



# Bronfman at 36

## Invitation to Learn

### Where are you?

We invite you to join us in asking the question, "Where are you?" as part of celebrating the Bronfman Fellowship's 36th year.

### Opportunity for study

Three Bronfman Fellowship faculty members from across the Fellowship's tenure have created user-friendly source sheets that focus on this question.

You may choose to study these source sheets independently, within a chevruta, online, in-person, or in multiple modalities. We encourage you to share these sources with your friends and family to inspire dialogue and connection.

### Why ask questions?

The Bronfman Fellowship encourages introspection and deep reflection for its own sake and as an essential component of leadership. By asking questions privately and communally we embrace Jewish learning as an instrument for discovery, creativity, and change.

Through a diversity of Jewish works, including but not limited to traditional religious texts, philosophy, literature and poetry, visual art, and contemporary thought, we strive for everyone to feel welcome to share their voice, perspective, and questions – and, simultaneously, be able to undertake the difficult work of evolving one's worldview.

### Midrash Zuta Eichah 1:1

"Rabbi Shimon the son of Pazi said, "The numerical value of ayekah is *thirty-six*." Ayekah is first found in Bereshit 3:9. God called to the human, and said "Where are you?"

### Gathering to celebrate

On June 11, 2023 at 7pm ET, we will gather for a "Zoom Siyum" to celebrate our 36 years and reflect on our learning.



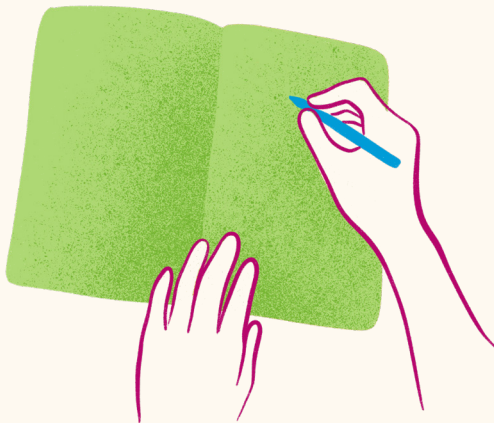
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# Where Have You Been, Where Are You Now, and Where Are You Going?

Rabbi Vanessa Ochs

*Served on Faculty of the Bronfman Fellowship 2012 and 2020*

The story of Moses writing down the Torah he receives on Mount Sinai—that's well known. But fewer are familiar with the diary Moses kept along the way.



### Numbers 33:2

And Moses wrote their goings forth, stage by stage, by the commandment of the LORD; and these are their stages at their goings forth.

### Question for discussion:

Why was Moses commanded to chronicle where he and the children of Israel had been (and all their kvetching along the way, I would add)?

Moving onward in our lives—to new places (literally) or to new roles, relationships or states of being—elicits a range of feelings, sometimes all muddled together: anticipation, curiosity, fear, excitement, relief, wonder. No wonder we have prayers for leaving and arriving, coming and going. These Jewish sacred texts suggest ways of bringing deeper understanding to diverse journeys of life.

### Questions for discussion:

Do any of these "texts" bring insight into your state of being as you experienced a past journey or phase of your life?



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What kind of insight might one or more of these “texts” provide you for a step along the way in your life right now?

Moving beyond this page and into your own creative space, what prayer/meditation, ritual, object or song—old or newly invented—might accompany you—like Moses’ wilderness diary, as you move onward in your life to where you’d like to be going?

What allows you to go to where you wish to “be” (physically, spiritually, existentially) next? What keeps you right where you are?

## Deuteronomy 28:3-6

בְּרִוֹן אֶתְּהָ בְּעִיר וּבְרִוֹן אֶתְּהָ בְּשָׂדֶה:

Blessed shall you be in the city and blessed shall you be in the country.

בְּרִוֹן פְּרִי בִטְנֶיךָ וּפְרִי אֲדָמָתְךָ וּפְרִי בְהֵמְתֶךָ שֶׁגֵּר  
אֶלְפֶיךָ וְעִשְׂתָּרוֹת צֹאנֶיךָ:

Blessed shall be your issue from the womb, your produce from the soil, and the offspring of your cattle, the calving of your herd and the lambing of your flock.

בְּרִוֹן טַנְאָה וּמִשְׂאֵתְךָ:

Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

בְּרִוֹן אֶתְּהָ בְּבֹאֶךָ וּבְרִוֹן אֶתְּהָ בְּצֵאתְךָ:

Blessed shall you be in your comings and blessed shall you be in your goings.

