

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI DOV LERNER**

### Ascending Scales

Adam and Eve err, even rebel; they follow hungry impulses and find themselves exposed. As the guilt seeps into consciousness and the blood drains from their aware faces, a resounding whisper gathers pace; it is the sound of Divine reckoning. In haste they flee and hide in the woods—an act which carries the flavor of mortal fear, a flavor that resonates in our wooden coffins.<sup>1</sup> Naked and ashamed, barely born and now unmasked, G-d curses man and offers the now required dignity of dress: “The Lord made coats of skin for Adam and his woman”.<sup>2</sup>

Coats of hide, not leaves or fabric, leave mankind clad in the residue of death’s touch. Forever accompanied by the texture of animate vulnerability, Adam and Eve are inescapably alerted to their own limits. So the text implies.

Rabbi Meir, though, refutes such an image and infuses the scene with sacred illumination; he, the Midrash reports,<sup>3</sup> would read the word for skin—עור, *Or*—as its softer twin—אור, *Or*—meaning light. Extracting the guttural undertones of the sound, Rabbi Meir simultaneously erases the moral distaste for the image. Man is no longer draped in death, but radiates light. Although expelled, warmth remains; although east of Eden, the hope of paradise lives on.

Rabbi Eliezer, however, refuses to lighten the cloth’s sting, and in fact adds a vast new weight to its already heavy load. Taking the text at its word—the cloth was skin—but burying deeper into detail, he asks, ‘Whose skin was it?’ It was, Rabbi Eliezer claims, the skin of the snake.<sup>4</sup> A creature of cruel persuasion, it was the serpent that had triggered human error and shaped the toxic hubris which led to mankind’s demise. Being enrobed and enveloped by the scaly skin of man’s initial tempter, it would seem, serves as an

Please keep in mind  
Ita bas Blima Leah  
for a refuah shelaima

<sup>1</sup> Genesis Rabbah, 19: “Adam and his wife hid among the woods of the garden’ – R’ Levi said – this hints to descendants placed in wooden coffins.”

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3:21

<sup>3</sup> Genesis Rabbah, 20

<sup>4</sup> Pirkei D’ Rebbi Eliezer, 20

eternal token not only of the generic limitations of the living, but of Adam’s personal failure. In G-d’s offer of dignity there appears to lie a ghastly torment; with expulsion and curse as punishment enough, we might ask why G-d would comfort man with such a disturbing gown.

Perhaps we misunderstand the presence of failure, and with the aid of two suggestive scenes we can alleviate the seeming cruelty of Adam’s cloak.

One Midrash<sup>5</sup> describes a desert teaming with snakes that had the strange effect that if they touched the shadow of a bird overhead, the bird would burst into pieces. The symbol of failure cannot be concealed; to soar over past misdoings and ignore former misdeeds is to undo all possibility of success; to try and obscure blunders in the shadows is to invite an inner splintering.

When G-d washes away the world’s moral degeneracy and recreates it with Noah, Rashi invokes an image in which rather unexpected passengers alight the ark: demons.<sup>6</sup> Emmanuel Levinas suggests that, “These are the tempters of postdiluvian civilizations, without which, no doubt, the mankind of the future could not be, despite its regeneration, a true mankind”.<sup>7</sup> In a moving reading of a phrase in Psalms, our Sages proclaim the truth that, “If a human being uses a broken vessel it is shameful, but the vessels that G-d use are specifically broken ones, as per the verse, ‘G-d is close to those of a broken heart’”.<sup>8</sup> Any attempt to forget our failures is an ill-conceived illusion, unattainable and unhealthy. In Freud’s terminology, the repressed will return.

To complete the picture we turn to another desert scene, where Israel are seen surviving on the backs of engendered serpents: “When Israel walked in the desert, in abundant love, G-d directed the snakes to



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<sup>5</sup> Mechilta D'Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai 15:22; Midrash Tanchuma, Beshalach, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Rashi Genesis 6:19

<sup>7</sup> Levinas, Emmanuel. *Nine Talmudic Readings* (New York: Indiana University Press, 1994), 33

<sup>8</sup> Leviticus Rabbah, 7

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form bridges, and Israel passed over them as a man on a bridge".<sup>9</sup> Snakes and serpents and sins are cunning creatures and will forever haunt our steps—to ignore them is fatal. But to privately carry the knowledge of our failures can offer comfort in the spirit of recognized progress. In confronting our pasts, our hissing sins dissipate into service, and in harmony we ascend their scales. In crossing the bridge toward our destinies, we merge the fibers of Rabbi Meir's and Rabbi Eliezer's imagining, as when we wear our sins and recognize them we can convert icy misdeeds into beams of light. ©2013 Rabbi D. Lerner and Yeshiva University Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought. Rabbi Lerner is the assistant rabbi of Congregation KINS in West Rogers Park, Chicago, IL.

