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Very Good in an Imperfect World

This week's dvar Torah is sponsored by the Glowinsky family in loving memory of Avraham Chaim ben Avraham z'l, on the occasion of the yartzheit 28 Tishrei.

As we conclude the joyful - and intensely spiritual - *yomim tovim* of Tishrei, and go back to the very beginning, we re-enter the sacred (and exciting!) world of *Sefer Bereishis*. After weeks of elevated *tefillos*, *seudos yomtov*, and Divine service, replete with various mitzvot, we now find ourselves at the start of a new year. We return to our routines and daily responsibilities, and look ahead to a new year of opportunity that lies before us.

As we begin anew with Parshas Bereishis, the Torah teaches us about the miraculous six days of Creation (Bereishis 1:1-31). At the conclusion of almost every day, the Torah notes: וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב - *And G-d saw that it was good*.

Finally, upon the completion of all Creation on the sixth day, the *pasuk* summarizes the grand design: וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה - *And G-d saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good* (Bereishis 1:31).

When we read these words, we often envision a flawless cosmos where every detail unfolded seamlessly according to plan from the very first moment. Surely, if the Creator

created our world, it should be no less than "perfect" from the moment of inception.

We imagine that the world was a pure and untainted environment - one that existed in total harmony. Yet, when we examine the *pasukim* carefully - with the commentary of Rashi - a far more complex and highly relevant picture emerges.

According to the Torah narrative, Creation was not a smooth or effortless execution of instant perfection. Rather, nearly every single day involved friction, necessary adjustments, and ongoing Divine recalibrations. This is made clear to us from a careful reading of the *pasukim*.

Rav Yaakov Bender *shlita* quotes a profound insight from Ha'Rav Avrohom Pam zt'l. This insight, Rav Bender notes, contains "the secret not just of *chinuch* and not just of *shalom bayis*, but of life itself" (Rabbi Yaakov Bender, *A Heart for Another*, Mesorah Publications Ltd., p.62).

In one of his *erev Shabbos shmuesen*, Rav Pam noted that: On the first day, the light Hashem created proved to be too intense for mankind to endure, so Hashem concealed it for the *tzaddikim* in the future. On the second day, a discord arose between the upper and lower waters as each sought proximity to the King, requiring Hashem to console the *mayim*

tachtonim (lower waters) with a special role in the *korbanos* and the *simchas beis hashoeiva* (both important modalities of Divine service in the BHM"K). On the third day, the trees made an independent decision, defying the Divine command, by producing bark that did not share the taste of its fruit. On the fourth day, the moon contested its equal status with the sun, leading Hashem to diminish its size. On the fifth day, the massive creation of the *livyasan* had to be adjusted to preserve the delicate equilibrium of the world. And on the sixth day, man - the very pinnacle of Creation - sinned, bringing mortality, exile and distance from Hashem into the world.

Rav Pam asked a fundamental question: How could Hashem declare the finished world to be "*tov me'od*, very good", when *almost every stage* of its development was marked by *tension, reassessments, and necessary changes*?

And yet, Rav Pam notes, it was specifically *this world* - a world fraught with disagreement and friction - that Hashem declared to be "very good"! "In this *parashah*, we are being told the secret to success in any area. Keep going. Do not become dissuaded or discouraged by the inevitable mistakes or miscalculations. There will always be impediments, so the response is to resolve them and keep going" (ibid, p.62-63).

Hashem is teaching us that Creation continued forward, the Divine plan adjusting (*keviyachol*) to the very challenges that arose. As Rav Bender notes, this insight teaches us the blueprint for success in every area of life: *chinuch*, *shalom bayis*, professional endeavors, and one's personal *avodas Hashem*.

We may desire to measure self-worth - and our accomplishments - by seamless and "perfect" outcomes. When our family

relationships encounter tension, when our children or students do not respond immediately to our guidance, when our professional projects must be reworked, or when our spiritual aspirations fall short of our lofty ideals (especially relevant as we move from Tishrei into a long year ahead!), we may easily grow discouraged. We may erroneously assume that since a particular effort needed to be reworked or corrected, it was an inherently flawed failure.

Parshas Bereishis teaches us the exact opposite message. *Yahadus* in general, and our personal *avodas Hashem* in particular, do not demand instant perfection, nor do we measure success solely by its finished product. HKB"H cherishes - and rewards - the effort, patience, resilience, and quiet willingness to move to "Plan B" when necessary.

Real life takes place in the rebuilding. The mistakes that we make, the missteps we navigate, and the necessary rectifications along the way are not impediments to a meaningful life. *Adarabah* - the exact opposite is true! They are the very fabric of our world, and our existence, that Hashem looks upon and calls "*tov me'od*."

The *pasuk* in Mishlei tells us: כִּי טֹבֵעַ יִפּוֹל צַדִּיק וְנָקָם וְיִשְׁתָּלֵם בְּרָעָה, **For a righteous man falls seven times and rises up, but the wicked shall stumble upon evil** (Mishlei 24:16).

The true measure of success in all of our endeavors is not found in never failing. It is found in having the courage to re-evaluate when things veer off course, the humility to fix what needs fixing, and the fortitude to keep moving forward.

As we begin Bereishis anew, let us remember the foundation of Creation. Let us remember that any effort requires patience, hard work, and persistent commitment. And like

Hashem Himself did for His world, may we - and HKB"H - be able to look at our efforts, as well as the final results, and be able to declare, "behold, this is very good!"

May we enter this new cycle of Torah with energy, clarity, and joy, faithful in the awareness that each honest step forward is one more step in the right direction: the direction of closeness to Hashem, self-awareness, the healthy relationships we build with those around us, and our ability to see that our lives here are "tov me'od."

■ בברכת בשורות טובות ושבת שלום.

Michal Horowitz is a Torah educator who lectures nationally throughout the United States, as well as internationally. Thousands of her shiur recordings are available online. She is a regular presenter for the OU Women's Initiative and the author of *Abled: Living With a Disability*, a Torah View (Mosaica Press). Michal lives in Woodmere, NY, with her family.



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