

וּלְכָל־חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ 30 And for every animal of the earth  
וּלְכָל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם and for every bird of the heavens  
וּלְכָל־רֶמֶשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ and for every thing that crawls upon the earth  
אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה in which there is a soul of life—  
אֶת־כָּל־יֶרֶק עֵשֶׂב לְאֹכְלָהּ all green herbage for food”;  
וַיְהִי־כֵן: and it was so.  
וַיֹּרֶא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה 31 And God saw all which he made  
וַהֲנִה מְאֹד and behold it is very good;  
וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר and it was evening and it was morning  
יוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי: פ the sixth day.

*God surveys his  
creation at the close  
of the sixth day*

derives not from his own superiority, but rather from his servitude to his divinely-ordained role in creation—a role he must approach with humility rather than arrogance, with a sense of responsibility rather than privilege.<sup>44</sup>

-THE REBBE

{see commentaries to 9:3}

### 1:31

#### “All that he made... is very good”

The sages taught: Also those things which seem superfluous in your eyes are integral to the world's creation. Everything has its mission. God will employ a snake, or a flea, or a frog, to carry out his plan.

-MIDRASH RABBAH

All that is, is good. What is not good is that which is not: death is an absence of life, darkness a non-presence of light, illness a deficiency of health, stupidity a lack of wisdom.

Thus the Torah states, “God saw all that he made, and behold, it is very good,” and the sages declare that “nothing bad descends from Above.” For all that God actively makes is good. The weakness and impermanence of the physical is a function of God choosing to partially absent the divine quality of life from it, so that the physical substance is a combination of existence and absence.

-MAIMONIDES

If one truly believes that God, who is the ultimate source of life, goodness and bliss, is creating everything out of absolute nothingness

in each and every moment of time—then how can one imagine that anything bad is happening to him? Indeed, the truth is that only good comes from God. It is only that there are two types of good: revealed good, which we experience as such; and hidden good, which comes from a place so lofty that our finite faculties are incapable of assimilating it, so that we experience it as pain and suffering.

-R. SCHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI

#### “Very good”

During the six days of creation, God sees his work as “good”;<sup>45</sup> it is only when the work is completed that it is deemed “very good.” For the goodness of creation as a whole is greater than the sum of the goodness of its individual parts.

-SFORNO

The letters of the word “very” (מְאֹד ~ me’od) are the same as the word “man” (אָדָם ~ adam). Thus: “very good” also reads “good, man.”

-MIDRASH RABBAH

Meaning: All things achieve their purpose through man. So it is only after the creation of man that all that God created could be termed “very good.”

-RADAK

“Good, man” tells us that good is specific to the man. What one person achieves in tranquility, may for another be good only when attained with difficulty and suffering. For God supplies to each his individual good.

-R. CHAYIM OF CZERNOWITZ

Said *R. Shmuel bar Nachman*: I remember riding on the shoulders of my grandfather, going up to Kfar Chanan by way of Beith She’an, where I heard *R. Shimon ben Elazar*

### NOTES

1:31

THE SIXTH (הַשִּׁשִּׁי ~ ha’shishi) the additional letter ה indicates • the five books of the Torah - *Tanchuma*; *Rashi* • the sixth day—i.e., the Giving of the Torah on the 6th of Sivan - *Talmud*; *Rashi*

expounding in the name of *R. Meir*: “Very good” (טוֹב מְאֹד ~ tov me’od) should be read as “death is good” (טוֹב מָוֶת ~ tov maveth).<sup>46</sup>

-MIDRASH RABBAH

Death may seem negative to the individual. But for “all that he made”—for creation as a whole—it drives the cycle of life and its continual regeneration.

-MAIMONIDES

All creations were created as God desired them, except for the human being, who attains his perfection by his own efforts. King Solomon therefore proclaims, “Better the day of death than the day of birth”—for it is only at the very last moment of a person’s allotted time in this world that his achievements are completed. This is why our sages say that “God does not attach his name to the righteous during their lifetimes,” as they have not yet fulfilled their task in this world.

Indeed, with all other creations it says “God saw that it is good.” But following the creation of man it says, “God saw... that it is very good”—meaning, as *R. Meir* interpreted it, “death is good.” Man’s goodness is a lifelong endeavor, whose culminating moment is at the moment of his death.

-AKEIDAH

<sup>44</sup> Thus *Rashi* emphasizes that also when Noah and his descendants were later granted permission to eat meat, it was expressly placed in this context—on the same basis on which Adam was permitted to eat the vegetative growth of the soil.

<sup>45</sup> 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21 and 25.

<sup>46</sup> Death was introduced into creation at the close of the Sixth Day, following Adam’s sin as related in 3:1–24. See also commentaries to 2:17.