

Our *Parashah* opens: "In the beginning of *Elokim's* creating the heavens and the earth..." (We have translated the verse as it is explained by *Rashi z"l*.) *Rashi* comments: The verse does not use the Name "*Hashem*," because at first the Creator intended the world to function using the attribute of *Din* / Justice, which is commonly denoted by the Name "*Elokim*." However, He realized that the world could not thus endure and, therefore, He allied *Din* with the attribute of *Rachamim* / Mercy, which is commonly denoted by the Name we pronounce "*Hashem*," but He gave precedence to *Rachamim*. Thus, we read (*Bereishit* 2:4), "On the day that the *Hashem Elokim* made earth and heaven"--using both Divine Names, representing *Rachamim* and *Din*, respectively. [Until here from *Rashi*]

It goes without saying that *Hashem* did not obtain new information and change His mind! What then does *Rashi* mean? R' Chaim Friedlander *z"l* (1923-1986; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva) explains:

Rashi does not mean to imply that a change happened over time. Rather, *Rashi* is teaching that the world as we know it is not the ideal. *Hashem* "wanted" to create the world with *Din*--*i.e.*, that would have been the ideal--so that mankind would be judged by the letter of law and, therefore, would truly deserve reward for its good deeds. That would have been the greatest kindness, and *Hashem* never abandoned that plan; He will implement it in the ideal world of the future. In the meantime, however, *Hashem* knows that we are too imperfect to exist in a world where *Din* stands alone. Therefore, He created the world as we know it such that, for now, *Rachamim* prevails over *Din*. (*Siftei Chaim: Mo'adim* I p.57)

Shabbat

R' David Lau *shlita* (Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel from 2013-2024) writes: We read (*Shmot* 20:9), "Six days you shall labor and accomplish all your work." The *Midrash Mechilta* asks: Is it possible for a person to complete all of his work in six days? Is it not possible that when *Shabbat* comes, he will not yet have finished the project he was working on?

Rashi z"l quotes the *Mechilta's* answer: "When *Shabbat* comes it should be in your eyes as though all your work is done, *i.e.*, that you should not think at all about work." It is not enough to not work on *Shabbat*, the *Midrash* is teaching; one should not even think about work, R' Lau writes. One should imagine that he has no work to do, not even a phone call to make, as if the deal or project on which he was working is finished.

Are we simply being asked to fool ourselves? R' Lau asks. Certainly not! he answers, and he explains:

Creation was not a one-time event. Rather, as we say in our daily prayers, "He renews daily, perpetually, the work of Creation." Unlike a contractor who leaves behind a finished project and gives, at most, a limited warranty, *Hashem* "forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates all"--all in present tense, as we also say in our daily prayers. At every moment, *Hashem* is upholding Creation and bestowing His goodness upon it.

In contrast, man has a very limited role to play in the world. We have an obligation of *Hishtadlut* / exertion of effort, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, we are expected to have *Emunah* / faith that it is really *Hashem* who does our work. When one has this perspective, he will never worry when *Shabbat* starts that perhaps he should have made one more phone call. Since he has done his *Hishtadlut*, he has already done his job; it truly is complete. Now, he can use his "time away" on *Shabbat* to reflect upon the fact that it is *Hashem* Who will determine whether or not the deal or project gets done. That is not fooling oneself! That is *Bitachon* / trust.

(*Maskil Le'David: Igrot U'Michtavim* p.89)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-775-9623

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“Hashem said to Kayin, ‘Why are you annoyed, and why has your face fallen?’” (4:6)

One of the most prized students of R’ Yitzchak Isaac Sher z”l (1875-1951; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Slobodka Yeshiva in Lithuania and Bnei Brak) was R’ Shlomo Hoffman z”l (1922-2013; Torah scholar and educator noted, among other things, for his 40 years working in the Israeli prison system). The latter relates that the first time he met the *Rosh Yeshiva* who would ultimately become his primary teacher, R’ Sher asked him: “Why are you sad?”

“I’m sad?” the future R’ Hoffman asked. R’ Sher replied that he did indeed look sad.

The young man then questioned what was wrong with looking sad, and R’ Sher responded, “Bring me a *Chumash*.” Upon receiving the *Chumash*, he opened to the story of Kayin and Hevel and asked, “What was Kayin’s sin?”

“Murder!” the young man responded, in a tone that suggested the answer was obvious.

