

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Crayola in the Sky

I had an experience recently that I don't get very often. I saw the sunrise on a beach. I will say it was not the most beautiful sunrise I had ever seen, but that's kind of like saying that Beethoven's Symphony Number Three was not his best work; it's still quite good! As I walked along the beach, I noticed the variety of hues, some with names I could identify, like pink and gray and blue. Other shades might have been more nuanced: charcoal gray, sky blue, scarlet. It reminded me of a time when I was in Galveston, officiating a man's conversion to Judaism. As part of the conversion and subsequent immersion in the bay for a *mikvah*, we did a *havdallah* service. As the main blessing in *havdallah* praises G-d for separation – separating Shabbat from the rest of the week – *havdallah* prior to conversion was a symbolic representation of the separation of his before his conversion and after he officially took on the obligation of becoming Jewish. I remember seeing the dark sky in the west (midnight blue?) and the bright light in the east (pink and red). Directly above our heads, the night and the day blended together forming a color that I could not identify; kind of gray, mixed with some purple. It felt like this moment of conversion, the blending of the past with the future, was a mysterious haze that could only be answered with time.

I've often looked at the world during dawn or dusk and tried to separate the colors. Of the many colors that exist in nature, most of them I can only recognize from the box of crayons I used as a child. I remember colors like Sierra, eggplant, mauve, powder blue, sky blue, midnight blue, chartreuse, scarlet, burnt orange, etc. These are all just names that were made up by someone – maybe the crayon manufacturers. The standard colors of the rainbow – red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet – all blend to form unique shades. When I look outside and see branches and leaves of trees against a sky whose color changes moment by moment, or when a thunderstorm approaches and finishes, none of the colors seem to fit exactly in a particular category.

People can be like that. The labels we give people can be as vague or as accurate as the colors of nature. We use words like vivacious, friendly and outgoing, but also aggressive, nosy and pushy. Someone might be considered private, humble and unassuming, but to others might appear stand-offish or arrogant. When we say a color is red or blue or green, there is a very wide spectrum, darker and lighter, brighter or dimmer. The Crayola company may believe it can come up with a name for the hue, but there are as many different shades of color as there are different individual people. Perhaps that is why G-d's early promise to humanity, the rainbow, is a multi-colored spectrum. To remind us of the unique individuality of every separate being. The red at the beginning of the rainbow is no more or less important than the violet at the end or the green in the middle.

Look outside your home, and you'll see a beautiful, undefinable array of color. Look inside your soul, and you'll see a beautiful multitude of possibilities and connections.

L'shalom,

Rabbi Dan Gordon