

TORAH SPARKS

CHOOSING TO SEE

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When God created light, we **read**: וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאוֹר כִּי-טוֹב, “And God saw the light, that it was good.” Divine sight generates goodness. To see, in God's grammar, is not simply to observe but to call forth, to delight in, to bless into being. The rhythm repeats through the creation week: God sees, declares good, and makes space for what he has seen to flourish.

By **Genesis 6**, the same verbs return, but inverted: וַיֵּרְאוּ בְנֵי-הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת-בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם כִּי טֹבֹת הֵנָּה, “And the sons of God saw the daughters of man, that they were good.” The structure is identical: they see, they perceive goodness. But what follows breaks the pattern. וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם וְנָשִׁים מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּחָרוּ, “And they took for themselves wives from all whom they chose.”

The corruption is not in what they see but in what seeing has become. Divine sight creates; human sight here consumes. God beholds and makes room. The sons of God behold and seize. What began as a gaze that generates goodness has become a gaze that possesses it. The verbs of creation: seeing, calling, blessing, still move through the text, but they have been turned inside out.

This is the corruption of vision, not only of morality. In Genesis 1, seeing is an act of making space for the other. God looks upon light, water, land, living creatures, and declares them good, good in themselves, good beyond himself. But in Genesis 6, sight collapses inward. The “sons of God”, whether divine beings transgressing boundaries or human rulers claiming divine privilege, represent sight that has forgotten its source. They imitate God's seeing without God's generosity. To see the good is to reach for it, to claim it, to take it for oneself. The divine image, meant to reflect God's creative seeing, has become appetite. An image that was supposed to consecrate the world now consumes it.

God responds first by setting a boundary: “My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he too is flesh; his days shall be one hundred twenty years” (Genesis 6:3). Boundlessness has become corruption. Finitude will become the new frame for holiness. What cannot be grasped forever might yet be blessed in its moment. Mortality will teach what immortality could not: that the good is not ours to possess. Creation itself must learn its limits if it is to survive the gaze of those who cannot stop reaching.

Then God sees the full **scope**: וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רָבָה רָעַת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ, “And the LORD saw that the evil of man was great upon the earth.” God sees again, but now what He beholds is the wreckage of seeing itself. The same verb, the same divine gaze, confronts a world where goodness has been consumed by those who should have blessed it. And so: וַיִּתְּעַצֵּב אֱלֹ-לִבּוֹ, “And he grieved to his heart.” From that grief comes the flood.

And yet: “Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.” He is not the model of faith, only the remnant through whom divine sight remains possible. His righteousness is quiet, his obedience unadorned. He does not see as God sees, but he does not presume to see for God. He is the pause between uncreation and the world's next attempt to begin again. His chosenness is endurance, not perception. It is the bare thread of continuity between what was and what might be again.

After the waters subside, humanity tries once more. The new beginning is Babel. The people gather not to multiply and fill the earth but to “build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves.” The tower is their monument to permanence, their attempt to secure meaning through the work of their hands. Their speech collapses under its own certainty, their vision under its own ambition. The builders of Babel name to possess. Their seeing, like their speaking, has forgotten how to receive.

And then, in the next breath of the text, God calls Abraham. Out of Babel's ambition to make a name, God **promises**: וְאֵגְדְּלָהּ שְׁמִיךָ, “And I will make your name great.” The symmetry is deliberate, almost surgical. The tower-builders reach upward to seize transcendence. Abraham steps outward to meet it. They call themselves into being. He calls upon the name of the LORD, וַיִּקְרָא בְשֵׁם יְהוָה. Their monuments reach for heaven. His altars open to it. One seeks permanence, the other presence. One makes a name; the other answers one.

With Abraham, chosenness takes its first true shape. Noah obeyed a command to survive. Abraham answers a call to become. He does not seize what is good, he follows it into the unknown. He learns that blessing multiplies only when released. He looks at his promised son and sees not possession but trust, not his own futurity but God's faithfulness. His life turns the verbs of creation back to their source: to see, to bless, to call forth. The covenant will grow from this posture of open vision, of seeing not to own, but to witness.

And from this family, many generations later, when Yocheved hides her newborn son, Moses, among the reeds of the Nile, the ancient rhythm **returns**: וַתֵּרָא אֹתוֹ כִּי-טוֹב הוּא, “And she saw him, that he was good.” The phrase is whispered from Genesis into Exodus, the thread unbroken. Her seeing restores what was lost when the sons of God saw and took. She looks upon what is good and does not claim it. She protects it by letting it go. That single act, an ordinary mother's gaze turned toward hope, reverses the corruption of human seeing. She reflects, in that moment, the truest image of God: to behold the good and make space for it to live.

The story that began with divine sight and human taking ends with human sight that blesses by release. Between those two ways of looking, consuming and consecrating, lies the long history of chosenness. God does not choose those who see clearly from the start. He chooses those willing to learn his way of seeing. Noah keeps the gaze alive through destruction. Abraham learns to answer it with faith. Yocheved learns to embody it with love.

And perhaps this is all chosenness ever means: not to stand apart from the world but to look at it as God once did, as God still does, fleeting, finite, and somehow good. Each generation, a few learn to look again. Not perfectly. Not always. But enough to turn seeing to blessing, to behold without seizing, to call good without claiming. Maybe that is enough. Maybe the world endures on the strength of that seeing: on a gaze that blesses what it cannot keep, on a heart that grieves and still calls it good.