**The Great No-Thing – KETER, Parshat Bereisheet and Sh’ma**

There is a story in the Talmud (*Taanit* 25a) about the great sage Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa. Rabbi Hanina was a miracle worker, and whatever he prayed for would immediately manifest. Yet, despite his miraculous powers, he was extremely poor.

One day, his wife got fed up with living a life of such deprivation. “You have the power!” she said to him, “Why don’t you pray for mercy and get us out of this wretched life?”

So, Rabbi Hanina prayed, and immediately an angelic hand appeared out of thin air and handed him a golden table leg. *“Barukh Hashem*, we are rich!”

But, that night, his wife had a nightmare. In the dream, she was in *olam haba,* the future world. She looked around and saw all the other sages sitting and feasting at tables which were all supported by three legs. But, when she saw her husband, his table had only two legs!

She awoke in a cold sweat. “My husband, I saw a disturbing vision in my dream!”

She explained what she saw, to which he responded, “How do you feel about your husband having a deficient table in the World to Come?

“Not good!” she exclaimed. “Please, once again, pray for mercy!”

He did, and immediately the hand appeared again out of nowhere and took the golden table leg back.

The Talmud then relates a quote by an unknown source:

גדול היה נס אחרון יותר מן הראשון דגמירי דמיהב יהבי מישקל לא שקלי

*The last miracle is greater than the first, for we have a tradition that what is given is not taken back…*

It is a strange story – what does it mean? Is it saying that riches are bad and that poverty is good?

There is a passage in *Kohelet,* Ecclesiastes, that seems to confirm this idea:

מְתוּקָה֙ שְׁנַ֣ת הָעֹבֵ֔ד אִם־מְעַ֥ט וְאִם־הַרְבֵּ֖ה יֹאכֵ֑ל וְהַשָּׂבָע֙ לֶֽעָשִׁ֔יר אֵינֶ֛נּוּ מַנִּ֥יחַֽ ל֖וֹ לִישֽׁוֹן׃

*A worker’s sleep is sweet, whether he has much or little to eat; but the rich man’s abundance doesn’t let him sleep.*

* Ecclesiastes 5:11

Both this passage and the Talmudic story seem to be saying that wealth is more trouble than it’s worth. They say it in different ways, but both seem to be linking the acquisition of wealth with *worry about the future*. (And disturbed sleep!)

But, there is another passage in *Kohelet* that clarifies:

הִנֵּ֞ה אֲשֶׁר־רָאִ֣יתִי אָ֗נִי ט֣וֹב אֲשֶׁר־יָפֶ֣ה לֶֽאֶכוֹל־וְ֠לִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִרְא֨וֹת טוֹבָ֜ה בְּכָל־עֲמָל֣וֹ ׀ שֶׁיַּעֲמֹ֣ל תַּֽחַת־הַשֶּׁ֗מֶשׁ מִסְפַּ֧ר יְמֵי־חַיָּ֛יו אֲשֶׁר־נָֽתַן־ל֥וֹ הָאֱלֹהִ֖ים כִּי־ה֥וּא חֶלְקֽוֹ׃

*Behold that which I have seen is good – that one should eat and drink and experience the goodness from all the work that one toils under the sun, during the numbered days of life that the Divine has given; for that is one’s portion… a gift from the Divine.*

* Ecclesiastes 5:17, 18

Here we can see – it’s not saying that wealth and enjoyment are bad. Rather, King Solomon is saying that it’s good to enjoy things; eat and drink *lir’ot tovah –* so that you can experience goodness!

But, here is the caution – *receive the enjoyment as a gift.* It is not something you can hold onto; it does not have permanence, you cannot rely on it beyond the moment:

מִסְפַּ֧ר יְמֵי־חַיָּ֛יו אֲשֶׁר־נָֽתַן־ל֥וֹ – *from the numbered days of one’s life that is given…*

All things, all forms, all experiences, all phenomena come to an end, and so the idea here is not to push good things away, but also it is not to try and hold on to them. Instead, enjoy them as a gift, in this moment; in other words, *be present.*

But, you might say, doesn’t Rabbi Hanina pray to get rid of his gold? Why wouldn’t he simply enjoy it as a gift too?

When we see miracle stories, there is usually a hidden meaning. Why is it a golden table leg, rather than just a pile of gold? Why does it appear out of thin air?

