

# *Simchat Torah*

## *ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS*

### *Deuteronomy 34:10-12*

And no prophet has ever arisen like Moses, who knew God face to face. God sent him to do all the signs and wonders in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and his servants and all his land and everything was done with a strong hand and all the great wonders that Moses did were before Israel.

### *Genesis 1:1-5*

In a beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was dark and disorganized and dimness was on the face of the deep and God's spirit hovered over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. And God saw that the light was good and God made a difference between the light and the darkness. And God called the light "Day," and called the dark "Night," and there was evening and there was morning, the first day. (Genesis 1:1-5)

### *Mishnah Taanit 4:3*

On the first day of the week they would read the first verses from the Torah from "in a beginning" (Genesis 1:1), to "and let there be a dome in the heavens" (Genesis 1:5). On the second day they would read from "and let there be a dome in the heavens" (Genesis 1:5), to "and let the waters be gathered together" (Genesis 1:6-8).

### *Bavli Rosh Hashanah 21b*

Fifty gates of understanding were created in the world and all were given to Moses except one.

## *Discussion Questions*

1. These two passages conclude, and begin, the Torah. What are their similarities and their differences?

2. In ancient Israel, while the Temple stood, regional representatives would go to Jerusalem to serve in the Temple. During that time, their communities at home would read the first chapter of Genesis. How did the Temple rites continue the work of creation? Does it make sense that the sages saw Jerusalem as the belly button of the world?

3. The cycle of reading Torah brings us ever-increasing levels of understanding. This insight from the Babylonian Talmud suggests that, no matter how far we progress, we always have further to go. (If Moses did not reach the final pinnacle of understanding, how can we expect that we shall?) How many levels of understanding have you experienced thus far?