister to be put to shame," she gave those codes to Lei'ah. That is why the Torah says "and the next morning— behold, it was Lei'ah!" [Genesis 29:25]; for on account of the new bride possessing the passwords which Racheil had given to her sister, he did not know until then. Therefore she was rewarded by being the ancestress of Saul, first King of Israel.

Jerusalem Talmud, B'rachot 66b -

Our Mother Racheil was among the foremost of the prophetesses. For [upon the birth of Joseph in Genesis 30:24] she declared: "One more will issue forth from me." She did not say "more children," but rather "one more" [anticipating the subsequent birth of Benjamin].

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Seider 'Olam Rabbah 2 -

When Racheil died in childbirth, delivering Benjamin, she had attained age 36.

Midrash Genesis Rabbah 74:4 -

Why did Racheil die first? Rabbi Judah says it is because she insubordinately usurped the prerogative of her older sister (and Jacob's principal wife)— even as it is written in Scripture: “first Racheil replied, and then Lei'ah” [Genesis 31:14].

Zohar 1:175a -

Jacob's delay in fulfilling the vow he had made before God [in Genesis 28:20-22] strengthened the indictment sought against him by his celestial prosecutor. That is why Racheil went into hard labor, and had terminal complications in her second childbirth.

Midrash Genesis Rabbah 74:9-

Jacob, being unaware of Racheil's having stolen her father's household gods, invited his indignant uncle to search anywhere in his encampment, earnestly declaring: “With whom-ever you find it, they shall die!” [Genesis 31:32]. Thus is it that he had inadvertently handed down sentence against his own beloved— for we were already informed that “Racheil had stolen them” [*ibid.* 31:19]; so it is that “then Racheil died” [*ibid.* 35:19].

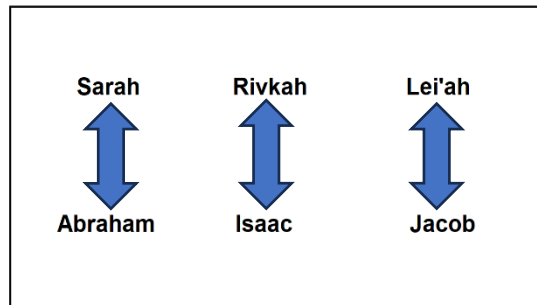
Midrash Genesis Rabbah 82:9 -

The Torah text says, very succinctly, “Racheil died, and was buried” [Genesis 35:19]. From this we learn that burial should take place immediately after a death, to show respect for the departed.

Midrash Genesis Rabbah 72:3 -

Racheil had once sold her bed-rights with her husband in return for some of the mandrake roots that Lei'ah's son Reuben had found, telling her older sister: “Therefore he shall lie with you tonight” [Genesis 30:15]. Because she so lightly esteemed the privilege of lying together with the righteous Jacob, it was her destiny to be buried separate from him.

Tomb of the Patriarchs - Chevron



Zohar 1:223a -

“Lei'ah had weak eyes” [Genesis 29:17] - from the time she was a young girl, Lei'ah would go out every day to the crossroads to await the eventual arrival of her righteous cousin Jacob, weeping for fear that he would never arrive, and bewailing the prospect that she might be married off instead to his wicked brother Eisav. As for Racheil, she never went out to the road in either eager or anxious anticipation— wherefore Lei'ah merited resting eternally with Jacob, while Racheil's tomb stands forever at a crossroads.

TuvYah ben-Eli'Ezer, Leqach Tov -

“Jacob raised a monument-pillar on the roadside grave of Racheil” [Genesis 35:20] – every one of his children placed a stone on Racheil's grave, so that twelve stones were piled one atop the other, with Jacob's own stone crowning them all.

- more over

Zohar 1:175a -

The place of Racheil's burial will never disappear, until the day The Holy And Blessed One raises the dead.

Midrash Genesis Rabbah 82:10 -

Jacob buried Racheil not in Efrat, but on the roadside, because (as a prophet of God) he knew that the exiles of Jerusalem would one day pass that way— and he knew, as well, that **the Mother of Israel would know their anguish and pray for them** as they went by.

Flight of the Prisoners
by James Tissot, 1896



G) Jeremiah 31:14-15 [Haftarah for Second-Day Rosh haShanah] -

קול בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמָע
נְהִי בְּכִי תִמְרוּרִים

A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping;

רַחֵל מִבְּכָה עַל בְּנֶיהָ

מֵאַנָּה לְהִנָּחַם עַל בְּנֶיהָ כִּי אֵינָנּוּ

It is Racheil, bewailing her children—

moaning, inconsolable, **because they are no more.**

כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה מְנִיעֵי קוֹלְךָ מִדְּמָעָה

Therefore, thus says The Eternal One: “Withhold your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears.

כִּי יֵשׁ שָׂכָר לַפְּעֻלָּתְךָ נְאֻם יְהוָה וְשָׁבוּ מֵאֶרֶץ אוֹיֵב

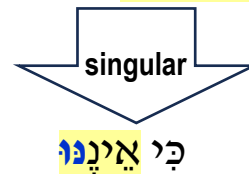
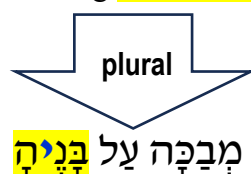
“There is payment for your efforts,” declares The Eternal One— “**for they shall return** from the land of the enemy.

וַיֵּשׁ תִּקְוָה לְאַחֲרִיתְךָ נְאֻם יְהוָה וְשָׁבוּ בָנִים לְגְבוּלָם

“And **there is hope** for your future,” declares The Eternal One, “as **the children shall return** to their border.”



“bewailing **her children** . . . because **he** is no more”



Joseph —

stolen away from his home,
and longing for family in Canaan.

all Israel —

taken away into exile
and longing to return to Zion.