#### **RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS**

## **Covenant & Conversation**

In stately prose the Torah in its opening chapter describes the unfolding of the universe, the effortless creation of a single creative Force. Repeatedly we read, "And God said, Let there be ... and there was ... and God saw that it was good" – until we come to the creation of humankind. Suddenly the whole tone of the narrative changes:

And God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of heaven, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every moving thing that moves upon the earth."

So God created man in His image,  
In the image of God He created him,  
Male and female He created them.  
(Gen 1:26-27)

The problems are obvious. First, why the preface, "Let us make ..."? In no other case does God verbally reflect on what He is about to create before He creates it. Second, who is the "us"? At that time there was no "us." There was only God.

There are many answers, but here I want to focus only on one given by the Talmud. It is quite extraordinary. The "us" refers to the angels with whom God consulted. He did so because He was faced with a

fateful dilemma. By creating Homo sapiens, God was making the one being other than Himself capable of destroying life on earth. Read Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs and Steel* or *Collapse* and you will discover how destructive humans have been wherever they have set foot, creating environmental damage and human devastation on a massive scale. We are still doing so. This is how the Talmud describes what happened before God created humankind:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create man, He created a group of ministering angels and asked them, "Do you agree that we should make man in our image?" They replied, "Sovereign of the Universe, what will be his deeds?"

God showed them the history of mankind. The angels replied, "What is man that You are mindful of him?" [in other words, let man not be created].

God destroyed the angels.

He created a second group, and asked them the same question, and they gave the same answer. God destroyed them.

He created a third group of angels, and they replied, "Sovereign of the Universe, the first and second group of angels told You not to create man, and it did not avail them. You did not listen. What then can we say but this: The universe is Yours. Do with it as You wish."

Then God created man.

When it came to the generation of the Flood, and then to the generation of the builders of Babel, the angels said to God, "Were not the first angels right? See how great is the corruption of mankind."

Then God replied (Isaiah 46:4), "Even to old age I will not change, and even to grey hair, I will still be patient." (Sanhedrin 38b)

This goes to the core of the dilemma even God could not escape. Were He not to create humanity there would be no-one in the universe capable of understanding that he or she was created and that God exists. Only with the birth of humanity did the universe become self-conscious. Without us, it would be as if God had created billions of robots mindlessly doing what they been programmed to do for all eternity. So, even though by creating humans God was putting the entire future of creation at risk, God went ahead and made humankind.

This is radical theology indeed. The Talmud is telling us is that the existence of humankind can only be explained by the fact that God had faith in man. As the Sifre explains the phrase in Moses' song, "the God of faith" – this means, "the God who had faith in the universe and created it."<sup>10</sup> The real religious mystery, according to Judaism, is not our faith in God. It is God's faith in us.

This is the extraordinary idea that shines through the entire Tanakh. God invests his hopes for

<sup>9</sup> Midrash Vayosha Collection

<sup>10</sup> Sifre, Ha'azinu, 307.

the universe in this strange, refractory, cantankerous, ungrateful and sometimes degenerate creature called Homo sapiens, part dust of the earth, part breath of God, whose behaviour disappoints and sometimes appals him. Yet He never gives up.

He tries with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, a string of judges and kings. He tries with women also, and here succeeds much better. They are more faithful, less violent, less obsessed with power. But He refuses to give up on men. He has His most passionate relationship with the prophets. They understand Him and become bearers of His word. Yet most of the prophets end up as disappointed with people as God is.

The real subject of the Torah is not our faith in God, which is often faltering, but His unfailing faith in us. The Torah is not man's book of God. It is God's book of man. He spends a mere 34 verses describing His own creation of the universe, but more than 500 verses describing the Israelites' creation of a tiny, temporary, portable building called the Mishkan, the Sanctuary. God never stops believing in us, loving us, and hoping for the best from us. There are moments when He almost despairs. Our parsha says so.

