

The Beginning of God's Creative Work is Separating the Righteous from the Unrighteous

This week's reading from [Parashat Bereshit](#) (*Bereshit / Genesis 1:1-6:8*) contains some of the most significant actions of God, which set the stage for all of Scripture. More specifically, we are told the first thing the Lord does in His creation, is to separate the light from the darkness. What is the significance of the Lord beginning His creative process by separating the light from the darkness? Is it possible, in this description of the creation events, the Lord God is laying the foundation for not only the definition of a day, but to say that the beginning of His ways is to make a distinction between light and darkness, as an illustration for the beginning of His work in our lives to make a distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness? In the creation account in *Bereshit / Genesis 1*, the Lord describes the separating between the light and the darkness, as day and night, and that it is very good. He specifically calls the light "good," but not state the darkness is good. The following verses adds additional context to the separation process.

Bereshit / Genesis 1:6-8

1:6 Then God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' 1:7 God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. 1:8 God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. (NASB)

Bereshit / Genesis 1:14-19

1:14 Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; 1:15 and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth'; and it was so. 1:16 God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day,

and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. 1:17 God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, 1:18 and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. 1:19 There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. (NASB)

In *Bereshit / Genesis 1:6-8*, the Lord continues His separation process of creation, by separating water from water. Note how the Scriptures speak of the waters from above and the waters below. This may be an illustration on the water vapor found in the sky as opposed to the liquid water on the earth. The Scriptures again are setting the stage by describing the power of God, His ability to make a division and distinction between the things above from the things below. In Parashat Haazinu, Moshe described Heaven and Earth as bearing witness, and to let His testimony be as the rain which comes from above. The illustration was as the Torah is from since before the creation, being with God in the beginning, the Lord sends His Torah from Heaven to Earth, His instructions in righteousness comes from above. The Lord separates the heavens from the earth, and there is light and darkness, morning and evening. Notice how all of these things are connected, and how the creation account is drawing these things into context of one another. In addition, based upon these Scriptures (*Bereshit / Genesis 1:14-19*), another key distinction the Lord is making is that the creation of light did not extinguish all darkness in all places, but rather that there were places for both light and darkness, just as day does not annihilate or do away with the night. Note how in the heavens, the Lord placed the stars to be sources of life within the darkness. In a similar manner, He places us in the midst of this present age to be a light for truth, righteousness, and justice.

The significance of Parashat Bereshit, and of these observations is that we learn of the creation of the world, the creation of man and woman, the fall of man into sin through disobedience to the command of the Lord, and the mercy and grace of God to forgive man of his sins. The importance of these introductory chapters to all of Scripture, is that the Lord is making a distinction between light and darkness, which has its parallel to the beginning of God's ways, and the differences between good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness. Based upon these first few verses, the

Lord separating the light from the darkness, a great amount of doctrine, theology, and literatures have been developed over the centuries. The separation process described in the creation account cannot be understated. This week, let's study what the Lord is trying to tell us regarding the beginning of His works, to separate the light from the dark, and that *"It is good,"* and how this is related to righteousness and unrighteousness.

ספר בראשית פרק א *Shemot / Bereshit 1:1-5*

א בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: ב וְהָאָרֶץ הֵיטָהָה
תְּהוֹמוֹת וְרֵוַח אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֵף עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹמוֹת הַיָּם:
ג וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי-אוֹר וַיְהִי-אוֹר:
ד וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאוֹר כִּי-טוֹב
וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין
הַחֹשֶׁךְ: ה וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים | לְאוֹר
יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב
וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד:

1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 1:2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. 1:3 Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. 1:4 God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 1:5 God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day. (NASB)

Studying the first chapter of Parashat Bereshit, the one thing that we may observe from the creation account is that the Lord separated the light from the darkness, the Lord separated the expanse of waters, and lights were placed within the expanse of the heavens in the midst of the darkness to be signs for seasons, for days, months, and years. If we draw a parallel to the light and darkness and to righteousness and unrighteousness, the Lord calls and places us within the darkness of this world to shine forth His truth, to speak into the darkness, to the unrighteous of the righteousness of God and of His love and mercy. What a wonderful illustration the Lord is drawing here in the context of the creation account with regard to the calling Lord has for His people, to live, to love, and to reach out to the lost.