“Pay attention!” replied R’ Sher, showing the *Chumash* to the future R’ Hoffman. “The first question *Hashem* ever asked Kayin (after Kayin’s sacrificial offer was rejected) was, ‘Why has your face fallen?’” In other words: Why do you look sad.

We learn from this, concludes R’ Hoffman in retelling this story, that Kayin’s first sin was allowing himself to remain sad. (He should have learned a lesson from *Hashem*’s rejection of his offering and then moved on.) Because of his sadness, Kayin descended down a slippery slope until, ultimately, he committed the first murder in history.

(*She’al Avicha V’yagedcha* p.8)

A related thought:

We read (*Mishlei* 15:13), “A glad heart cheers the face, but a despondent heart [causes] a broken spirit.” R’ Eliyahu z”l (1720-1797; the *Vilna Gaon*) explains:

When someone is happy with the work he is doing, it brings cheer to his face. A person’s yearning to perform *Mitzvot* or anything else worthwhile comes from a spirit that rests on him after he does other good things. (This is what our Sages mean when they teach, “A *Mitzvah* brings another *Mitzvah* in its wake.”) But, when a person’s heart is sad, that spirit is broken, and he becomes unable to accomplish anything.

(*Be’ur Ha’Gra Al Mishlei*)

R’ Aryeh Finkel z”l (1931-2016; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Mir Yeshiva in Modi’in Ilit, Israel) adds: Very often (as in Kayin’s case), that sadness comes from a feeling that one was short-changed.

(*Har Yera’eh*)

“Elokim saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good . . .” (1:31)

Targum Onkelos translates the phrase, “It was very good,” into Aramaic as, “It was very well made.” In contrast, earlier in the chapter (verses 4, 10, 12, 18, 21, and 25), *Onkelos* translates, “It was good,” literally. Why the difference?

R’ Gershon Edelstein z”l (1923-2023; *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva) explains: Only when something is complete can one attest that it is “very well made.” Thus, this could have been said only on the sixth day.

R’ Edelstein continues: *Midrash Rabbah* teaches that the phrase, “Behold, it was very good,” refers, in particular, to the creation of death. Why? Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z”l (1210-1263; Spain) explains that the existence of death is very good because it humbles a person. R’ Edelstein elaborates: This is part of what makes the world complete, for the world is not complete unless man is complete, and man is not complete without *Yir’at Shamayim* / fear of Heaven, which comes from humbling oneself before G-d.

(*Sha’arei Teshuvah Im Pininei Chizuk* II 25)

“Of the fruit of the tree which is in the center of the garden, Elokim has said, ‘You shall neither eat of it nor touch it, lest you die.’” (3:3)

“And the woman perceived that the tree was good for eating and that it was a delight to the eyes . . .” (3:6)

Midrash Rabbah relates that, just before the Exodus, Moshe Rabbeinu commanded *Bnei Yisrael* to circumcise themselves in preparation for eating the *Korban Pesach*, but many hesitated. What did *Hashem* do? He caused all the winds in the world to blow through *Gan Eden*, and from there to waft over Moshe’s *Korban Pesach*, bringing its enticing aroma to *Bnei Yisrael*. After smelling the *Korban*, *Bnei Yisrael* agreed to circumcise themselves.

Why specifically did the aroma of the *Korban Pesach* persuade *Bnei Yisrael*, and what is its connection to *Gan Eden*? R’ Yaakov Moshe Charlap z”l (1882-1951; *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) explains: Mankind was expelled from *Gan Eden* for eating the fruit of the *Etz Ha’da’at*, a sin that involved all of man’s senses except the sense of smell. Chava listened to the snake, she looked at the tree, she touched the fruit, and she tasted it. She also misused her power of speech when she said that *Hashem* had commanded them not to touch the tree, which He had not done. (This enabled the snake to argue, “Just as you did not die when you touched it, so you will not die when you eat it.”) These actions weakened the spiritual power of man’s senses.

The only sense that remained unscathed was the sense of smell. Therefore, that sense could be a catalyst for the Exodus, the beginning of the process of repairing the sin that occurred in, and returning mankind to, *Gan Eden*. Therefore, *Gan Eden* had a role to play in the Exodus. [Notably, the Prophets and *Gemara* speak of *Mashiach* as being able to distinguish between truth and falsehood using smell.] (*Haggadah Shel Pesach Mei Marom* p.40)