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and He was grieved to His very core.

But Noah, good, innocent, upright, consoles Him. For the sake of one good man God was prepared to begin again.

Of course, all of this is a matter of faith – as is all belief in the thoughts and feelings of persons other than myself. Do I really know whether those closest to me – my marriage partner, my children, my companions, my friends – love me or have faith in me, or is that just wishful thinking on my part? Atheists sometimes think that belief in God is irrational while belief in other people is rational. That is simply not so. The proof is the failure of the man who, at the dawn of the Enlightenment, sought to put philosophy on a rational basis: Rene Descartes. Descartes famously said, Cogito ergo sum, "I think, therefore I am." All he was sure of was his own existence. For anything else – the existence of physical objects, let alone other minds – even he had to invoke God.

I for one do not have enough faith to be an atheist.<sup>11</sup> To be an atheist you have to have faith, either

<sup>11</sup> Of course an atheist might say – Sigmund Freud came close to saying this – that faith is simply a comforting illusion. That really is not so. It is far more demanding to believe that God summons us to responsibility, that He asks us to fight for justice, equality and human dignity, and that He holds us accountable for what we do, than to believe that there is no meaning to human existence other than ones we invent for

in humankind as a whole, or in yourself. How anyone can have faith in humankind after the Holocaust defies all reason. The single most calculated, sustained crime of man against man happened not in some benighted third world country but in the heart of a Europe that had given birth to Kant and Hegel, Bach and Beethoven, Goethe and Schiller. Civilisation utterly failed to civilise. Humanism did not make men humane.

When I first stood at Auschwitz-Birkenau the question that haunted me was not, "Where was God?" God was in the command, "You shall not murder." God was in the words, "You shall not oppress the stranger." God was saying to humanity, "Your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground." God did not stop the first humans eating forbidden fruit. He did not stop Cain committing murder. He did not stop the Egyptians enslaving the Israelites. God does not save us from ourselves. That, according to the Talmud, is why creating man was such a risk that the angels advised against it. The question that haunts me after the Holocaust, as it does today in this new age of chaos, is "Where is man?"

As for believing only in yourself, that is hubris. Every serious thinker since the dawn of history has known that this ends in nemesis.

There are only two serious possibilities to be entertained by serious minds. Either the one put forward by the Torah that we are here because a Force greater than the universe wanted us to be, or the alternative: that the universe exists because of a random fluctuation in the quantum field, and we are here because of a mindless sequence of genetic mutations blindly sifted by natural selection. Either there is or is not meaning to the human condition. The first possibility yields Isaiah, the second, Sophocles, Aeschylus and Greek tragedy. The Greece of antiquity died. The Israel of Abraham and Moses still lives.

I respect those who choose Greek tragedy over Jewish hope. But those who choose Judaism have made space in their minds for the most life-changing idea of all: Whether or not we have faith in God, God has faith in us.

There may be times in our lives – certainly there have been in mine – when the sun disappears and we enter the cloud of black despair. King David knew these feelings well. They are theme of several Psalms. People can be brutal to one another. There are some who, having suffered pain themselves, find relief

ourselves, no ultimate truth, no absolute moral standards, and no one to whom we will have to give an account of our lives. Fifty years of reflection on this issue have led me to conclude that it is atheism that is, morally and existentially, the easy option – and I say this having known and studied with some of the greatest atheists of our time. That is not to say that I am critical of atheists. To the contrary, in a secular age, it is the default option. That is why now, more than at any other time in the past two thousand years, it takes courage to have and live by religious faith.

in inflicting it on others. You can lose faith in humanity, or in yourself, or both. At such times, the knowledge that God has faith in us is transformative, redemptive. As David said in Psalm 27: Even were my father or mother to forsake me,

The Lord would still receive me. (Ps. 27:10)

We may lose heart; God never will. We may despair; God will give us hope. God believes in us even if we don't believe in ourselves. We may sin and disappoint and come short again and again, but God never ceases to forgive us when we fail and lift us when we fall.

