

DIVISION IS NOT GOOD

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

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When Do We Say 'It Was Good' About Division?

The Medrash points out that on the second day of Creation, the Torah does not use the expression "Ki Tov" (It was good). On all the other days of Creation, the Torah says that "G-d saw that it was good". However, the Torah does not use this expression on the second day of Creation.

The Medrash explains that on the second day, G-d made the firmament (rakiah) which divided between the waters above and the water below. This was the day when G-d introduced division (machlokes) into the world. Therefore, G-d did not want to use the expression "It was good" regarding machlokes.

The Medrash continues, "If a machlokes which is for the establishment of the world is not 'good', certainly a machlokes which is not for such a lofty purpose, but rather is just to create disunity and arguments, is not good".

There seems to be one obvious problem with this Medrash. This was neither the only nor the first division during Creation. Another division was created on the first day of creation. "And G-d divided between the Light and the Dark" [Bereishis 1:4]. So G-d made machlokes on the first day as well. He separated between light and darkness. And despite the division, it does say "And G-d saw that it was good (ki tov)".

Rav Shlomo Breur, zt"l, explains that this Medrash is telling us an important and recurring concept. The prophet says, "And Truth and Peace You shall love" [Zecharia 8:19]. We must love, cherish, and pursue two different principles. We must pursue Peace, but we must also pursue Truth. And, Truth is not secondary -- "Truth and Peace You shall love" -- Truth precedes Peace.

We want Peace at almost any cost. But there is a price we are not willing to pay. We can never compromise the Truth. When Peace and Truth come into conflict with each other, our Sages tell us

to pick Truth, because the Peace of a perverted Truth is not a Peace that we want.

The last Mishna in the Talmud [Uktzin 3:12] says that "G-d did not find a receptacle as appropriate for holding blessing as the receptacle of Peace". Rav Breur points out that Peace is referred to as a receptacle (keli). If one does not have a receptacle to hold his blessing, he is left with nothing. But one must realize that Peace is a vessel to hold something. That which we are left holding must be worthwhile. "Truth and Peace You Shall Love." Peace -- Yes; but only together with Truth.

On the second day, G-d divided the upper and the lower waters. This was not a case of good water and bad water; of True water and False water. This was a case of making a division between two equally valid components. Regarding such division we do not say, "It was good". This was an unfortunate division. A division was necessary, but there is no 'ki tov' on that day because conceptually there is no reason to have machlokes between 'water' and 'water'.

But the first day was different. On the first day, the division was between Light and Dark (Or v'Choshech). By analogy, this represents separation between Truth and Falsehood, between the forces of Good and the forces of Evil. There we must divide. We must delineate. We must say this is Light and this is Dark; This is True and this is False. This is a machlokes, but it is a machlokes that warrants a 'Ki Tov'. It is a necessary machlokes -- a division that must be made.

Sometimes we question, why would it not be better to have peace? Is it not much better to have unity? Why do we sometimes need to create what seems to be machlokes? The answer is "Truth and Peace You shall love". Love and pursue peace, but make sure that truth is maintained together with the peace.

Why Do We Not Find 'It was Good' by Creation of Man?

Later, concerning the creation of all the species, the Torah writes "And G-d saw that it was good". However when G-d creates Man we do not find this expression. There is no 'Ki Tov' by the creation of Adam.

The insect gets a 'Ki Tov'. The elephant gets a 'Ki Tov'. Every creature gets 'Ki Tov'. But Man himself, formed in G-d's Own Image, the top of the pyramid, does not merit a 'Ki Tov'!

The Sefer Halkrim by Rav Yosef Albo discusses this matter: When an insect is created, it is possible to say 'It is good'. When an apple tree is created, it is possible to say 'It is good'. Concerning every creation in the world it is possible to say 'It is good'. The reason why is that when an elephant is created it has reached perfection. We do not expect anything more from that elephant. When an apple tree is created, it is perfect. We do not expect anything more from the apples. Everything is 'Good' as created, except for Man.

However, regarding Man, it is not merely sufficient that he was created. That is only the beginning. He is far from perfect. We expect more from Man. We wait a lifetime for Man, because a Man has to grow. He has to reach his potential. The apple tree, the bird, and the insect have all reached their

potential on day one. But Man is a vast bundle of potential that is waiting to grow, that is waiting to happen, that is waiting to blossom. We can not say 'Ki Tov' yet. Maybe we can say 'Ki Tov' after 120 years, when that potential is finally reached, but not on the day of Creation.

The Talmud says [Berachos 17a] When the Rabbis used to take leave of each other, they gave themselves a blessing: "You should see your world in your lifetime" (Olamecha tireh b'chayecha). What do these words mean? What kind of blessing is this?

I once heard a beautiful thought regarding this from Rav Shimon Schwab zt"l. Rav Schwab said the word 'Olamecha' ("your world") comes from the root he'elem (that which is hidden). He'elem is the word for potential. The blessing of "Olamecha tireh b'chayecha" was that they should be able to see their own potential in their lifetime.

The blessing was "Let us be able to say on you a 'ki tov', to see in you the potential that every human being has". But this potential is never visible on day one.

I once heard a similar thought in the name of Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zt"l. When Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, G-d gave everyone a curse. G-d cursed the snake. G-d cursed Chava. But G-d said to Adam, "Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate from the tree that I forbade you to eat from, the earth will be cursed because of you; with pain you will eat from it, all the days of your life."

Rav Shraga Feivel asks, the curse seems to be directed to man -- that he would have to work hard to take food out from the earth. Why then does the Torah say that the _earth_ will be cursed?

Rav Shraga Feivel answers that the earth received the worst curse of all. If it is hard to take the fruits out from the land, the earth cannot see its potential. That is the worst curse. "I cannot give forth my fruits." To be unable to meet its potential, to have the potential but have it suppressed and inaccessible is an awesome curse.

Inability to see one's potential is a curse for mankind as well. The blessing that we should hope for ourselves and for our children and grandchildren is "Olamecha tireh b'chayecha" -- we should see our potential in our own lifetime.

Glossary

machlokes -- division, argument

ki tov -- that it was good

tireh b'chayecha -- you should see in your lifetime

Sources and Personalities

Rav Shlomo Breur-- (1850-1926) son-in-law of Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch and his successor in Frankfurt.

Rav Yosef Albo -- 15th century, Spain. Author of Sefer Halkarim, [Book of Principles (of Faith)].

Rav Shimon Schwab -- (1908-1995) Rav of the 'Breur Kehilla' in Washington Heights, and previously the Rav of Shearith Israel Congregation, Baltimore, MD.

Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz -- (1886-1948); Influential Torah educator; Mesivta Torah Vodaath; New York.

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