There is something in our experience, right now, that also magically appears a disappears: *thought*. Our thoughts are constantly manifesting out of nowhere, and they can dissipate just as quickly. Furthermore, a “table leg” supports the top of the table upon which we eat; the “table leg” represents support for what we need to survive.

So, the magical appearance of the golden table leg doesn’t mean actual physical gold, it means a way of relating to gold; it means seeing the gold (wealth, possessions, or good experiences in general) as something solid that we can rely upon, like a table leg. And it is this kind of thinking that brings about the nightmare of the two-legged table: when we try to rely upon passing phenomena as solid and enduring, this only creates insecurity and worry:

הַשָּׂבָע֙ לֶֽעָשִׁ֔יר אֵינֶ֛נּוּ מַנִּ֥יחַֽ ל֖וֹ לִישֽׁוֹן – *But the rich man’s abundance doesn’t let him sleep…*

And not only our possession, but more importantly, our very lives eventually come to an end:

*One must depart just as one came. As one came out of their mother’s womb, so must they depart, naked as they came. They can take nothing of their wealth with them; so what is the good of one’s toiling after the wind?*

* Ecclesiastes 5:14, 15

Ultimately, everything is *hevel,* impermanent.

But, not to worry! There is, nevertheless, something we *can* rely on.

Because when we become present, when we receive this moment as a gift and let go of thoughts about the future, there is a Wholeness and a Whole*some*ness inherent in simply being…

בְּרֵאשִׁ֖ית בָּרָ֣א אֱלֹהִ֑ים אֵ֥ת הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם וְאֵ֥ת הָאָֽרֶץ׃

*In the Beginning of Elohim creating the heavens and the earth…*

* *Berisheet* 1:1

Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch, taught on this first verse of the Torah that existence itself is a greater miracle than any of the well-known miracles. The splitting of the sea, the water from the rock, the manna from heaven ­– these are all based on phenomena that already existed, but which only behaved a little differently than what we would expect. But existence itself is a much greater miracle than all of those, because – why should there be anything at all? How it is that anything comes to be anyway, seemingly *Yesh me’Ayin,* Something from Nothing?

And yet, when we recognize the miracle of existence, when we receive this moment, as it is, as a supreme miracle – there then arises another possibility: we can actually move from the Something back to the Nothing!

Meaning: when we let go of the movement of the mind and its preoccupation with the future, with its seeking the “golden table-leg” of security in time, we can simultaneously become aware of the great No-Thing within which this moment appears – the vast field of awareness within which all experience lives. And this, said the Maggid, is an even greater miracle – not the bringing forth of Something from Nothing in creation, but of returning the Something back to the No-Thing in our spiritual work. As the Talmud says:

**…**גדול היה נס אחרון יותר מן הראשון

*Gadol hayah nes akharon yoter min harishon – The last miracle is greater than the first!*

In Kabbalah, this *Ayin,* or No-Thingness, the essential Being-ness behind all things, is represented by the first *sefirah* on the Tree of Life, called *Keter,* which means “Crown.” It is the crown because just as an actual crown adorns the head of royalty and reminds us of our relationship with the one who bears it, so too we are reminded to offer our attention and reverence toward Being Itself, the miraculous No-Thing that is ever-present in and as all things. Crowns are also circular, reminding us not to try to derive security through the persistence of things in linear time, but rather to “circle back” our awareness into the Truth of this moment, back into the boundless circle of our awareness within which all experience comes and goes.

This is the beginning and the end of the spiritual path, also symbolized by the circle – be present, enjoy this moment in recognition of the Oneness of Being, the One Reality Who gives this moment to you as a gift, right now. That’s why the fundamental Jewish practice is the chanting of the *Sh’ma,* six words that point us toward this recognition:

שְׁמַ֖ע יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל יְהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֵ֖ינוּ יְהוָ֥ה אֶחָֽד׃

*Sh’ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ekhad!*

*Hear, O Israel! Existence Itself is our God, Existence is One!*

* *Devarim* 6:4, *Parshat Va’etkhanan*

This is the invitation: In the morning and at night, after the break of dawn and the falling of darkness, take a moment to become present, to reconnect with the Oneness:

שְׁמַע – *Sh’ma –* “Listen” meaning be aware, become present to this moment as it is.

יִשְׂרָאֵל – *Yisrael –* “Israel,” coming from *sarita-El,* one who “strives for” the Divine.