Have faith in God's faith in us and you will find the path from darkness to light. *Covenant and Conversation 5777 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2017 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org*

#### **RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## **Shabbat Shalom**

**"R**emember the teaching of Moses, My servant, the laws and ordinances that I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel." [Malachi 3:23].

The truest essence of reality is not necessarily that which meets the eye; indeed, often times things and people are not what they appear to be. Even our most profound statement of faith, "Sh'ma Yisrael" [Deut. 6:4], is recited while covering one's eyes with one's hand, so that we not be distracted by the illusory nature of what we see around us. Indeed, Rashi's explanation of this verse – that we live in an incomplete and imperfect world in which God is not yet universally accepted – reinforces this point.

The world of God is the world of the inner dimension, the soul rather than the face of the human being, the inner reality rather than the mask for the outside world. In fact, the entire High Holy Day period, beginning with Rosh Hashana and culminating with Simchat Torah, is dedicated to the inner self and to the essential soul of things. The piercing sound of the shofar resonates with the inner cry of the human being; the liturgical poems remind us that the Almighty "searches the inner feelings of every human being;" and we express on this day our deepest fears as well as our innermost hopes.

On Yom Kippur, each of us stands before the Almighty bereft of our physical trappings and even minimal bodily comforts such as food and drink. It is our inner soul that stands before the Almighty ready to be purified.

In a similar vein, it may be said that the Jewish calendar establishes two celebrations for two aspects of the Torah – or, if you will, a separate celebration for each one of our two Torahs, represented by the two sets of tablets we received in the desert.

The festival of Shavuot (Weeks) marks the

Revelation at Sinai when God first presented to us His Torah in the form of the first tablets. This was an external Torah, given amidst an "external extravaganza" of thunder and fire and sounds which were to be seen by the eye [Ex. 20:15].

In contrast, when Moses received the second set of tablets – on Yom Kippur – he did so this time in the midst of Divine silence and in the lonely splendor of intimacy with the Divine. The Sages teach that only the second tablets contained the Oral Law [Midrash, Shemot Rabba, 46:1], which is actually the innermost dimension of Torah that can only be heard and extracted by those who are privy to the inner voice of the Torah's secrets.

It is not by accident that the first tablets were broken, whereas the second are eternal and indestructible. It is not coincidental that forty days after the first Revelation, the People of Israel worshipped the golden calf, whereas the second Torah remains our eternal symbol of Divine love and forgiveness.

These two Torah, the outer and the inner, are expressed in the K'tiv and Kri of the Torah as we experience it. The K'tiv literally means the "writing", the black letters as they appear in the Torah Scroll; the Kri is the way our tradition mandates that we read those letters, sometimes in a different way than we would expect. One might say that the K'tiv is the external Torah and the Kri its internal counterpart. On Simchat Torah we celebrate the inner Torah, the Oral Torah, the "Kri".

On this closing day of the High Holiday period, we read of the death of Moses. Moses' life also has a "K'tiv" and "Kri", an external form and an internal essence.

On the one hand, we might conclude that Moses was a tragic personality: he began his life amidst the wealth and fame of Pharaoh's palace, a veritable prince in Egypt, but concluded it while wandering in the desert, without even a solid roof over his head. His goal had been to take the Israelites into the Promised Land, but at the crucial moment of truth, they failed to rise to the Divine challenge. Finally, after a series of quarrelsome rebellions and forty-two different temporary destinations, Moses departs from his people and the physical world without even a cemetery monument to mark his memory!

The truth, however, resides in the "Kri" of Moses' life, the internal essence that follows us and that we follow to this day. It was Moses who spoke to God face-to-face, as it were, and led the transformation of a slave nation into one with a relationship with the Divine. Even if Moses' words were not always heard by his own generation, his message reverberates throughout all the Jewish generations.

We celebrate the Torah even as we read of Moses' death because for us Moses never died; his grave is unmarked because through the words of the

Torah that he communicated to us, he lives on. Moses in essence resides in his inner message, the Torah by which we live and from which we study is his eternal legacy. It is this Torah over which we rejoice on Simchat Torah. ©2017 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

### RABBI BEREL WEIN

## Wein Online

**A**s is usual and customary, the reading of the Torah concludes and is resumed again in an almost simultaneous fashion on the day of Simchat Torah. This juxtaposition of the readings is especially noticeable this year with the immediacy of Shabbat Bereshiith to Simchat Torah itself.

