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B'REISHIT

The Pause Makes All the Difference

It is clear that there is a system in the process of the creation of the world.

Day by day things take shape, step by step the work moves towards completion. God, the great Architect, checks each stage and declares Himself satisfied.

The story is magnificent and majestic. But it is not without its problems.

For example, why does the system change once the sixth day is over?

Everything up to that point is material and physical - land and seas, sun, moon and stars, flora and fauna, man himself - but creation now becomes non-physical with the seventh day Shabbat.

The clue comes in the word LA'ASOT, "to function"; the physical world is created "to function", but subject to a condition: everything must have time out.

The earth has to rest - hence the sabbatical year. Animals have to rest - hence they must rest when we do.

Above all - man, as the only part of creation with a consciousness of time and purpose, must rest. This is why Shabbat was created.

Yet Shabbat rest is not just physical; the day is not merely for sleep and inactivity but for spiritual and cultural refreshment.

A famous pianist was asked, "What is the secret of your playing?"

His answer? "The magic is not in the notes, but in the pauses between them!"

Shabbat is the pause that makes the difference.

Is Man a Photo?

That man is made in God's image is axiomatic to the Torah (B'reishit 1:27).

The word "image" (TZELEM) does not mean anything physical, since God has no physical shape or characteristics. The "image" is intellectual, moral and spiritual.

Man is not a photograph of God in any literal sense, but metaphorically has the capacity of aspiring to be God-like.

As God thinks and plans, man can think and plan. As God is just and truthful, man can be just and truthful. As God is sublime, so man can at least try to be sublime.

Man will never be God, but he has the ability to raise himself to be, as the Psalmist puts it, "a little lower than God" (T'hilim 8:6).

How tragic it is when you see human beings who go down morally, not up, who stifle their inner spiritual spark and ignore the pinprick of conscience, who know deep down that they really could look higher but simply don't want to.

On the other hand, how miraculous it is to find people who let their still small voice be heard and allow themselves to begin the slow but exhilarating upward climb. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH