

Sparks

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What You See Is What You Get

"Daddy, where is G-d?"

"Son, wherever you let Him in."

— Attributed to Rebbe Pinchas of Koretz

How do we open our souls' eyes to let G-d in?

The Kabbalah says, "There is no king without a nation." This point requires deep exploration. It may make sense that, in the human world, a king is dependent on having subjects who acknowledge his sovereignty. The last Emperor of China ceased to be emperor when there were no longer people who bowed when he entered the room. Even after the Communist government had exiled him, as long as people recognized him and acknowledged him as their sovereign, he was, in a very real sense, still a king, albeit without the power to rule. But G-d is reality, so how can G-d be dependent on human acknowledgment.

The world that you and I live in is a product of our perception of reality. The philosopher Immanuel Kant probed this concept. He asked: Do we see reality or do we see our perception of reality? Kant's answer, of course, is that we do not see reality, but only our perception of reality. In other words, is this world reality? No, this world is your perception of reality. Therefore, the focus and clarity of your consciousness will determine the kind of world you live in.

Imagine three people sitting right next to each other in a doctor's waiting room. Are they sitting in the same room? Let's say the first person walked in, and complained, "Oh, how small this room is!" The second person entered, and exclaimed, "Look how bright this room is." The third person came in, and thought, "Ugh, what a messy room." Now, they are sitting inches apart, but they are not in the same room. The first person is sitting in a small room, feeling really cramped. The second person is sitting in a light room, feeling cheerful. The third person is sitting in a messy room, feeling disgusted.

Essentially, what you see is what you get. The world you live in is a product of what you are looking and willing to see. This is expressed in the Kabbalah classic - the Zohar's commentary on the story of Jacob as he's going to Egypt to be reunited with his long-lost son Joseph. Jacob has misgivings about leaving the land of Israel, even to see his beloved son. G-d appears to Jacob and says, "Jacob, don't worry. Joseph will close your eyes." The Zohar queries, what does this mean? According to Torah, when a person passes away, someone must close the eyes of the deceased. The Zohar explains that the colors and textures and shapes of this world exist in your eyes. In order to enter a new world, a higher world, after death, the soul must first leave this world. This world exists in one's eyes, so the eyes must be closed in order to take leave of this world and see a higher world. G-d is announcing to Jacob that he is going to die in Egypt and Joseph will be there to close his eyes to this world, so that he will be able to enter, i.e. see, the next world.

Is the Zohar saying that this world is an illusion? No. The Zohar is saying that this world is your subjective perception. Your consciousness of reality determines the world you're in. Your consciousness of G-d determines how much of the light and the truth of G-d will be allowed into your world. To the extent that you acknowledge G-d, to that extent G-d will be in your life. This is a very crucial idea. Although G-d is, G-d is not revealed in your perceptual world unless you actively acknowledge and invite G-d in.

A friend of mine had an unpleasant experience with a mother of one his students who was about to be ordained a rabbi. This greatly upset and disturbed this woman who considered herself an enlightened intellectual and looked at organized religion as backward and fanatical. She was very nasty and cynical about her son's religious convictions. They were on the way to the ceremony when she turned to my friend and said, "Basically, I don't believe in G-d."

My friend replied, "O.K., fine! Don't believe in G-d." He was the first religious person who had responded to her that way, others tried to convince her. "What?" she exclaimed in surprise.

"You don't want to believe in G-d?" he said. "Fine, so live in a G-dless world."

That's essentially the choice we have. If we don't want to believe in G-d, then G-d won't be in our world. That doesn't mean G-d isn't real. G-d is real, but not for those who choose to deny that truth.

In other words, if I've never tasted papaya, then there's no flavor of papaya in my life. Whether it's real or not for others, it's not in my life. If I'm blind to the color red, then red will not be one of the colors in my life. Mammals do not see colors, so they live in a colorless world. If I'm not willing to see G-d, then my world is godless.

Once I was dating a woman, who I'll call Daphne, whom I loved very much. I wanted to marry Daphne. It took me a long time to realize that Daphne simply could not acknowledge my love. I did everything in my power to show her that I loved her. Daphne had such a poor image of herself, however, that she couldn't believe that anyone could love her. It didn't matter how much I professed my love to her, how many bouquets of flowers I sent her. She couldn't see my love. So, in a way, it wasn't there for her.

Everyone is thirsty for love, but how much love you can receive is dependent on how much you believe someone can love you. How much you believe is how much you receive. The more you acknowledge and believe in G-d the more you receive and see G-d in your life.

To the extent that we build our awareness, expand our consciousness, and acknowledge that G-d is the power directing the show, to that extent we see how G-d runs the show for us.

Each one of us has a choice. You can believe that this world is filled with the presence of G-d who cares about it and guides it. Or you can believe that this world is one big accident, a chaotic mess. The choice is yours. But remember what you believe is ultimately what you will see. What you believe creates the world you live in.

The Talmudic Sages taught: "Everything is in the hands of G-d except awe of G-d."

The Hebrew word for awe, *yira*, means both "awe" and "will see." Everything is in the hands of G-d, except for our acknowledging and seeing and being in awe of G-d. If we are in awe we will see G-d. If

we are not in awe, if we are not open to seeing G-d, then G-d is not in our world. It's that simple and that serious.

Some people experience constant Divine presence, which means they see and feel G-d's care and guidance in their lives. They need \$800 to pay for a car repair, and an unexpected check for \$800 arrives in the mail. They miss a bus, so they get on the next bus, and the person they sit down next to turns out to be a friend from twenty years ago.

Why are such experiences not part of everyone's daily life? Because what you see is what you get.

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