The Torah concludes with the lesson of the mortality and the eternity of the human being. The Torah itself finishes with the mortality of Moshe but it is a physical mortality. There is no greater testimony to the eternity of the human spirit than the Torah that Moshe bequeathed to us and to the world at large. And this is also the lesson taught to us by the opening narrative regarding the creation and development of human beings.

The Torah tells us that we humans were and are invested with eternity, blown into our nostrils by God, so to speak, and endowed with enormous and gifted talents. But with all of this, our own mortality and the constant reminder of its fragile state of being would always limit us. Humans are aware almost from the time of their birth of their mortality.

Paradoxically, it is this very knowledge of our temporary status on earth that provides the fuel and the energy that drives the engines of human creativity and civilization. We are always in a hurry for we are aware that passing time is our mortal enemy. Both the end and the beginning of the Torah come to reinforce this message of the duality of human beings – eternal and temporary at one and the same time.

The Torah concludes with the blessings of Moshe to his beloved people, the children of Israel. Those blessings are very detailed, individual and personal. The Torah begins with God's blessings to the human race, which are general and universal in nature. This teaches us that although all humans are basically alike and desire health, material success, family and community, comfort and security, each human being is particular, differently talented and motivated in his or her own private world.

Judaism recognizes and reconciles this community and individuality, which is the basic cause of human tension and internal angst. Moshe taught us that we are to treasure our uniqueness as individuals and as a people. God, so to speak, taught us that each of us is part of a universal brotherhood, fashioned from the same mold, by the same Creator.

Seeing ourselves as being recipients of this gift

of social and spiritual duality of identity and purpose is one of the main requirements of living a truly Jewish Torah life. That is why we treat the Torah readings as a seamless whole, really without beginning and end. It all flows together in the paradoxical condition of the human soul and its eternal search for a fairer society and a better world. The continuing, never ending cycle of the Torah itself is our greatest comfort. ©2017 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)

### RABBI AVI WEISS

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**W**hy did Adam and Eve disobey God and eat from the tree of knowledge? Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch argues that Eden was a society based on the system of divinely rooted ethics. For this reason, God instructs Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil as God is the ultimate arbiter. In disobeying God and eating from the tree of knowledge Adam and Eve were rejecting this principle. They opted for a world based on ethical humanism, where human beings alone decide right and wrong. This is dangerous for human thinking tends to be relative. What is unethical to one person is ethical to another. If, however, ethics have their source in God they become objectively true.

From this perspective, the goal of redemption is to return to the Eden milieu where God is acknowledged by all as the ultimate decider of good and evil.

Another possibility comes to mind. Perhaps Eden represents the perfect "angelic world" where evil does not exist. Adam and Eve found themselves dissatisfied in this world. After all, in a society which is totally good, there would, in reality, be no good says Rav Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Kohen Kook. For good is a relative term. There is good only when evil exists.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler adds, there would be no challenge in a perfect world. There would be nothing to overcome.

And Rabbi Chaim Volozhin notes, that without evil we could not do wrong; the essential part of humanity would be lost, the ability to possess free will and choose between good and bad. Without freedom of choice, we would be stripped of our humanity.

Adam and Eve eat from the tree of knowledge because they opt to leave the "angelic world" and enter the "real world" – a world in which good exists, challenge prevails and the human being is blessed with freedom of choice.

From this perspective, the goal of humankind is not to return to Eden. Rather it is to shape a messianic society in which one attains goodness despite the

existence of evil. The pathway to reach that "ideal world" is in fact the Torah and the halakhah. (Halakhah comes from the word halakh, to go, as it takes us on the path toward redemption.)

Eden is not the ideal. For this reason Adam and Eve leave Eden, to face evil and overcome it. The expulsion from Eden is commonly perceived as the gravest sin of humanity. Yet the Eden experience is rather a lesson in human nature. And is even a necessary prerequisite for the redemption of the world.

