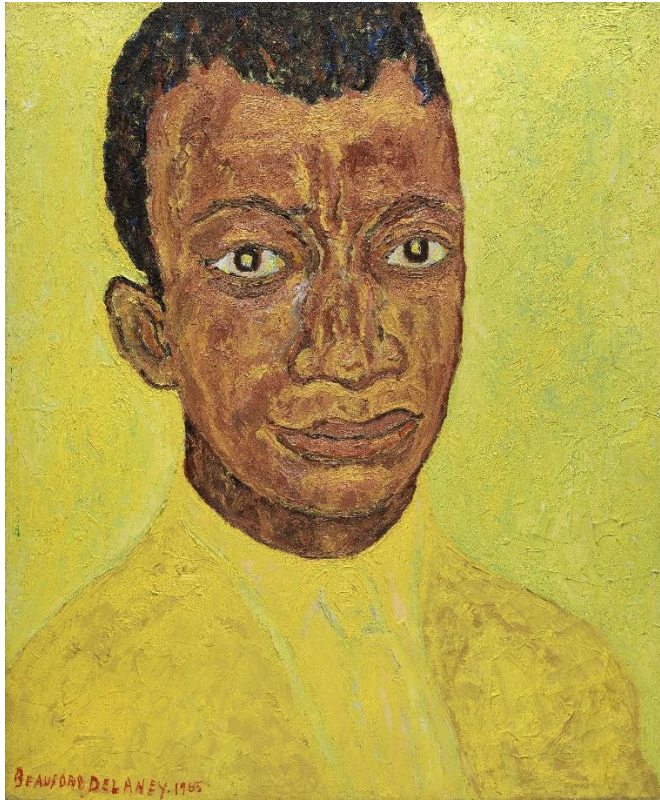


PARSHAT B'REISHIT
GENESIS 1:1-6:8
24 TISHREI 5782/30 SEPTEMBER 2021



Portrait of James Baldwin
Oil on canvass by Beauford Delaney

“Not everything is lost. Responsibility cannot be lost, it can only be abdicated. If one refuses abdication, one begins again.” (James Baldwin, *Just Above My Head*)

WE CAN BEGIN AGAIN

1. “Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?” he asked. “Begin at the beginning,” the King said gravely, “and go on till you come to the end: then stop.” (Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*)
2. The verse cannot be read as “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” since the first act of God was “Let there be light.” Thus, verse 1 does not come to teach us the order of Creation. (Rashi)
3. God separated the waters below from the waters above. (Genesis 1:7)

They are crying like a family being torn apart. The lower waters long to go up in order to be reunited with their other half. (Midrash, B’reishit Rabbah 5:5)

וַיֵּאָדָר יַעֲלֶה מִן־הָאָרֶץ, *and a mist/flow would well up from the ground...* (Genesis 2:6)

אָדָר - mist, flow אָדָר - be curved, bent אָדָר - distress, calamity; of bereavement, pain

For all of Creation alludes to the human psyche. The “destroyed worlds” are lived out in the heart broken by failing. In that way alone can one ever attain understanding....“A mist rose up from the ground and watered the whole earth.” That is, a cry rose from the worlds that were destroyed....Arousal must move from below; only then the earth was watered. (Rabbi Ya’akov of Izbica-Radzyn)

4. And for what, except for you, do I feel love?

....

And not to have is the beginning of desire.

To have what is not is its ancient cycle.

It is desire at the end of winter, when

It observes the effortless weather turning blue

And sees the myosotis on its bush.

Being virile, it hears the calendar hymn.

It knows that what it has is what is not

And throws it away like a thing of another time,

As morning throws off stale moonlight and shabby sleep.

(Wallace Stevens, “Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction”)

5. Every beginning contains some dimension of renewal/innovation (*hithadshut*), without which is not called a true beginning....However, there is an important distinction to be made here. In reference to all beginnings in the world, there are beginnings that contain an element of renewal/innovation and beginnings that are not beginnings. (Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira)
6. “...safety is always necessarily an illusion. Artists are here to disturb the peace. They have to disturb the peace. Otherwise, chaos.” (James Baldwin)