יְהוָה – Vocalized as *Adonai,* this unpronounceable Divine Name comes from the root היה *hayah,* “to be,” and thus means Existence, Reality or Being-ness.

אֱלֹהֵינו – *Eloheinu –* “Our God” – reminding us to “Crown” Existence, to recognize Reality Itself as God, through the devotion of the heart and attentiveness of the mind, and to know that this Divinity is not separate from who are at the deepest level…

יְהוָה אֶחָֽד – *Adonai Ekhad –* “Existence is One.”

This basic Oneness of Reality, the macrocosmic Mystery of Being, is reflected in the microcosmic field of awareness; just as there is only One Reality, so too there is only ever One experience, happening now. And while the ever coming-and-going content of our experience may be bitter or sweet, painful or pleasurable, the field of awareness within which experience happens is always Whole; it is the goodness that is ever available to us, at any moment, always in *this* moment:

…וַיַּ֧רְא אֱלֹהִ֛ים אֶת־הָא֖וֹר כִּי־ט֑וֹב וַיֹּ֥אמֶר אֱלֹהִ֖ים יְהִ֣י א֑וֹר וַֽיְהִי־אֽוֹר׃

*Elohim said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And Elohim saw that the light was good…*

* *Berisheet* 1:3, 4

This “light” that is “good” is the basic goodness of simply being, the goodness inherent in consciousness itself, within and beyond all particular experiences, positive or negative. This light is *Keter,* the Oneness of Being, ever-present and therefore easily ignored. But it is also easily invoked; meaning: *it must be invoked with easefulness.* Therefore, take a moment, twice each day, become easeful, let go of the “golden table legs” of life in time, and chant:

שְׁמַ֖ע יִשְׂרָאֵ֑ל יְהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֵ֖ינוּ יְהוָ֥ה אֶחָֽד׃

*Sh’ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ekhad!*

**More on Bereisheet...**

[**The Refrigerator – Parshat Bereisheet**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/parshat-bereisheet)10/23/2019 [0 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/parshat-bereisheet#comments)  
  
Sometimes it happens that a jar of something spills in the refrigerator. It is rare, in our home, for the refrigerator to be totally clean; usually it shows the signs of being well used. But when something spills, it crosses over from acceptable shmootz to a genuine crisis of muck. The spilled mess pushes me over the edge of complacency and drives me to clean not just the spilled stuff, but also the dirtiness in general. It is then, ironically, that more dirtiness leads to more cleanliness.  
   
And so it is with the spiritual life.  
   
When things are going well, there is a low level of discomfort that is easily tolerated without much effort. We can become lazy in our attentiveness. But when the “jar” of our expected routine “breaks,” when some crisis disrupts our sense of normalcy, causing the mind to rush and the emotions to flare more than usual, we are driven from the comfort of our ordinary laziness. It is then that we are again motivated to find our way back to the true peace within, the peace that lies not in the external and temporal, but in the Eternal Present within which all experience arises.  
   
This sense of being driven out from our comfort, a universal experience fundamental to the human condition, is appropriately expressed in this first parsha, in the story of the expulsion from Eden:  
   
וַֽיְשַׁלְּחֵ֛הוּ יְהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהִ֖ים מִגַּן־עֵ֑דֶן לַֽעֲבֹד֙ אֶת־הָ֣אֲדָמָ֔ה אֲשֶׁ֥ר לֻקַּ֖ח מִשָּֽׁם׃  
The Divine sent them from the Garden of Eden, to work the soil from which they were taken.  
(Bereisheet 3:23)  
   
Adam and Eve are sent out of Eden because they “ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad.” In other words, they became conscious of the possibility of crisis. Rather than passively and unconsciously receive the moment as it unfolds, the way a fetus would in the womb, this daat/knowledge is imagining how things might go wrong; we might say this is the beginning of worry. It is also the beginning of ego, of the attempt to control our experience.  
   
