

And G-d saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. (1:31)

After Hashem created the world in its entirety, the Torah declares that it was not only good, but it was very good. On an individual basis, each creation in isolation may be viewed as inherently good. When

everything is combined into the larger context, it becomes very good. Even those creations that appear to be evil – such as misery, pain and even death – have their place in the larger scheme of things. Thus, in the total context of existence, we can view them as being very good. Indeed, the Midrash says: “Tov, good: this is the angel of life. Me’od, very (good): this is the angel of death.” Incredible! The angel of death and what he represents is not only good, it is very good. With an inimitable analogy, the Maggid, zl, m’Dubno gives us a homiletical insight into Chazal. A craftsman who was famous for his intricate works of art, his beautifully fashioned furniture, and his supreme workmanship once left his home without putting away his expensive tools. His son, Yankel, was an astute, resourceful bundle of energy, always looking for something to do. Noticing his father’s tools, he had an idea. Why not demonstrate his talent to his father? Certainly, he could create works of art just like his father. He proceeded to remove tools from the tool box and began to create. Wood was putty in his hands, as his father’s saw cut various pieces of furniture down to size. The hammer and nails were also helpful, as were the drill and screw driver. Yankel was having a blast, until his father came running home after remembering that he had neglected to put his tools away.

“Yankel, what have you done?” his father screamed.

“I was only helping you. I decided to fix up some of our furniture,”

Yankel replied innocently.

Yankel’s father could hardly constrain his smile as he told his precocious son, “Even responsible adults who have mastered carpentry should be very careful when attempting to use these tools. Certainly, a young child who has no experience will do much more harm than improvement. These are powerful tools which, when used by someone who is untrained, can be very destructive.”

Likewise, Hashem tells us in Sefer Devarim (30:15), “See! I have placed before you today the life

and the good.” The “good” as determined by Hashem is before us. Take it! So what does the “brilliant” man do? He decides that there is a better way. There is better than good. There is “very” good. He will arise early in the morning to daven k’vasikin, at sunrise. Meanwhile, he will wake up his entire family and everybody else in his apartment building. Someone trying to be more “creative” will add some mitzvos. If they do not approve of another person, they decide it is a mitzvah to “bury” him. In other words, there are those individuals who will not leave well enough alone; Hashem’s 613 mitzvos are not sufficient. Instead, they feel that they must focus on new programs, new charities, new ideas, new forms of service to the Almighty – everything – except to focus on the original that has been tried and proven.

Tov, good: this is the angel of life. Hashem has told us how to live. Tov me’od, very good: this is when people seek to improve on Hashem’s good. The Midrash is not addressing the positive aspect of death. Rather, it is focusing on the negative aspect of “very good.”