

INSIGHTS from the SEDRA

Insights from the Sedra is a project of the Scholar's Kollel of Great Neck. It aims to provide several questions and answers about the Sedra, culled from various commentaries, including the following: Baal Haturim, Darash Moshe, Vedibarta Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky, Torah Treasures by Dov Furer, Wellsprings of Torah by Alexander Friedman, and Kol Dodi by Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, Great Torah Lights by Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Goodman, Something To Say by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, The Vilna Gaon, Growth Through Torah by Zelig Pliskin and The Call of the Torah.

ויאמר אלקים יהי אור

"The L-rd said, 'let there be light...'" (1:3)

Rabbi Yehudah commented, "Light was created first" (*Breishit Rabbah*). If there is light, the world exists, but without it, there can be nothing. So too, regarding the light of Torah: *the light of the Torah gives life to all those who possess it - they merit Resurrection of the Dead (Ketubot 111a)*. A person's vitality derives from the Torah both in this world and the next. Someone walking at night in the pitch dark is afraid, as our Sages say in their parable (*Sotah 21a*), but when the light shines, he is saved from everything. (Chafetz Chaim)

ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום אחד

"And there was evening and there was morning; one day." (1:5)

Scripture refers to the next day of Creation as the "second day." Why then does it call the first day, *yom echad*, "one day"? Since the first day of Creation was different from all the other days, it was on an entirely different level apart from the five days that followed. For what was created on that first day was that special light, which was subsequently concealed, to be revealed only in the end of days, because the world was not deserving of such great light. Had the Scriptural text read "the first day" it would have put that day on the same level with all the other days, when in fact, the first day of Creation was "one day", unique in kind and degree. (Meshech Chochmah)

ויבדל בין המים אשר מתחת לרקיע ובין המים אשר מעל הרקיע ויהי כן

"And G-d divided the waters from which were beneath the firmament from the waters that were above the firmament, and it was so." (1:7)

According to the *Midrash*, the comment "and it was good" was omitted here because the waters were divided from one another and division is not good. But why, then, do we find the comment "and G-d saw that it was good" in connection with the fourth day of Creation, when G-d also made a division, this time between light and darkness (*Breishit 1:18-19*)?

The division between light and darkness, unlike the division between the waters, was a division made between opposites, and it is permitted and even "good" to separate such opposites as light and darkness, since these two cannot coexist together. But the waters belonged together, and it is not good to put asunder things that by right should be one.

This should teach us that men of like minds should unite and that any division among them is not good. But in the case of good and evil, a clear0cut separation is not only permitted but actually considered “good.”

ויאמר הנחש אל האשה לא מות תמתן

“And the serpent said to the woman, ‘You shall surely not die...’” (3:4)

The *Midrash* comments that the snake pushed *Chava* into the tree and she touched it. He remarked that “just as there is no death in touching it, so there is no death in eating it.”

What proof did the snake cite that there was no death in merely touching the tree? The fact that he made *Chava* touch the tree and she did not die immediately. But had not G-d implied that death would come “*in the day that one eats from it*”? The day was still young. How could *Chava* be sure that she would not die that day?

Said the snake: “*You may eat of the fruit to your heart’s content. If there is no death in touching it, there certainly will be no death in eating it. But even if you were to die after all for having touched the tree, you may eat of its fruit, because you can only die once, and you might as well as enjoy yourself before.*”

This is the way of the evil impulse. Once he has caused man to start on the road to sin, he says to him: “*You see, you are lost already, so you might as well as enjoy yourself.*”

(*Peninim Yekarim*)

ויאמר אלקים נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו

“And G-d said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.’” (1:26)

Rashi comments that “*when G-d judges the kings, He likewise consults His Heavenly Council.*” Even though the whole world was already complete, and the purpose of its creation was man, G-d stopped to deliberate and to reconsider His work. This should teach man that even after he has already completed a plan he should stop and reconsider before he proceeds, just as if he had only begun the work. The fact that he has already completed the task should not keep him from reconsidering it, even if such reconsideration would lead him to find that he must destroy it and begin all over again.

(*Sifrei Mussar*)

SHABBAT SHALOM

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