וַיְגָ֖רֶשׁ אֶת־הָֽאָדָ֑ם וַיַּשְׁכֵּן֩ מִקֶּ֨דֶם לְגַן־עֵ֜דֶן אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִ֗ים וְאֵ֨ת לַ֤הַט הַחֶ֙רֶב֙ הַמִּתְהַפֶּ֔כֶת לִשְׁמֹ֕ר אֶת־דֶּ֖רֶךְ עֵ֥ץ הַֽחַיִּֽים׃  
He drove the Adam out, and stationed east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery sword, ever-turning, to guard the way to the Tree of Life.  
(Bereisheet 3:24)  
   
When our awareness of crisis triggers the turning movement of the mind and the enflames the fire of the heart, driving us from our peace to “work the soil” and deal with our situation, our worry can eventually become compulsive, and we may come to feel as though we have been exiled forever (or worse, lose all memory of peace altogether). The plain meaning of the text seems to support this: “…the fiery sword, ever-turning, to ***guard (lishmor)*** the way to the Tree of Life.” This is the bitterly pessimistic view of human life that we sometimes see in Biblically based perspectives – that the Way back to The Garden, the derekh eitz hahayim, is completely blocked to us in this life by the “fiery turning sword” that guards it.  
   
But we can understand this word for “guard” – lishmor – in a different way by looking at some other passages:  
   
שָׁמ֣֛וֹר אֶת־י֥וֹם֩ הַשַׁבָּ֖֨ת לְקַדְּשׁ֑֜וֹ כַּאֲשֶׁ֥ר צִוְּךָ֖֣ ׀ יְהוָ֥֣ה אֱלֹהֶֽ֗יךָ  
**Guard** ***(shamor)*** the Sabbath Day and keep it holy, as the Divine has commanded you.  
(Devarim 5:12)  
   
This passage from the Ten Commandments says to “guard” the Sabbath. Does that mean that we are kept away from the Sabbath? Of course not! To “guard” doesn’t mean we are blocked from it; it means that we should not take it for granted, that we should recognize its sacredness so that we can enter into it more deeply.  
   
Or how about this passage:  
   
וְהָיָ֣ה עֵ֣קֶב תִּשְׁמְע֗וּן אֵ֤ת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים֙ הָאֵ֔לֶּה וּשְׁמַרְתֶּ֥ם  
And it will follow if you listen to these rules and ***guard (ushmartem)*** them…  
(Devarim 7:12)  
   
Does it mean to guard the rules so as to keep away from them? Of course not – it means the opposite. And this reveals the deeper dimension of the “fiery turning sword” – yes, the movement of the mind and the triggering of emotion drives us out from our peace, but it also serves as a beacon to bring us back, showing us exactly where to find the Path to the Tree of Life! More dirtiness leads to more cleanliness.  
   
That is why the “guardian” of the Path is not just movement and fire, not just thought and emotion, but is also a sword. This is the sword of intention that directs us into awareness of thought and emotion, so that we need not be caught by them. And more than that, as we intensify our awareness of the movement of the mind and the fire of the heart, the quality of awareness itself comes to the foreground, showing us not only the Way Back to the Garden, but also revealing that the Garden is who we really are, beneath and beyond the mind and heart. The Tree of Life is not external; it is our own nervous system.  
   
 וַיַּשְׁכֵּן֩ מִקֶּ֨דֶם לְגַן־עֵ֜דֶן אֶת־הַכְּרֻבִ֗ים – and caused to dwell east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim…  
   
The “east” is the place of the rising sun, the place of the dawn, reminding us: when we awaken in the morning and the mind is moving and the heart is agitated, let that “fiery turning sword” show you the way back to the Garden. Before you go out to “work the soil,” spend some time first with meditation, using the “sword” of intention to cast off the bonds of the temporal, dip into the spacious freedom of the Eternal Present, and nourish yourself with the Tree of Life.  
   
It is a new year – let us recommit and deepen our practice – the Garden is waiting for you. I’ll be there with you tomorrow morning!  
  
  
[**The Garden- Parshat Bereisheet**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-garden-parshat-bereisheet)  
10/27/2016  [3 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-garden-parshat-bereisheet" \l "comments)  
​  
“Bereisheet Bara Elohim Et Hashamayim v’Et Ha’aretz-  
"In the beginning, Elohim created the heavens and the earth…”  
  
**​*What Is My Purpose?***  
  
When you awaken from sleep, is it because you’ve decided to awaken?  
Or, do you simply wake up when your body is finished sleeping?  
In sleep, there’s no deciding.  
   
Once you are awake, you are faced with the question:  
What shall I do? What is my purpose?  
   
Waking up itself solves nothing-  
There was no problem to begin with.  
But once awake, life becomes a problem.  
   
