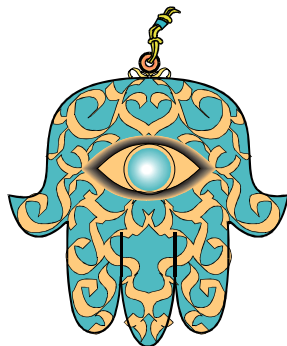


Spiritual Thought for the Week

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“And God Saw That It Was Good” *Parashat Beresheet (Genesis 1:1 – 6:8)*

In six majestic days, God creates heaven and earth, land and water, plant life, the solar system, fish and fowl, beasts and animals, and – finally – human beings. At the conclusion of each creative act, God looks upon His new creation, and repeatedly comments “that it was good.” This comment by God is His own approval of what He had just created. God is pleased with the sight of the developing world, and is inspired by the “good” appearance and nature of each new element in the world.

Only the creation of human beings does not conclude with “And God saw that it was good.” Why the exception? What was it about human beings that caused God to refrain from making this positive observation?

The great 20th Century Torah scholar/teacher Nehama Leibowitz says that the reason for the absence of “it was good” in the case of human beings is “indeed because human beings are different from all the other items of creation. Humanity’s ‘good’ is in its own hands, because man has freedom of choice.”

Maimonides articulates this position quite clearly: “Freewill is accorded to every human being. If he desires to take the good path and be righteous, he is free to do so; and if he desires to take the evil path and be wicked, he is free to do so...God the Creator does not preordain human beings to be good or bad” (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Teshuva, 5).

God was not able to look upon human beings and say that they were good, because God who created them understood that – as opposed to all of the other elements created – human beings alone possessed the freedom of will to choose to be good – or not.

There are many who ask where God was during massacres, pogroms, wars, acts of terror, or the Holocaust. In light of the human “hard drive” – which is created with the freedom and capacity to choose either good or evil – the question we should really be asking is not “where was God,” rather “Where was humanity?” Humanity’s greatest challenge is to reach a point where God will look down at us and finally say “It is good.”