

GATHER THE PEOPLE

Torah-Based Community Organizing and Development

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FAMILY SIDDIR STUDY: LESSON PLAN 26

LAST TIME WE FINISHED LEARNING ABOUT THE עֲמִידָה.

- So we're almost at the end of the Friday evening service.
- After we finish our silent עֲמִידָה prayers, we sit down, and the service continues on page 47.

SO LET'S READ THE FIRST PARAGRAPH ON PAGE 47 IN HEBREW AND THEN IN ENGLISH.

- In Hebrew: וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צְבָאָם: וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה: וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר-בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת.
- Let's read the English together.
- The first word in the Hebrew is וַיְכַלּוּ.
- The שׁוֹרֵשׁ of this word is כ-ל-ה, which can mean two very different things:
 1. That something is made perfect or completed; and
 2. That something is stopped, destroyed, or no longer exists.
- In the words we're reading, the Hebrew word וַיְכַלּוּ is translated as "completed"—"The heavens and the earth and all they contain were *completed*."
- ***But what about the other meaning, that something stops or no longer exists—what stopped?***
- This word וַיְכַלּוּ is telling us that the creation was not only completed but that it *stopped* changing, which we have talked about before.
- ***Since we see the creation changing all the time, in what sense do you think it stopped changing?***
- What stopped changing was the *lawfulness* of the creation, both the physical laws and the moral laws.
- We know the physical laws if we have studied subjects like physics and chemistry or even by taking notice of gravity.
- ***But what's an example of the moral laws, the laws that teach us about behavior that's right or wrong?***

- In other words, the creation didn't just happen by accident, because if it had its physical and moral laws would have gone on changing the way they did at the beginning.
- The kind of changes that were happening when God was creating everything, they stopped after God had finished the creation—so we know that the creation is the work of God, who had the power not only to create the lawfulness by which everything exists, but to stop those laws from continuing to change, which we're unable to do.

IN THE FIRST SENTENCE OF THE PARAGRAPH, THE HEBREW READS:

- וַיִּכְלֹ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צָבָאָם
- Our siddur translates it as: “The heavens and the earth, and *all they contain*, were completed.”
- But the word צָבָאָם from the root צ-ב-ה, which we have also talked about before, has a very particular meaning:
 1. It refers to a large gathering that has a leader, like a large group that's being led by a single leader.
 2. *What would be a group you're in that has a leader that the members of the group follow?*
 3. The word for a group that follows a leader is צָבָאָם.
- *Do you think that the stars and planets decide for themselves what they're going to do, like how and when they're going to move and in what paths, or that they have a “leader” of some kind?*
- So וַיִּכְלֹ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל-צָבָאָם is telling us:
 1. Not only did God create the heavens and the earth and all the galaxies, stars, planets and moons;
 2. Not only did God decide at some point to stop the creating;
 3. But also that everything God created, the whole צָבָאָם, stayed under God's control.
- What we see in the night sky or through the latest James Webb Space Telescope, the billions of galaxies, each of which probably contains 100 thousand million stars, are not deciding for themselves how they'll move—God “leads” them in everything they do.
- The God that created them continues to control them.

LET'S READ THE SECOND SENTENCE IN THE PARAGRAPH, FIRST IN HEBREW, THEN IN ENGLISH:

- וַיְכַל אֱלֹהִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְכַל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה

- “On the seventh day, God finished the work He had been doing, and ceased on the seventh day from all the work He had done.”
- The Hebrew word that’s translated into the English word “work” is מְלָאכָה.
- This word doesn’t mean *working* in the sense of actually *doing* work, like when you’re doing homework or some job you have to do around the house.
- This word מְלָאכָה refers to the *thing* we create with our work, like when you finish your homework and you have the completed papers in your hand—it refers to the actual finished project, not the effort to do it, but the results.
- Now this word מְלָאכָה, which refers to a finished piece of work, is only a slightly different form of the word מְלַאֲךָ, which is the Hebrew word for “messenger.”
- ***What’s a “messenger”?***
- So when we read this sentence that God finished all the מְלָאכָה, the work that God had been doing, it tells us a couple of things:
 1. That God *finished* creating everything God had been creating, just as we finish our projects when we decide we’re done with them.
 2. And all that God created and stopped creating is meant to send us a message—they are messengers.
 3. They are telling us that our God has free will to choose not only to start the creation but to stop it when God decides it is sufficient.

LET’S READ THE FINAL SENTENCE IN THE PARAGRAPH IN HEBREW AND ENGLISH.

- וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ כִּי בּוֹ שָׁבַת מְלַאכָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים לַעֲשׂוֹת
- “Then God blessed the seventh day and called it holy, because on it God ceased from all His work that God created to make.”
- ***Can anyone remind us of the Hebrew word that’s translated as “holy”?***
- So we see in that word וַיְקַדְּשׁ the word קָדוֹשׁ, which means “holy.”
- ***You probably remember the basic meaning of קָדוֹשׁ or “holy”?***
- It’s something that, first of all, is set aside for a special, godly purpose.
- ***What’s the Hebrew word in this last sentence that’s translated as “ceased”?*** (שָׁבַת)
- Now the word שָׁבַת means to stop doing something, because the thing is finished—like when you finish your work or something you’re creating, like a picture.

- And on the seventh day, when God had finished the creation, the Torah teaches us that God called that day holy—that is, he set it aside for a special purpose.
- ***Can you imagine what we might learn from that special purpose?***
- Our מְסֻרָה, our Torah tradition, teaches that if we spend the other six days of the week doing what God wants us to do, then on the seventh day we can really stop working just *as if* all our projects are completed, because every week we will have done everything God wants us to do, and in that sense all our work will be finished—which will bring us the greatest happiness in our lives.

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