The universe springs into being-  
Does creation have a purpose?  
   
But “purpose” is itself something that’s created!  
“Purpose” is a thought; “purpose” is a thing.  
There cannot be a purpose for creation until after creation.  
   
Before, there is no problem.  
The universe comes into being because:  
Why not?  
   
Sometimes, after many months, I clean my car.  
My wife asks, “Why did you have to clean it now all of a sudden?”  
But the only answer is: Why Not?  
   
Before creation, there is no problem.  
After, all the problems.  
   
What is the solution to all the problems?  
Go back to before the problems!  
   
“Hinei Tov Me’od-  
Behold it was very good!”  
   
That is the Shabbat- the remembering that there were no problems before we got involved;  
In fact, there are still no problems.  
   
The “Before” never went anywhere, because it is not a thing.  
It is always right here.  
The Shabbat, the Garden- they were Here before Anything.  
   
From within the Garden, there is no problem with moving back into problems.  
From within Shabbat, there is no problem with moving back into time.  
   
Seeing from within the Garden, even outside the Garden is really still inside the Garden-  
For where can the Garden not be?  
   
Seeing from outside the Garden, even inside the Garden is just more of the same:  
   
“How can we manage to get back in?”  
“Once we get in, how can we make sure that we stay there?”  
   
But- The Garden is not “there.”  
   
Thought springs into being from No-Thought; in No-Thought, there is no problem.  
From No-Thought, why not think?  
   
“Eitz Hada’at Tov v’Ra-  
The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad…”  
   
Here we are amidst the trees of the Garden-  
Why not take a bite of the good and the bad?  
Of the This and the That?  
Of the Before and the After?  
   
But once you leave the Timeless, the Sword of Fire blocks your way back.  
What is the Sword of Fire?  
Nothing but thought!  
   
You can't decide to awaken-  
You can’t think your way back into the Garden-  
The Garden never went anywhere.  
  
But let thought cease, and you will see for yourself:  
   
The “Purpose” is to come back to No-Purpose-  
To the Place from which the Universe springs:  
   
“Y’hi Or- Let there be light!”  
   
To return to No-Purpose requires living with Great Purpose-  
​The Purpose of Being Present.  
   
From There (which is always Here)  
We can create something beautiful-  
You, Me, and Others.  
   
The world is waiting!  
Do you not believe me?  
   
Don’t worry- it’s Friday afternoon!  
  
**​**[**The Pool- Parshat Bereisheet**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-pool-parshat-bereisheet)  
10/8/2015  [1 Comment](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/the-pool-parshat-bereisheet" \l "comments)  
  
When I was about two or three years old, my parents took me on vacation.  
  
I have a memory of a boy playing by the pool, filling his plastic bucket with water and splashing it on people. As I walked by him, he made an angry growling noise and threw some water on me.  
  
Without a thought, I just pushed him into the pool and watched him slowly sink to the bottom. Immediately, a barrage of adults surged all around me. Men in suits threw off their jackets and dove into the water. In a moment he was safe, and I stood there watching in astonishment.  
  
He coughed a bit, looked at me and said, “Next time I’ll push you in the pool!”  
  
I wonder sometimes what my life would have been like if I had accidentally killed that boy, and I am so grateful that he was saved from my innocent but deadly push. At that age, I had no idea what the consequence of pushing him into the water would be. It was just an impulse.  
  
As adults, we know that we can’t breathe underwater, and that we must constantly breathe to stay alive. And yet, there is a different kind of breathing that many people are barely aware of at all- not a physical breathing, but a kind of inner breathing, without which you can “drown” in your own life.  
  
Meaning, you can “drown” in the “water” of your roles, your desires, your opinions, your memories, everything that seems to make up your life.  
  
This “water”, however, actually exists only in only your mind. This “water” is nothing but thought!  
  
The more continuous your stream of thinking, the less space there is to “breathe”- meaning, the less you can feel the openness and ease that is available when simply living in the present. This continuous stream of thinking is not malicious or evil; it is just an impulse. But it's an incredibly strong impulse.   
  
Most people function on very little “breathing”. Their minds “come up for air” only occasionally, take a “breath”, then dive back into the waters of thought.  
  
Some people, unfortunately, lose the ability to come up at all, and end up drowning in the stresses and pressures of life, all created by thought. For these people, there is no longer any ability to differentiate between thought and reality. Everything is seen as a projection of the mind.  
  
