

When the earth was astonishingly empty, with darkness upon the surface of the deep. (1:2) G-d said, “Let there be light,” and there was light, and G-d separated between the light and the darkness. (1:3,4)

In what must be the most interpreted, but yet remains the most enigmatic, ambiguous *pesukim*, the Torah commences with the story of Creation. It is a topic which can be studied for a lifetime and its interpretation still remains elusive, because its profundity is far above our mortal cognitive limitations. Just to give the reader snippets to think about, I cite from *Kol HaTorah* by *Horav Eliyahu Munk, zl*, concerning the phrase *v'choshech al pnei sehom*; “with darkness upon the surface of the deep.” The *Ramban* explains that darkness is not to be thought of as an absence of light, but as the effect of a creation ad hoc – a creation of darkness. *Rav Munk* observes that noticeably the creation of darkness precedes the creation of light, with this sequence (darkness preceding light) revealing a characteristic of both the physical and spiritual realm. It is the principle of ascendancy in creation, moving from negative to positive and from nothingness to being. Regardless of the conditions that confront us, this is the path which perfection must take. Why?

I think that to achieve perfection, one must first eradicate, expunge, the negative. Otherwise, the perfection is flawed, subject to failure at any juncture of challenge. *Ramchal* devotes an entire chapter to the *middah*, attribute, of *nekiyus* (loosely translated as cleanliness, but more closely resembles purity). A *naki* is a person who has purged himself both from bad character traits and sinful actions. A *naki* avoids any subtle wrongdoing or even the appearance of it. It is a state of mind in which a person does not even fall prey to “rationalized” sin, having convinced himself that a certain activity is permissible. He must separate himself from anything negative. It is the type of “baggage” that will destroy his “journey.”

Hashem created light. This original light was later concealed (*ohr haganuz*) and set aside for the *tzaddikim*, righteous, in *Olam Habba*, the World-to-Come. This original light was created to dissipate the darkness that preceded it and now covered the abyss. The *Baal HaTanya* explains that our task as human beings with cognitive ability is to take a lesson from the light arising from the darkness, to act likewise in our own lives, to make our light and the light of others emerge from amidst the darkness in which so much of the world is immersed. We should look at ourselves and at others and say: *Yehi ohr*, “Let there be light.” Let us arise from the abyss to endeavor to achieve perfection.

Interestingly, Hashem next separated the light from the darkness. He did not have the light rule over the darkness, despite the fact that when He saw the light, He called it *tov*, “good.” He allowed darkness to subsist, but he separated it from light. We can derive a powerful lesson from here, explains *Rav Munk*. From the beginning of Creation, Hashem instituted the principle of *havdalah*, separation, in the universe. (This was the prototype for gender separation.) Thus, He separated

Heaven and earth.

In the world plan, separation is a catalyst to life on earth. Indeed, it is this universal polarization that gives man his earthly mission: to do everything within his power to transcend these dualisms and to bring about the Supreme unity everywhere that he possibly can. We must never forget that everything emerges from one unique Source, and everything instinctively tends to return to it. Man and woman were originally formed as one being, and subsequently separated into two distinct bodies. Thus, the tendency to become “one flesh” is natural and deeply rooted in their emotions. This concept likewise, applies, to the other separations: light from darkness; *Shabbos* from weekday; *Klal Yisrael* from the other nations; holy from profane. These are not naturally occurring separations/*havdalos*, which represent eternal, immutable, definitive states of separation. In the future, the separation between light and darkness will be overcome when *Ohr chadash al Tzion ta'ir*, “A new light will shine on *Tzion*.” Similarly, through the spread and growth of moral forces (which will eventually override the filth and moral bankruptcy which characterize modern society) of mankind, the separations between *Klal Yisrael* and the nations of the world will disappear, as all nations will unite to serve Hashem (this does not mean that they will become Jewish. They will continue as gentiles, but will maintain an elevated moral code of living, similar to ours). All differences will dissolve, and all the nations will revere the supreme unity.

Ultimately, the difference between *Shabbos* and the six weekdays will make way for the *Yom shekulo Shabbos u'menuchah l'chayei Olam Habba*, “The time/day of continual *Shabbos* and continual rest in the World to Come.”

Perhaps we might add a new idea concerning the concept of unity. After Hashem created each day, the Torah writes that Hashem saw that “it was good” (except on day two, because, on that day, Hashem began to create the waters but He did not complete them until the third day [*Rashi*]). Alternatively, upper and lower waters were divided that day. Division indicates strife. There is nothing “good” about strife). On the third day, the Torah writes, “It was good,” twice. *Yom she'nichpal bo ki tov*, “The day that *ki tov* was doubled.” What is so special about the number/day three?

Let us “crunch” the numbers. The number one represents unity. It also implies simplicity and agreement. One is alone. There is no discord, no disturbance when one is alone, but then there is no interaction with anyone – period. *Koheles* (4:9) expresses the meaning of the number two: *Tovim ha'shnayim min ha'echad*, “Two are better than one.” That only works, however, when the two are on the same page, working well together. Otherwise, two can imply duality, separation, and, at times, tension.

The number three connotes harmony and synthesis. While the unity of number one connotes isolation and exclusivity, the unity of number three is created by inclusiveness and acquiescence. Number two is neither banished nor abandoned, but prevailed upon to join with number one, to ease the tension and work through whatever complexities may stand in opposition to an enduring,

amicable conciliation. Number three seeks a common denominator, a universal goal to which one and two can work toward as a joint venture. Three focuses on transforming adversity into diversity, thus creating lasting harmony and unity. Thus, it is doubly good.

At the end of time, the only true unity is the Oneness of Hashem, which is perfect. Our goal always has to focus on perfection, *nekiyus*, purity. While separation works to a certain extent, it is not ideal. Thus, we all look forward to that glorious day when the separations will merge together as everyone recognizes the Glory of Hashem.