

Shall we Praise the Darkness?

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

Glory be to God for dappled things / For skies of couple-color as a brindled cow.

In his poem, *Pied Beauty*, G.M. Hopkins thanks God for the world which is more than one color — skies are light and dark like the skin of the cows grazing below. The poem expresses a vital message of Yom Kippur.

We should bless the bad, the Talmud tells us, as we bless the good. Good and bad are light and dark, the “couple-colors” of the world. In the Talmud we are told of a man who refuses to harvest honey because looking at the swarming hive, he concludes, “I’ll do without the honey and the sting.” Naomi Shemer used that parable to write her beautiful song *Al Kol Aleh — On All These* — an anthem of modern Israel. It begins: “On the honey and the sting, on the bitter and the sweet ... over all these things please guard, my God.” To give up the sting is to foreswear the honey; to bypass pain is to thwart love.

The world is saturated in miracle. Miracles do not come in single colors or hues, however. Sometimes they are the patch of light in a darkened sky. On Yom Kippur we remember that it is our task to embrace God’s world in all its stunning variety. May we give more, care more, commiserate, sing and celebrate more in the year ahead.