Who will save them?  
  
Is it possible to awaken from the dream of your own mind, to come up and breathe the life-giving air of the present?  
  
It is possible, but to do it, you have to make the background the foreground.  
  
For most, the present moment glows faintly in the background, while the foreground is filled with the noisy waters of thought.  
  
But when the background becomes the foreground, the texture of this moment becomes bright, alive and new, as if seen for the first time. This is hinted at in the very first verse of the Torah. This week’s reading begins:  
  
“Bereisheet bara Elokim et hashamayim v’et ha’aretz-  
“In the beginning, the Divine created the heavens and the earth.“  
  
The 12th century Kabbalistic text known as “The Bahir” equates the word “Reisheet”, which means “Beginning”, with the word “Hokhma”, which means “Wisdom” or “Consciousness”, by means of a verse that connects the two:  
  
“Reisheet hokhmah yirat Hashem-  
“The beginning of consciousness is awe of the Divinity of Existence…” (Psalm 111:10)  
  
When your own awareness (Hokhmah) meets this moment, it has the quality of brightness, of newness (Reisheet).  
  
This is also hinted at by the duality of “heavens and “earth”-  
  
When the “heavens” of your awareness meet the “earth” of all of your sense perceptions- then everything is be-reisheet- with (be) the quality of beginning-ness (reisheet).  
  
We’ve all known this newness at the very beginning of our lives. As an infant, you didn’t know your name. The infant has no story. Just like a cat rolling in the sun, like a bird flying in the sky, like a worm tunneling through the earth- the newborn is fresh and alive in this moment.  
  
But then the story begins.  
  
The child learns its name, its roles, its story, and the confusing mix between direct perception and all these mental narratives starts to obscure the present moment. As it says:  
  
“V’ha’aretz hayta tohu vavohu, v’hoshekh al p’nai tahom-  
“And the earth was confusion and chaos, with darkness on the face of the depths…”  
  
But fortunately, there is a path out of this confusion:  
  
“V’ruakh Elohim merakhefet al p’nai hamayim-  
“And the Divine hovered over the face of the waters-“  
  
Rather than drown in the waters of your mind, you can “hover” over it simply by consciously noticing what your mind is doing. In deciding to notice your own thoughts, you can command your inner “light” into the darkness:  
  
“Vayomer Elohim ‘y’hi ohr’  
“And the Divine said, ‘let there be light!’”  
  
Simply notice what’s going on in your own mind: “There is a thought about such-and such.”  
  
And when notice it, what happens?  
  
You may find your mind becomes quiet all by itself, revealing an experience of Reality without the burden of mind, without the burden of time. Practice this often, and eventually a new light will be revealed:  
  
“Vay’hi ohr!  
“And there was light!”  
  
This “light” is the dawning of the brightness that was there when you were a newborn, before you were a “someone”. It hasn’t changed! It was overlaid with narrative, but it never went anywhere.  
  
This goodness of life in the present in not something you have to believe in. It’s not about philosophy. It’s something you can see directly:  
  
“Vayar Elohim et ha’ohr ki tov-  
“The Divine saw that the light was good!”  
  
And so the Torah opens not merely with a cosmology or a mythology, but with a description of awakening- a Torah of Awakening.  
  
Of all the Hassidic rebbes, Reb Zushia of Hanipole was particularly known for his simple wisdom that transcended the intellectual complexity characterizing so much of Jewish teaching.  
  
According to one story, when asked to reveal his core teaching on what’s most important, he replied, “To me, the most important thing is whatever I happen to be doing in the moment.”  
  
Again, none of this is to put down or devalue the mind and thinking. After all, you wouldn’t denigrate your clothing for not being your body! You wouldn’t insult a menu for not being food!  
  
It’s only that when we confuse thought for reality, we tend to lose reality. Then we are literally living in a dream, and dreams can become nightmares.  
  
Of course, bringing the power of awakening into its full potential for your life takes training and practice. Soon I’ll be launching a new opportunity for you to get that training and practice in this new year. Stay tuned!  
  
As we enter the gates of Autumn and this Shabbat of Beginnings, may these opening words of Torah inspire us to not forget the inherent goodness, newness and freedom that is our birthright and nature-  
  
-the ever-available, ever-flowing present moment.  
  
Good Shabbos!  
-b yosef