## Brachot 29b

אָמַר לִיהוֹ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לָרֵב יְהוּדָה אַחוּהוּ דָּרַב סְלָא חֲסִידָא:  
לָא תִרְתַּח וְלָא תִחְסִי. לָא תִרְוִי וְלָא תִחְסִי. וְכִשְׂאֵתְהָ  
יִצְאָ לְדַרְגָּה, הַמְלִיךְ בְּקוֹנֵךְ וְצֵא. מֵאֵי הַמְלִיךְ בְּקוֹנֵךְ  
וְצֵא? אָמַר רַבִּי יַעֲקֹב אָמַר רַב חֲסִידָא: זֹאת תְּפִלַּת  
הַדַּרְגָּה. וְאָמַר רַבִּי יַעֲקֹב אָמַר רַב חֲסִידָא: כָּל הַיּוֹצֵא  
לְדַרְגָּה צָרוּךְ לְהִתְפַּלֵּל תְּפִלַּת הַדַּרְגָּה.

On the topic of prayers recited while traveling and in times of danger, the Gemara discusses the traveler’s prayer. When he appeared to him, Elijah the Prophet said to Rav Yehuda brother of Rav Sala Hasida: ...when you set out on a journey, consult with your Creator, and then set out. The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of: Consult with your Creator, and then set out? Rabbi Ya’akov said that Rav Hisda said: That is the traveler’s prayer. And Rabbi Ya’akov said that Rav Hisda said: It is not only good advice, but established halakha that anyone who sets out on a journey must recite the traveler’s prayer prior to embarking on his journey.



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## Tfilat Haderch in the siddur: The Travelers prayer we now say

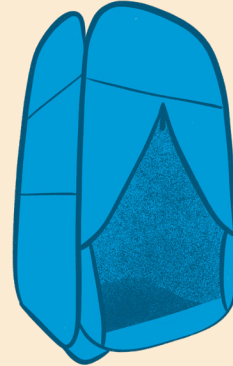
יהי רצון מלפניך יי אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שתוליכנו  
 לשלום ותצדיקנו לשלום ותדריכנו לשלום, ותסמכנו  
 לשלום, ותגיענו למחוז חפצנו לחיים ולשמחה  
 ולשלום. אם דעתו לחזור מיד אומר ותחזירנו  
 לשלום. ותצילנו מכף כל אויב ואורב ולקטים וחיזות  
 רעות בדרך, ומכל מיני פרעניות המתרגשות לבוא  
 לעולם, ותתננו לחן ולחסד ולרחמים בעיניך ובעיני  
 כל ראינו, כי אל שומע תפלה ותחנון אתה. ברוך  
 אתה לפי נוסח ספרד יי שומע תפלה: כי מלאכיו  
 יצוה לך לשמרך בכל דרכיך: יי ישמר צאתך ובואך  
 מעתה ועד עולם: ויעקב הלך לדרכו ויפגעו בו  
 מלאכי אלהים. ויאמר יעקב כאשר ראה ר"ת רפאל  
 אוראל מיכאל: מחנה אלהים זה, ויקרא שם המקום  
 ההוא מחנים. וברוך יי וישמרך: יאר יי פניו אליך  
 ויחנה: ישא יי פניו אליך וישם לך שלום:

May it be Your will, Lord, our God and the  
 God of our ancestors, that You lead us  
 toward peace, guide our footsteps toward  
 peace, and make us reach our desired des-  
 tination for life, gladness, and peace. May  
 You rescue us from the hand of every foe,  
 ambush along the way, and from all manner  
 of punishments that assemble to come to  
 earth. May You send blessing in our hand-  
 iwork, and grant us grace, kindness, and  
 mercy in Your eyes and in the eyes of all  
 who see us. May You hear the sound of our  
 humble request because You are God Who  
 hears prayer requests. Blessed are You,  
 Lord, Who hears prayer.

## Tfilat Haderech By Debbie Friedman

May we be blessed as we go on our way  
 May we be guided in peace  
 May we be blessed with health and joy  
 May this our blessing, amen.  
 May we be sheltered by the wings of peace  
 May we be kept in safety and in love  
 May grace and compassion find their  
 way to every soul  
 May this be our blessing, amen.  
 Amen, may this be our blessing, amen.

## Pop Up Sukkah



The light weight PopUp Sukkah Bag, which  
 jumps out of its case and expands into a  
 6-foot-high tent, goes with you everywhere.  
 With the Popup Sukkah you can set it up in  
 a fraction of a second at home or on the go.  
 This sukkah is designed for easy unfolding  
 and setting up. After dismantling, it all fits in  
 a circular bag for ease of transport.

## Question for discussion:

Where would you like to pop up, if you  
 could, and easily find shelter (ie, meet your  
 needs) there?



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# AhYeKaH or AYKhaH?