The rabbis have much to say concerning the creation account. The following are a couple discussions from *Shelah, Terumah, Torah Ohr 51*

and *Midrash Rabbah Bereishit, Parashat 2, Part 5.*

Shelah, Terumah, Torah Ohr 51

Shelah: Prior to the creation of the universe there existed only G'd and His name in total and absolute secrecy, a concept which I have explained elsewhere at length. Once it had become His will to bring into existence a universe, the Torah firsts speaks about בראשית ברא אלוקים (Bereshit / Genesis 1:1), and afterwards the Torah refers to: ביום עשות ה' אלוקים (Bereshit / Genesis 2:4). This shows that the four-lettered name of G'd remained secret and only the name אל-הים which has the same numerical value as the word for nature, i.e. הטבע (86), was revealed. I have already mentioned that the creation of the universe proved that G'd existed before the universe. G'd's existence is manifest only through His activities. The essence of G'd, by definition, remains hidden. Anything revealed must by definition have previously been concealed. The very name of G'd, which alludes to הוה ויהיה, היה, "something that was, is, and will forever be," is the cause of any existence and enables all that exists to continue doing so. This is why the verse quoted from Bereshit / Genesis 2:4 does not merely describe G'd as having created the universe in the past, עשה, but also as an ongoing process, עשות.

In Shelah Torah Ohr on Parashat Terumah, the commentary points out that the only one that existed before the creation of the universe was God and His name in absolute secrecy. The commentary continues saying, "*the Torah firsts speaks*" saying בראשית ברא אלוקים "*(Bereshit / Genesis 1:1), and afterwards the Torah refers to:*" ביום עשות ה' אלוקים "*(Bereshit / Genesis 2:4)*" referring to the work of God and His name, that before the creation, His name was secret, and after the creation, the Lord and His name are revealed in His works (in His activities). The interpretation is that the Lord is the one who enables all to exist and to continue to exist where *Bereshit / Genesis 2:4* indicates the creation process is an ongoing process. So the idea here is the Lord is revealed in His activities, and that

His creating and sustaining work is an ongoing process. This sustaining process may be described as His separating the light from the darkness which is paralleled to righteousness and unrighteousness, which is also an ongoing process. In addition, remember the rabbis say that the world exists as a result of the Tzadikim Nistarim (צַדִּיקִים נִסְתָּרִים, “*hidden righteous ones*”) or the Lamed Vav Tzadikim (ל"ו צַדִּיקִים, “*the 36 righteous ones*”). The point is that the Lord is continuing his creative process of separating the light from the darkness even to this day. If the Lord was not continuing this aspect of His creative process the world would end. Based upon this observable world, we know that the Lord’s process of separation is continuing today in His Messiah Yeshua in which we find the fulfillment of His promises to our Fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in each person that He calls out of the darkness and into the light, (*1 Peter 2:9*) or from unrighteousness into righteousness.

Midrash Rabbah Parashat 2, Part 5 has the following to say concerning the creation account.

Midrash Rabbah Bereishit, Parashat 2, Part 5

R’ Abahu and R’ Chiya Raba. R’ Abahu said - from the beginning of the creation of the world the Holy One saw the actions of the righteous and the actions of the wicked. This is what is written “For the Lord knows the way of the righteous...” (Tehillim 1:6) “Now the earth was astonishingly empty...” (Bereshit 1:2) these are the actions of the wicked, “And God said, Let there be light...” (Bereshit 1:3) these are the actions of the righteous. But I don’t know which one of them He desired, the actions of these or the actions of those. Since it is written “And God saw the light that it was good...” (Bereshit 1:4). He desires the actions of the righteous and not the actions of the wicked. R’ Chiya Raba said – from the beginning of the creation of the world the Holy One saw the Holy Temple built, destroyed and built. “In the beginning of God’s creation...” (Bereshit 1:1) refers to it built, this is what it says “...to plant the heavens and to found the earth...” (Yeshayahu 51:16) “Now the earth was astonishingly empty...” refers to it destroyed, this is what it says “I saw the earth, and behold,

it was void and unformed... ” (Yirmiyahu 4:23) , “And God said, Let there be light...” refers to it built and complete in the future to come, this is what it says “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has shone upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and a gross darkness the kingdoms, and the Lord shall shine upon you, and His glory shall appear over you.” (Yesah-yahu 60:1-2)

