

Parshat Breishit takes a negative turn towards the end. The people had become so evil and life was becoming so corrupt that Hashem decided to punish the world. The passuk says: "And Hashem regretted that he had made man on earth, since his heart was saddened" (Breishit 6:6). (For our purposes we will translate "Vayinachaim" as regret, although some translate it literally as "comfort.") What does it mean that Hashem could regret what He made?

The Malbim explains that the regret lies in the fact that specifically it was on this earth that Hashem created man. He proves it from the pasuk before, which states "Hashem saw that man's wickedness on earth was great"(6:5). It was not just the sins, but the words in the pasuk "on earth" prove that Hashem wanted man to live in a place where people followed their good nature.

To further explain, the Malbim gives an interesting Mashal, a parable. In a situation when a craftsman makes something and finds it to be insufficient, he destroys it and then tries again. There the fault is on the craftsman himself, who made something imperfect. Yet when the craftsman makes something that is destroyed by a foolish person creating trouble, what the craftsman made was still perfect and the fault is not on him. Hashem is our craftsman, and what He made did not have imperfections. Hashem's creations should have remained untouched and perfect. Man's free will caused sinning and punishment would ensue.

Additional proof for this comes from the Midrash (Gen. R. 11:10), which notes that when the Torah tells us that Hashem rested, it means He rested from creating the world, but not from fixing what the people in the world do wrong. Malbim takes this to mean that Hashem's world itself was perfect and that there was no issue with His craftsmanship, yet Hashem could not fully rest because His creations made poor choices. Therefore, concludes the Malbim, the regret that the passuk describes is the fact that Hashem gave man the power to choose, which led to sinning which led to destruction and the need to rebuild the world.

This is not a simple Malbim to understand. But two things are clear. One: Hashem did not regret making the world or us. Two: the world is ours; it is up to us whether we want to help build it up or contribute to the need to tear it down. I think this

is a powerful message following the High Holy Days and as we begin a new year and a new Parsha cycle.

Good Shabbos from the Kotel.