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### RABBI PINCHAS WINSTON

## Perceptions

“**G**od said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, seed yielding herbs and fruit trees producing fruit according to its kind in which its seed is found, on the earth,' and it was so." (Bereishis 1:11)

The talmud states that a person must own his lulav and esrog on the first day of Succos to fulfill the mitzvah of "Arbah Minim." They cannot be stolen or even borrowed, a stringency which does not apply to ALL mitzvos, and which originates from the following verse: "Take for yourselves -- LACHEM -- on the first day, the fruit of the 'hadar' tree..." (Vayikra 23:40)

The inclusion of the word "lachim" in the verse insists that the lulav and esrog belong to a person for the sake of the mitzvah. Why? Neither the Torah nor the Talmud explain. The Leshem, however, in discussing a similar stringency provides a clue:

"A financial acquisition of a person is relevant to the root of his Nefesh, which caused him to sin..." (Drushei Olam HaTohu, Chelek 2, Drush 4, Anaf 12, Siman 11)

This means that when a person purchases something, it creates a spiritual bond with the acquisition, at least on the level of the Nefesh. People are attached to their money, especially when they legitimately earn it, and "sacrificing" it is a form of SELF-sacrifice. The money, and that which it purchases, becomes a partial spiritual projection of its owner.

This is particularly important which it comes to an actual sacrifice, as this verse makes clear: "Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: 'When a person from [among] you -- MIKEM -- brings a sacrifice to God...'" (Vayikra 1:2)

It is the usage of "mikem," like "lachim," that indicates the need for a sacrifice to be owned by the person offering it. But again, how does ownership change the nature of the mitzvah?

The Leshem explains that Creation is comprised of four elements: mineral, vegetation, animals, and hu-mans. Everything that exists, for the

most part, is a unique combination of these four elements.

Prior to the sin of Adam HaRishon, all four elements were pure and holy. Impurity existed, but outside of man. It was the sin that changed this, and which caused a spiritual sully of the four elements. It also internalized man's yetzer hara, his evil inclination, making it the "ba'al habayis," and future sin even more likely.

Though a person has five levels of soul, the only to be affected by the sin was the lowest, the "Nefesh Behaimis," or "Animal Soul." All levels of soul require rectification, but only the Nefesh has to be rid of "zuhama," an indelible spiritual impurity which makes a person vulnerable to sin.

A sacrifice incorporated all four damaged aspects: salt is a mineral, wood is vegetation, the sacrifice was an animal, and a person offered it. Consumed by the fire of the altar, all four elements became purified with respect to the sinner's Nefesh:

"When he offers them on the altar and the fire of the altar consumes them, his Nefesh becomes purified of them." (Drushei Olam HaTohu, Chelek 2, Drush 4, Anaf 12, Siman 11)

IF HE OWNS it. It is the sinner's ownership that allows the sacrifice to work on behalf of his Nefesh, to rectify it, to make him less vulnerable to sin in the future. The financial investment in the animal created a spiritual bond that allowed the sacrifice to impact the offerer's spiritual being.

It would seem that this must be true of a lulav and esrog as well. In fact, the Talmud even says: "Rebi Avahu quoted Rebi Elazar as saying, 'Whoever takes a lulav with its binding and the hadas with its wreathing is regarded by the Torah as though he had built an altar and offered a sacrifice.'" (Succah 45a)

Really? Why? What does one mitzvah have to do with the other? Why must such a connection even exist? Every mitzvah causes its own measure of Tikun Olam. Why must the correct halachic performance of Arbah Minim be like offering a sacrifice?

Because it is.

To begin with, there ARE four species: lulav, esrog, hadas, and aravah. And, just as there is a hierarchy in "Datzcham," there is a similar hierarchy in terms of the arbah minim, from top to bottom: haddasim, aravos, lulav, and esrog. They correspond to the 10 sefiros that spiritually "govern" our world.

These are the level of sefiros that man can impact through free will decisions. When man correctly executes the will of God, they receive Divine light and Creation flourishes. When man sins, they are denied Divine light, and Creation falters. Taking a lulav and esrog and waving them in six directions indicates a person's will to do the former and avoid the latter. It is tikun at the highest level possible for man.

