Six Seven: The Gift We Gave the World
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There's a new menace in math class this year. Teachers across the country can't say, "Turn to page 67" or "Do problems six and seven" without chaos breaking out. The room erupts: kids chant "Six Seven!", hands wave, laughter echoes. No one knows why it's funny — and that's the point. It's the ultimate inside joke that no one's actually inside.

The Wall Street Journal ran an article about it this week — how "Six Seven" has taken over middle school culture. The meme means nothing, and somehow that's what makes it hilarious.

I know this all too well. My two teenagers have been trying for weeks to trap me into saying “six seven.” They do it at dinner, in the car, and most recently at our house during an AZA poker night. Every time the cards came up six and seven of any suit, the room exploded in “SIX SEVEN!” I’ve never seen teenagers laugh that hard over absolutely nothing. It was—if I’m honest—annoying as hell. But it was also kind of fascinating.

Because this week’s Torah portion, Bereishit, is built entirely around six and seven.

Six days of creation. One day of rest.

And for us, those numbers have deep meaning — maybe the deepest there is.

So while the meme world revels in meaninglessness, I thought I'd do the most adult, rabbinic, and therefore most annoying thing possible: give it meaning.

And in doing so, I might just ruin it for them. Which, I think, is my sacred parental duty.

The Torah begins not with a perfect world, but with *tohu vavohu* — chaos and void. Out of that swirling confusion, God brings light, form, and separation. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch once wrote that Bereishit isn't a scientific text but a moral one — it teaches that holiness begins when we bring order out of chaos.

For six days, God speaks meaning into being:

"Let there be light."

"Let there be a dome in the sky."

"Let the earth bring forth life."

The Midrash in Bereishit Rabbah imagines creation as a divine act of artistry — not an explosion but a construction. Six steps of forming and refining, each one a layer closer to life. The number six, in Jewish mysticism, represents completeness in the physical world: six directions — north, south, east, west, up, and down. To create is to engage fully in the material world, to shape it, build it, repair it.

We live in those six days. That's where we earn, cook, study, argue, and try to make meaning of our lives. It's where we create homes and communities,

where we raise children who shout “Six Seven!” at us from across the table.

But the Torah insists that the six days were not enough.

Creation only becomes whole with the seventh.

The Torah says:

> “On the seventh day God finished the work that He had done; and He ceased from all the work of creation.” (Genesis 2:2)

Notice: it doesn’t say God stopped working after finishing. It says God finished by stopping. In other words, rest itself was the final act of creation.

The Talmud in Megillah 9a teaches that when the world was made, everything had a partner — heaven and earth, day and night, sun and moon — everything except Shabbat. So God said, “Israel will be your partner.” We complete the creation by keeping the rhythm alive.

Shabbat was the world’s first labor law, its first declaration of human dignity. In the ancient Near

East, slaves and peasants had no day off. Their time belonged to kings. Judaism introduced the radical idea that time itself could be holy — that every person, even the lowliest laborer, even the stranger, had a right to rest.

Heschel called it “a cathedral in time.” Not built from stone, but from the refusal to be owned by work. Shabbat is humanity’s weekly liberation.

And that’s something we gave the world.

Christianity adopted the concept of a weekly Sabbath, then Islam; and eventually, secular society built the weekend. Every vacation day, every labor law, every idea that a human being deserves rest — they all trace back to that ancient Jewish revelation that time can be sacred.

It’s one of Judaism’s greatest gifts to civilization.

But the world has a way of dragging us back into endless day six. We live in an age of constant creation — not divine creation, but endless

productivity. Our devices hum, our calendars overflow, and we fill every quiet moment with noise.

We've become experts at doing, but beginners at being.

And so the Torah's rhythm feels even more revolutionary today. Six is for building, producing, solving. Seven is for stopping, breathing, remembering who we are.

Without the seventh, the six devours us.

Without rest, work becomes chaos again.

That's what God saw "was very good" — not perfection, but balance.

Now, my kids would say I'm overthinking all this. "Dad," they'd tell me, "it's just a meme. It doesn't mean anything."

And they'd be right. But that's kind of what we do as Jews — we add meaning to the meaningless. That's our whole project.

We see a loaf of bread and we say a blessing.

We see the moon and we sanctify the new month.

We see time passing and we call it holy.

It’s what adults do in every culture — we give names, boundaries, rules, meanings — and our children roll their eyes. And that’s fine. Because maturity, in the best sense, is the courage to bring purpose where there is none.

In that way, Judaism is the adult in the room. Not humorless, not joyless — just committed to meaning. We don’t invent chaos; we redeem it.

And yes, that can be annoying. But as I tell my kids, holiness is often annoying before it's appreciated.

Besides, Jews have a great sense of humor. We didn't invent comedy, but we perfected it — from the shtetl to Seinfeld. We laugh at the absurdity of life precisely because we also insist on finding meaning in it.

The philosopher Franz Rosenzweig once wrote that creation is not complete until humanity learns to imitate the divine pattern. When we work for six and

rest on the seventh, we participate in God's creative rhythm.

In a way, the "Six Seven" meme is a perfect metaphor for what happens when meaning gets detached from its source. The world shouts "Six Seven!" — noise without purpose — while Judaism whispers back: "Yes, six and seven — that's how creation began. Six days of work, one of rest. That's how the world stays whole."

We can laugh at the meme, but let's not miss the reminder. We need both: the laughter of youth and

the wisdom of age, the play of six and the peace of seven.

Our task is not to escape the world of six but to sanctify it by keeping seven. To show, through our practice, that the world is more than production — it’s purpose.

So, to my teenagers and their friends — if you’re listening — I know I’ve just ruined “Six Seven” for you forever.

You’re welcome.

Because every time you shout it, you'll now hear an echo of Bereishit:

Six days of creation. One of rest.

The pattern that holds the world together.

And maybe that's not such a bad thing — to turn a meaningless meme into a moment of meaning. That's what Judaism has been doing for thousands of years.

Taking chaos and giving it form.

Taking laughter and turning it into learning.

Taking six and giving it seven.

That’s how God finished creation.

That’s how we keep it going.

Shabbat shalom.