Notice what Midrash Rabbah Bereshit states, *“from the beginning of the creation of the world the Holy One saw the actions of the righteous and the actions of the wicked.”* The rabbis also recognize the significance of the Lord separating the light from the darkness as a reference to the need to separate the righteous from the unrighteous. The point they make is that the Lord saw the differences between the two and thus began his creation by the separation of the two. Note the differences when comparing the righteous from the unrighteous, there is no congruency. Righteousness and unrighteousness are contradictory terms and both cannot exist together, one will be at war with the other if they are both kept in the same vessel. The separation process is bringing order into one’s life, the same that was needed in the beginning. The rabbis describe the actions of the wicked as *“empty,”* whereas the actions of the righteous are called *“let there be light.”* If we seriously examine our ways today, can our actions and thoughts be described as the light or righteousness of God? Do you or have you seen a difference in your life, as a result of your faith in the Messiah, something that comes from within that is not of yourself but that which the Lord is working, doing, or changing?

The rabbis parallel the actions of the righteous to the building of the Temple, and the actions of the wicked to the destruction of the Temple. The rabbis conclude the midrash saying, *“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has shone upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and a gross darkness the kingdoms, and the Lord shall shine upon you, and His glory shall appear over you.”* The separation of the light from the darkness is paralleled to the glory of the Lord shining upon His people (the light) as opposed to the kingdoms of the earth that dwell in the darkness (unrighteousness). So, again, is it possible, in this description of the creation events, the Lord God is laying the

concluded that the typical translation of this word as law is not quite accurate. Note how the Aramaic Targum translates the Psalm saying, א שכלא :78:1 דרוח קודשא על ידי דאסף אצית עמי אוריתי אצלוך אודניכוך למימרי פומי: *A teaching of the Holy Spirit, composed by Asaph. Hear, O my people, my Torah; incline your ears to the utterances of my mouth. (EMC)* The rabbis translate the words of Asaph as being inspired by the Holy Spirit, and as the instruction or teaching of Asaph that is inspired by the Lord God Himself. The Targum (the rabbis) is in agreement with this interpretation of the word Torah (תורה) meaning the instruction of God.

While studying the Septuagint, a statistical analysis of the Greek text reveals that the most common way the word Torah (תורה) is rendered is by the Greek words nomos (νόμος) or nomo. The Greek text uses the word nomos (νόμος) in a variety of ways, one of which is law, however nomos is not limited in its translation to mean “law.” For example in *Mishley / Proverbs 1:8* שְׁמַע בְּנֵי מוֹסֵר אֲבִיךָ וְאַל־תִּטְּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ: 1:8 *Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. (NIV)* and the Septuagint translation, ἀκουε υἱε παιδείαν πατρός σου και μη ἀπόση θεσμοὺς μητρὸς σου, the rabbis translate the word Torah as thesmous θεσμοὺς meaning “instruction.” In a similar way, within the Apostolic Writings, the authors render the Hebrew word Torah (תורה) using the word nomos (νόμος) or nomo (νόμων), where in some instances, it is more appropriate to translate nomos as God’s “teaching or instruction” rather than “law.” There are two Hebrew words that are derived from the same root as Torah, (i) moreh (מורה) and (ii) horeh (הורה). A moreh is one who imparts instruction to his/her students, and a horeh is a reference to a parent who teaches and instructs the his or her child. As a result these things, the word Torah takes on a greater meaning that simply “law.” In addition, Judaism uses the word Torah in a very broad sense. For example, sometimes the word Torah is used to describe the Talmud. In other instances, the Torah may be a reference to the Oral Torah, the Mishnah, etc.

