

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

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

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29 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 their 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 with 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 said 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 he 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 Yitzchak no longer had an evil inclination.



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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 by "*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 for 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 self. 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.

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 toward Hashem when he said, "Am I my brother's keeper?" This was just a continuation of his attack on Hashem.



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