This explains the great simcha spoken about in

the verse: "Take for yourselves on the first day, the fruit of the hadar tree... and you shall REJOICE before GOD your God for a seven-day period." (Vayikra 23:40)

The holiday of Succos is called "Zman Simchasainu," the "Time of our Rejoicing." But isn't EVERY Jewish holiday this as well? Yes, but not to the extent that Succos is. Why? Because, the Talmud states: "Rebi Shimon ben Gamliel said: There were never great days of joy for the Jewish people than the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur." (Ta'anis 26a)

Why is Yom Kippur such a joyous time? The Talmud explains: Divine forgiveness. After spending the nine previous days coming clean before God, climaxing in a hard day's work of sincere teshuva with fasting on the 10th, there is an exuberance that comes from having paid one's debt and receiving a new lease on life.

Pleasure can come from many things in life. Simcha however, comes specifically from being spiritually in tune. The soul feels pure, the body feels pure, and the person feels great. THIS generates pure simcha.

THIS IS WHY the halacha states that there is only simcha on Yom Tov from eating meat and wine. In Temple times, the meat and wine were from the Korban Shlamim, offered to God in appreciation for the good a person enjoyed in life. Eating them today on Yom Tov is a throwback to those days, and this Temple-awareness creates a current spiritual connection to ancient times.

Such joy however is the basis of something even more important: "The Divine Presence does not dwell where there is sadness, laziness, frivolity, lightheadedness, idle talk, wasteful speech, but only where there is simcha shel mitzvah." (Shabbos 30b)

"Hashras HaShechinah," or the "Dwelling of the Divine Presence," requires simcha. Prophets used to listen to music just to enter a state of simcha so they could enter a state of prophecy. It is a heightened spiritual awareness that leads to simcha, which leads to envelopment by the Shechinah.

Thus, though moving into a succah after Yom Kippur may not make sense weather-wise, it makes PERFECT sense regarding Hashras HaShechinah, represented by the succah. Yom Kippur cleaned the slate. The mitzvah of lulav and esrog elevate the person. The succah is the reward for all of it. It represents the ideal state of Creation, as did the Clouds of Glory which protected the Jewish people the 40 years they traveled in the desert.

This is the reason why an esrog is the fruit of choice for the mitzvah. Sin, as Rashi points out, did not begin with the first man. It already occurred in some form prior to man's creation: "God said, 'Let the earth sprout vegetation, seed yielding herbs and fruit trees producing fruit according to its kind in which its seed is found, on the earth,' and it was so." (Bereishis 1:11)

"Fruit trees': The taste of the tree should be like the taste of the fruit. It [the earth] did not do this, however." (Rashi)

The Divine command was for trees whose bark tasted like its fruit. Instead, the ground produced trees whose bark tasted like bark, not fruit. How, what, or why the ground could do this is a discussion of its own. The point here is that this counted as a sin, one for which the ground was later cursed when man and woman were punished for their sin.

Not coincidentally, the Talmud, when discussing the kind of fruit mandated by the Torah for the mitzvah of arba minim says: "Our Rabbis taught: [The verse says,] 'the fruit of the hadar tree' (Vayikra 23:40), implying a tree whose fruit and bark is the same." (Succah 35a)

Apparently, not EVERY tree was impacted by the ground's decision on the third day of Creation. One tree came into existence as intended by God, the Esrog tree. Therefore, one fruit symbolizes the perfection of Creation, even today: the esrog. Taking it for the mitzvah on Succos not only rectifies the world, it connects a person to its more perfect, intended state.

Thus, if ever there was a reason to invest ADDITIONAL money in a mitzvah, it is to purchase an esrog. The more money one "sacrifices" for his esrog, the more "lachem" it becomes for him. He becomes more invested in the mitzvah, the tikun, and the connection to Godly perfection.

The more SIMCHA he can enjoy. ©2017 Rabbi Y. Ciner and torah.org

## ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

### Divrei Harav

### V'divrei Hatalmid

*Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit  
by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

**O**stensibly, the serpent in this week's portion when he convinced Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge could have used the argument that after all, it was not his fault. For Eve, when hearing the words of G-d ("Harav") and the words of the Serpent ("The Talmid in this case the Nachash"), should have heeded the words of G-d. In truth this is why we say that one cannot appoint a messenger to perform a directive for committing a sin, because "Ein Sheliach L'dvar Avera" ("you cannot appoint a messenger to carry out a sin"). Thus in such a case the messenger would be liable for his actions. In our case the serpent would be vindicated and Eve would be culpable (this is the view of Rashi).