According to the Sages, the Oral Torah was communicated to Moshe on the mountain of Sinai, and Moshe wrote down the written Torah, the Scriptures. The oral Torah was transmitted orally through the generations until Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi authorized for the oral Torah to be written down due to the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem. The writ-

ing of the oral Torah is called the Mishnah. The Mishnah was completed around approximately 200 CE. Following the writing of the Mishnah, the sages began to write commentaries on the Mishnah and the Torah in the MT, and these commentaries are called the Gemara. The Gemara was combined with the Mishnah into one work called the Talmud. There are two Talmuds, one produced in Israel (Jerusalem Talmud) and the other produced in Babylonia (Babylonian Talmud). The Jerusalem Talmud was completed in approximately the year 400 CE and the Babylonian Talmud was completed roughly around 500 CE. Today, Judaism for the most part (the Orthodox) consider the Babylonian Talmud to be the more authoritative of the two Talmuds. As a result of the communicating of the Sages discussions in written form (commentary), the writing of the Mishnah, and Judaism's use of the Talmud for hundreds of years, the Talmud is considered to be the Oral Torah, the same Oral Torah that was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai and, therefore, carries great authority. As a result of these things, it is important to study and to know the Mishnah and the Talmud. As we have seen in this study thus far, learning about the interpretations of the rabbis may help to interpret and understand many passages in the Scriptures, their application to our lives, and for understanding the Apostolic Writings. The important point to remember while studying the Mishnah, the Talmud, and the rabbis, is to understand that these are interpretations of the Scriptures, and interpretations are always open for debate on their authoritative nature. The written Scriptures however should hold a greater spiritual authority over our lives, the written Word of God, the Tanach and the Apostolic Writings.

The Apostle Paul wrote in *1 Corinthians 4:6* *Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. (NASB)* The point he was making is to not exceed what is written, that is the written Scriptures, the Word of God, remember the Mishnah and the Talmud would not have been written for hundreds of years later, Paul was not making reference to these works. In addition, the word Torah (תורה) has been applied as a reference to all of Scripture, even Yeshua himself used the word Torah within this context (*see John 10:25-30 and Yeshua answering his opponents referencing Tehillim / Psalms 82:6 and saying "it is written in your Torah," etc*) This is one of the NT references where Torah (νόμος)

should be interpreted as *“instruction.”* (10:34 ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς Οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένον ἐν τῷ νόμῳ ὑμῶν Ἐγὼ εἶπα Θεοί ἐστε) Yeshua demonstrated that the word Torah (תורה) may be used as a reference to the entire bible and not just the first five books of Moshe. As Yeshua demonstrated, the word Torah (תורה) may be applied as a reference to all of Scripture, therefore, this term should be used first and foremost as a reference to the books of Moshe, but we may also use Torah to speak of all of Scripture. The idea of all of Scripture as referring to Torah, is that all of us are to be yielding our members to our Father in heaven, and to Yeshua the Messiah. The manner in which we do this is to be obedient to the command. This was and is the purpose of the Lord giving His Holy Spirit to His children, to empower our lives and to help us to overcome sin. Overcoming sin is synonymous to being obedient to the commands, since sin is by its very definition *“disobedience.”*

The MT states in *Tehillim / Psalms 78:8*, הָיָה לֹא יִהְיוּ | כְּאֲבוֹתָם דֹּר סוֹרֵר, *78:8 And not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not prepare its heart And whose spirit was not faithful to God. (NASB)* Asaph states, הָיָה לֹא יִהְיוּ | כְּאֲבוֹתָם דֹּר סוֹרֵר the generation of people *“did not establish, make firm, or prepare their hearts, and they did not have faith in His Spirit (God’s Spirit).”* According to the Psalm, it is possible to prepare the heart, this was something the rebellious generation failed to do. In the text, the psalmist draws a parallel to the one who has not prepared the heart and the one who has faith. In Parashat Bereshit, the beginning of God’s creative work is the separation process in our lives, bringing us out of the darkness and into the light. (1 Peter 2:9) The Lord is speaking to us, that He is going to work a mighty work in our lives! We are being told to prepare our hearts and our lives for God’s moving, for His creative process! Having faith, or believing, is to take God’s Word, to understand it, and to apply it to our lives, this is the meaning of the Lord separating us unto righteousness. The important point of this study is to let this be the beginning of the preparing of our hearts before God, and to be sensitive to spiritual things this year. Dig deeper into God’s Word, study and remember His Words, have faith, be thankful of His covenant, and seek to apply His Word to your life. The application of the Word (a changed life) is what it is all about because of our thankfulness for His mercy and grace!

