

DARKNESS BY DAY

by Rabbi Daniel Travis

Some religions believe that there are two gods, one of good and one of bad. Whenever something which they consider positive takes place, they attribute it to the god of good, and when something they deem negative happens they say it was from the god of evil. They think that the constant ups and downs of life are a result of the struggles between these two gods.

Judaism views this matter totally differently. We believe that there is one G-d and that everything that takes place in this world comes directly from Him and is good. This belief is reaffirmed twice daily when we say Shema and proclaim that Hashem is in fact *Yechad*? One and Only. This concept is alluded to in the first blessing preceding the Shema. The Talmud tells us that in the opening blessing of Shema we must mention the night during the day and the day during the night (Brachos 11b).

On the surface, darkness seems less good than the light and warmth of daylight, both literally and figuratively. *Dark times*? are usually associated with loss, loneliness, confusion and hardship. And yet in the pre-Shema blessing we mention darkness during the day when the sun is shining brightly. This affirms our belief that every creation of Hashem and everything that He causes to transcend upon this Earth is ultimately good (Rabbeinu Yona, Brachos 5b).

Taking this idea one step further, we may suggest that the black of the night is in fact something extremely positive. While daylight helps us engage in all the activities we need and is essential for every chemical and biological process on the planet, nighttime signals that it is time to stop and rest and gather strength for the coming day. Symbolically, dark times in our lives are often opportunities to stop and take stock of who we really are and where we really want to go in the future. Mentioning the night by day helps us focus on the positive aspects of the night (Mahari Abuhav according to Perisha 59,1 and Elia Rabba).

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