"The First Bad Thing"

By Rabbi David Wolpe

What is the first thing in the Bible that is called "not good?"

Here is a hint from literature: When asked if he would make a philanthropic contribution, Charles Dickens' immortal character Scrooge tells the solicitors to put him down for nothing. "You wish to be anonymous?" they persist. He replies: "I wish to be left alone."

A hint from sociology. The father of modern sociology, Emile Durkheim, wrote, "Morality begins...only in so far as we belong to a human group, whatever it may be."

And of course, a hint from Hillel: "If I am only for myself, what am I?"

The comment is Genesis 2:18: "It is not good for man to be alone."

In a world that cherishes individuality it is important to remember how desperately we need one another. In contrast to the poet's apocalyptic warning, "human voices wake us and we drown," the Bible teaches that human voices save us, they throw us the rope to tug us back to the shore. Eve and Adam rescue one another from the solitude that shrivels the heart. If we are wise the screen and cell phone will periodically give way to the outreached human hand, for it is not good, and never has been good, to be alone.