

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

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This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Moshe Chaim ben Avraham Aba. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

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26 TISHREI

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS BEREISHIS

Light and Darkness

God said "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good and God separated between the light and the darkness (1:3-4).

Rashi (ad loc), in his second interpretation of this verse, comments: "According to its simple meaning explain it thusly – He saw that it was good and that it wasn't proper for it (the light) and the darkness to be functioning in a jumbled manner so He assigned this one (light) a sphere of activity during the day, and the other (darkness) a sphere of activity during the night."

These concepts require an explanation. First of all, what does it mean that Hashem saw that the light was good? In Rashi's first (less literal) interpretation, light refers to a spiritual light that Hashem reserved for the righteous in the World to Come. This can be understood as being good. But in his more literal explanation of the *possuk*, what was good about light? It was a creation like anything else; what was particularly good about it?

Secondly, how are we to understand the original "jumble" of light and darkness? How is that possible and what was this separation that was created because Hashem saw that it was good?

The Gemara (*Nedarim* 64b) teaches us that there are four types of people who are considered as if they were dead; one who is blind, one who has lost all his money, one who has leprosy, and one who is childless. Why is a blind person considered as if he were dead?

Light gives us the ability to see objects and seeing is our way of connecting to objects. People who are obsessed with themselves are constantly looking at themselves in

the mirror (and taking lots of selfies) because that is how they connect to themselves. When someone has an experience of losing something, he says, "I never thought I would see it again." In fact, this is what Yaakov says upon being reunited with Yosef after giving him up for dead for twenty-two years, "I can die at this time after having seen your face..." (46:30).

A person who cannot see his body isn't properly connected to himself. In fact, Rashi points out by Yitzchak, who was home bound because of his blindness, that he no longer had an evil inclination and Hashem was therefore able to associate His name with Yitzchak without fear that Yitzchak would sin. Seeing is a way to be connected and take ownership. If you cannot see something, you cannot sense it as being yours – so a blind person is as if he is dead because it is as if he has no body. This is why they no longer have an evil inclination.

This is the difference between day and night. Hashem divided creation into day and night because they have two very distinct purposes. During the day a person is connected to his body, while at night a person is connected to his soul. This is what the *possuk* (*Tehillim* 92:3) means, "To declare your loving kindness in the morning, and your faithfulness every night."

We sense the kindness of Hashem and the opportunity to gain from all that he has created for us during the day. When night comes, we begin to feel alone and yearn



to seek a spiritual connection.

Originally, light and dark were created to be intermingled intermittently so that a person could connect to both parts of his psyche. But when Hashem saw that light would actually give a person the ability to sense himself, he separated the darkness, which would immediately limit man's sense of himself. He thus separated light and darkness into two distinct spheres of influence – a time to focus on one's physical body and a time to focus on one's soul.

The Great Satan

And God saw all that He had made and behold it was very good (1:31).

At the end of the sixth and final day of creation, the *possuk* says that Hashem reflected upon all that He had created and saw that it was **very** good.

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabbah* 9:6-9) has a fascinating discussion on what is meant by "and behold it was very good." There are several dissenting opinions, including: "Nahman said in the name of R' Shmuel this refers to the evil inclination [...] R' Zeira said this refers to Gehinnom [...] R' Shmuel ben Yitzchak says this refers to the angel of death."

These are not ordinarily considered wonderful additions to creation; what do Chazal mean by saying that the evil inclination, the angel of death, and Gehinnom are all part of what Hashem

The Great Satan Continued

saw as “and behold it was very good”?

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 30b) makes an odd statement: Hashem told the Jewish people “I created the evil inclination and I created the Torah as its spice.” In other words, the very basis of creation is built on the evil inclination and the Torah is “merely” its antidote. What does this really mean?

The answer is that man was created with the ability to desire things for himself. In order to receive and fully appreciate the good that Hashem intended to bestow on mankind, man has to be in touch with his sense of self and what he wants to have. The evil inclination is the prime motivator for man to achieve. On the other hand, the more we focus solely on what we want the further we move away from Hashem. Thus, the *yetzer hora* is the basis to creation and the Torah, which is meant to guide us in the maelstrom of the physical

world, is really the key to keeping us on track to receive the ultimate good that Hashem desires us to have.