There are those however who state that in such a scenario it only frees the sender from culpability, in our case the "Nachash". Others state that in such a scenario, the entire action of the sender is nullified.

When a farmer leaves over "Leket", (gleanings

of the field left for the poor) if he pronounced before it became "Leket" that his field is ownerless ("Hefker"), can a wealthy person possess this "Leket"? Once again we apply the principle "The words of the teacher (in this case the mitzvah commanded by G-d of "Leket") and the student (the owner of the property), we follow the word of the teacher and the gleanings remain in their state of "Leket" and cannot be made "Hefker".

This principle is not only applicable to those commandments between G-d and man, but also in a practical way; if there is a dispute of law between the Rabbi and the student, the law follows the Rabbi. © 2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit

### RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

## Spreading the Fate

**W**hat began as a good-will gesture turned terribly sour. Worse, it spurred the first murder in history. It could have been avoided if only...

The Torah tells us of Cain's innovation. He had all the fruit of the world before him and decided to offer his thanks to the Creator, albeit from his cheapest produce -- flax. Cain's brother Hevel (Abel) imitated his brother, by offering a sacrifice, too, but he did it in much grander form. He offered the finest, fattest of his herd. Hevel's offer was accepted and Cain's was not. And Cain was reasonably upset.

Hashem appears to Cain and asks him, "Why is your face downtrodden and why are you upset?" Hashem then explains that the choice of good and bad is up to every individual, and that person can make good for himself or find himself on the threshold of sin. Simple as all that. (Genesis 4:6-7)

Many commentaries are bothered by what seems to be another in a litany of questions that G-d knows the answers to. Obviously, Cain was upset for the apparent rejection of his offering. Why does Hashem seem to rub it in?

The story is told of a construction worker who opened his lunch pail, unwrapped his sandwich and made a sour face. "Peanut Butter!" he would mutter, "I hate peanut butter!" This went on for about two weeks: every day he would take out his sandwich and with the same intensity mutter under his breath. "I hate peanut butter sandwiches!"

Finally, one of his co-workers got sick and tired of his constant complaining. "Listen here," said the man. "If you hate peanut butter that much why don't you just tell your wife not to make you any more peanut butter sandwiches? It's as simple as that."

The hapless worker sighed. "It's not that simple. You see, my wife does not pack the sandwiches for me. I make them myself."

When Hashem asks Cain, "why are you dejected?" it is not a question directed only at Cain. Hashem knew what caused the dejection. He was not waiting to hear a review of the events that transpired.

Instead Hashem was asking a question for the ages. He asked a question to all of us who experience the ramifications of our own moral misdoing. Hashem asked a haunting question to all whose own hands bring about their own misfortunes.

Then they mutter and mope as if the world has caused their misfortunes. "Why are you upset, towards whom are you upset?" asks G-d.

"Is it not the case that if you would better yourself you could withstand the moral failings and their ramifications? Is it not true that if we don't act properly, eventually, we will be thrust at the door of sin?"

Success and failure of all things spiritual is dependent on our own efforts and actions. Of course Hashem knew what prompted Cain's dejection. But there was no reason for Cain to be upset. There was no one but himself at whom to be upset. All Cain had to do was correct his misdoing. Dejection does not accomplish that. Correction does.

A person in this world has the ability to teach and inspire both himself as well as others. He can spread the faith that he holds dear. But his action can also spread more than faith. A person is the master of his own moral fate as well. And that type of fate, like a peanut butter sandwich, he can spread as well! © 2002 Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and torah.org

### SHLOMO KATZ

## Hama'ayan

**"G**-d said, 'Let us make man...'" (1:26) R' Menashe ben Yisrael z"l (Amsterdam; 1604-1658; best known for his mission to persuade Oliver Cromwell to allow Jews to live in England) writes: Regarding all of the other creations, G-d said, "Let there be," i.e., He did not associate himself with them. In contrast, when He created man, He associated himself with the act ("Let us make") due to the man's inherent greatness. And, He thereby showed us a line, in the very first chapter of the Torah, between that which is holy (man) and that which is not (animals). The reason man is holy, of course, is because he has within him a Divine soul. (Nishmat Chaim Part I ch.1) © 2012 S. Katz & torah.org

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10-06-2006  
WILL YOU PLEASE PICK UP ALL YOUR CLOTHES?