

When the earth was astonishingly empty, with darkness upon the surface of the deep... G-d said, "Let there be light," and there was light... And G-d separated between the light and the darkness. (1:2-4)

Contrary to popular belief, the darkness of which the Torah speaks is not merely the absence of light. It is a specific creation, as it is clearly stated in *Yeshayahu* 45:7,

Yotzeir ohr u'borei choshech – oseh shalom u'borei ra, "[I am the One] Who forms light and creates darkness, Who makes peace and creates evil." The *Midrash* comments, "Great is peace, for Hashem did not commence His creation of the world with anything other than something which represents peace. What is this? It is light." The *Midrash* goes on to cite the *pasuk* in *Yeshayahu*. We must endeavor to understand what about light evokes the concept of peace. Furthermore, what is the relationship between the creation of light and darkness and peace?

In his *Halichos Shlomo*, *Horav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zl*, explains that light specifically relates to peace, as it is the perfect symbol for peace. We first must understand the meaning of peace. We are led to believe that a man at peace is one who has vanquished his enemies. No longer does he suffer from those who would cause him to be involved in strife. His enemies fear him as he walks among them with impunity, but they are still his enemies. This is not the true definition of peace. Living with enemies all around you, albeit powerless to hurt you, does not define peace. Rather, it is controlled enmity.

Shalom, peace, is derived from *shleimus*, completion, perfection. To be at peace is not to have enemies at all. One gets along with everyone, earning their respect and admiration – even if they do not see eye to eye on various issues. We see this dichotomy between the blessings that the evil Lavan and Besuel gave to Rivkah *Imeinu* as she was about to become Yitzchak *Avinu's* wife: "And may your offspring inherit the gates of its foes" (*Bereishis* 24:60). When Moshe *Rabbeinu* blessed Asher, he said, "He shall be pleasing to his brothers" (*Devarim* 33:24). One blessing focuses on vanquishing enemies, while the other sets his sights on friendship and respect. These pose two contrasting perspectives, which represent their differences in appreciating the value and meaning of peace.

Concerning all natural phenomena, we note that, by their very nature, they are involved in a sort of competitive relationship whereby one must best the other. Fire and water cannot exist together. It is one or the other. This applies to all phenomena, except light and darkness. They are both creations *yeish mei'ayin*, *ex nihilo*, something from nothing. In his commentary to *Meseches Tamid* 32, the *Maharsha* writes that we must believe that Hashem created *ohr* and *choshech*, light and darkness, equally *yeish mei'ayin*, even if we have difficulty conceptualizing this. We neither ask what existed before this world was created, nor what will be after. As believing Jews, we do just that: believe in

Hashem. Likewise, the *Gaon, m'Vilna*, writes in his commentary to *Sefer Yetzirah* that darkness is not merely an absence of light. It is a powerful entity created by Hashem. Nevertheless, despite the fact that darkness is a viable entity, a drop of light will push it away. Why? Because the darkness **yields** to the light, accepting its status without complaint or without protest. This is peace at its zenith. For this reason, only light stands alone as the symbol of peace, for its ability to compel darkness to acquiesce to its dominance.

This explains the *pasuk's* concluding words, *u'borei ra*, "Who creates evil" (*Yeshayahu* 45:7). As Hashem causes darkness to cede to light, creating a viable peace, likewise will evil be pushed away from good, so that the two will make peace.