Even though the evil inclination was the root cause of Adam’s original sin and caused a rift between man and Hashem, the desire for self-fulfillment is the basis for creation. The Torah is the guide for the road back to Hashem and the relationship with Him, which is the ultimate good, but creation is built on man choosing for himself.

Similarly, the angel of death can also be seen as a great kindness. Death really means that man now has an end time to his life cycle. Once man sinned and his spiritual soul could no longer sustain the physical body, it became necessary for man to die in order to expel the physical contamination to his body.

Man’s life now has boundaries, and just like every physical object in the universe,

boundaries provide definition. This is what Shlomo Hamelech meant when he said, “It is better to go to a funeral than a feast” (*Koheles* 7:2). If a person takes to heart that his life on earth is limited, it allows him to transcend the mere physical desires of this world and seek a deeper eternal existence.

Lastly, *Gehinnom* can also be seen as the ultimate expression of Hashem’s love for mankind. Meaning, if a person is so far off the proper path and separated from Hashem that he cannot go to an eternal reward, he should just perish into oblivion. But Hashem, in his great love for man, wishes to rehabilitate his creations. The Mishna points out that there are only a few people who have no share in the World to Come. Thus, this pain of rehabilitation is really just a purification process so that a person can merit an eternal existence at some point, and this is, after all, the entire purpose of creation.

An Abel Proxy

After a period of time, Kayin brought an offering to Hashem from the fruit of the land, and Hevel also offered some of the firstborn of his flock. Hashem paid heed to Hevel and his offering; but to Kayin and his offering Hashem paid no heed. Kayin became furious and depressed (4:3-5).

This week’s *parsha* recounts the famous story of the first conflict between brothers, which ultimately leads to the first case of fratricide. The Torah gives us the background on the source of the conflict: Kayin who had first conceived of bringing an offering to Hashem was outdone by his younger brother who seized on the same concept but prepared a much nicer offering to Hashem (see *Rashi* 4:3-4). Hashem accepts the offering of Hevel, while Kayin’s offering is all but ignored.

The Torah describes Kayin as “furious and depressed.” One can only imagine how slighted Kayin felt; after all, he had the original idea to make an offering to Hashem but was outdone by his younger brother who merely co-opted his idea and improved on it. Kayin’s fury is understandable, but why does the Torah also describe him as depressed? Being furious and being depressed are not complementary emotions; what is Kayin’s

state of mind?

Shortly thereafter, in what seems to be a fit of jealous rage, Kayin rises up to kill Hevel. Immediately, Hashem appears to Kayin and asks, “Where is your brother Hevel?” Kayin responds in a very strange manner – “I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?” Why does Kayin take such an insolent position with Hashem to make the derisive remark, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Kayin could have simply responded, “I don’t know.” What point is Kayin trying to convey?

The Ten Commandments were written on two side by side tablets (as opposed to one long tablet listing the Ten Commandments in order). Chazal note that this is significant in that the Ten Commandments can also be read across; therefore the first commandment “I am Hashem...” is connected to the sixth commandment “Do not murder.” Thus, the transgression of murder is also an attack on Hashem Himself, as it were. The reason for this is,

as we see in this week’s *parsha* regarding the creation of man, on the sixth day of creation Hashem says, “Let us make man in our image and likeness.” Thereby an attack on man is also an attack on Hashem.

This is what the Torah meant when it said that Kayin was furious and depressed. He was angry at Hashem for ignoring his offering, but at the same time he also recognized that he had no way of expressing his anger at Hashem. This impotence to act caused Kayin to feel helpless and thereby depressed. Kayin’s attack on Hevel wasn’t motivated by jealousy or anger towards Hevel, it was a proxy attack on Hashem. He killed Hevel to get even with God.

Now we can understand his insolence towards Hashem when he said, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” This was just a continuation of his attack on Hashem.



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