Rabbi Avi Weinstein

*Executive Director Emeritus of the Bronfman Fellowship*

Hosea 6:7

וְהִמָּה כְּאָדָם עֲבָרוּ בְרִית שָׁם בְּגָדוּ בִי:

But they, to a man, have transgressed the Covenant. This is where they have been false to Me:

The plain meaning of the text is referring to "to a man," but the most literal meaning would refer to a particular man i.e. Adam and how he foreshadows the tragedies of the Jewish people.

*The Petichta (Introduction) to the Midrash on Lamentations uses verses throughout the Tanakh that are concerned with the catastrophe of destruction and exile. Not surprising, there are lots of places.*

## Introduction to Eicha Rabba 4

Rabbi Abbahu began: "But they, like men [ke'adam], have violated the covenant" (Hosea 6:7) – this is Adam the first man. The Holy One blessed be He said: I brought Adam the first man into the Garden of Eden, I commanded him, and he violated My command. I sentenced him to banishment and expulsion, and I lamented him with eikha.

I brought him into the Garden of Eden, as it is stated: "He placed him in the Garden of Eden" (Genesis 2:15). I commanded him, as it is stated: "The Lord God commanded the man saying.... [but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat]" (Genesis 2:16–17).

He violated My command, as it is stated: "Have [you eaten] from the tree from which I commanded you [not to eat?]" (Genesis 3:11). I sentenced him to banishment, as it is stated: "He banished the man" (Genesis 3:24). I sentenced him to expulsion, as it is stated: "The Lord [God] sent him from the Garden of Eden" (Genesis 3:23). I lamented him with eikha, as it is stated: "He said to him: Where are you [ayekal]" (Genesis 3:9); it is written eikha.

His descendants, too, I brought into the Land of Israel, as it is stated: "I brought you into a



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fruitful land" (Jeremiah 2:7). I commanded them, as it is stated: "Command the children of Israel" (Leviticus 24:2). They violated My command, as it is stated: "All Israel has violated your Torah" (Daniel 9:11). I sentenced them to banishment, as it is stated: "From My house I will banish them" (Hosea 9:15). I sentenced them to expulsion, as it is stated: "Send them from My presence and let them go" (Jeremiah 15:1). I lamented them with: "How does... she sit solitary?" (Lamentations 1:1).



## Talmud Sanhedrin 38b

And Rav Yehuda says that Rav says: Adam the first man was a heretic, as it is stated: "And the Lord called to the man and said to him: Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9), meaning, to where has your heart turned, indicating that Adam turned from the path of truth. Rabbi Yitzhak says: He was one who drew his foreskin forward, so as to remove any indication that he was circumcised. It is written here: "And they like men [adam] have transgressed the covenant" (Hosea 6:7), and it is written there: "And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant" (Genesis 17:14).

## Questions for discussion:

The Midrash changes the way the Torah vocalizes AhYeKaH (Where are you) into AYKhaH (How???). How does this change the original narrative when God questions Adam about eating from the forbidden fruit?

What is the point of comparing Adam to B'nei Yisrael? What is the Midrash trying to say?

AyKHaH is concerned with "how," AhYeKaH focuses on the "who." In your life, reflect on the place of AYKhaH in your AhYeKah and how that informs where and indeed who you are.

## Questions for discussion:

How does R. Yehuda understand the verse in Hosea, and how that informs "Where are you?"

Who is Rav Yehuda addressing with this extreme statement?





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# Where Are You ... Inside a Poem?

Jake Marmer

*Served as Education & Programming Director  
of the Bronfman Fellowship from 2019-2022*

From “Coming to Life”  
by Joy Ladin

Where the waters of death empty  
Into waters of life  
The grass grows higher than your head.  
The soil between your toes is damp.  
You lost your shoes some ways back.  
This is holy ground, the waters said  
Or a voice you took  
For the voice of waters  
Pulling you under  
Time and again. You were trying  
To learn to walk  
When you needed to learn to swim. You part  
The grass that whispers  
Through the waters that sing in your ears.  
You can't make out the question  
So you answer Yes.

Questions for discussion:

What do you imagine the “question” is—the one that the narrator can't hear? What about the question the narrator chooses to answer?

Where is the narrator? What is this “place,” at the intersection of “waters of death” and “waters of life?”

Do you ever use this sort of liturgical/biblical/mythic language to describe and explain your own life? When are you compelled to do so?



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## The Shofar Place By Paul Celan, tr. by John Felstiner

The shofar place  
deep in the glowing  
empty-text,  
at torch height,  
in the timehole:

hear deep in  
with your mouth.

### Questions for discussion:

Celan's poem is cryptic and mysterious, and more accessible through sensory free association than direct interpretation. What do you imagine this "shofar place" is, and how does one get there?

Do you have imaginary/symbolic/abstract places you find yourself returning to at different points in your life? What are some of them like?

