

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"L

Covenant & Conversation

What exactly was the first sin? What was the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil? Is this kind of knowledge a bad thing such that it had to be forbidden, and was only acquired through sin? Isn't knowing the difference between good and evil essential to being human? Isn't it one of the highest forms of knowledge? Surely G-d would want humans to have it? Why then did He forbid the fruit that produced it?

In any case, did not Adam and Eve already have this knowledge before eating the fruit, precisely in virtue of being "in the image and likeness of G-d"? Surely this was implied in the very fact that they were commanded by G-d: Be fruitful and multiply. Have dominion over nature. Do not eat from the tree. For someone to understand a command, they must know it is good to obey and bad to disobey. So they already had, at least potentially, the knowledge of good and evil. What then changed when they ate the fruit? These questions go so deep that they threaten to make the entire narrative incomprehensible.

Maimonides understood this. That is why he turned to this episode at almost the very beginning of *The Guide for the Perplexed* (Book 1, Chapter 2). His answer though, is perplexing. Before eating the fruit, he says, the first humans knew the difference between truth and falsehood. What they acquired by eating the fruit was knowledge of "things generally accepted." But what does Maimonides mean by "things generally accepted." It is generally accepted that murder is evil, and honesty good. Does Maimonides mean that morality is mere convention? Surely not. What he means is that after eating the fruit, the man and woman were embarrassed that they were naked, and that is a mere matter of social convention because not everyone is embarrassed by nudity. But how can we equate being embarrassed that you are naked with "knowledge of good and evil"? It does not seem to be that sort of thing at all. Conventions of dress have more to do with aesthetics than ethics.

It is all very unclear, or at least it was to me until I came across one of the more fascinating moments in the history of the Second World War.

After the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Americans knew they were about to enter a war against a nation, Japan, whose culture they did not

understand. So they commissioned one of the great anthropologists of the twentieth century, Ruth Benedict, to explain the Japanese to them, which she did. After the war, she published her ideas in a book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. One of her central insights was the difference between shame cultures and guilt cultures. In shame cultures the highest value is honour. In guilt cultures it is righteousness. Shame is feeling bad that we have failed to live up to the expectations others have of us. Guilt is what we feel when we fail to live up to what our own conscience demands of us. Shame is other-directed. Guilt is inner-directed.

Philosophers, among them Bernard Williams, have pointed out that shame cultures are usually visual. Shame itself has to do with how you appear (or imagine you appear) in other peoples' eyes. The instinctive reaction to shame is to wish you were invisible, or somewhere else. Guilt, by contrast, is much more internal. You cannot escape it by becoming invisible or being elsewhere. Your conscience accompanies you wherever you go, regardless of whether you are seen by others. Guilt cultures are cultures of the ear, not the eye.

With this contrast in mind we can now understand the story of the first sin. It is all about appearances, shame, vision and the eye. The serpent says to the woman: "G-d knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like G-d, knowing good and evil." That is, in fact, what happens: "The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised that they were naked." It was appearance of the tree that the Torah emphasises: "The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and desirable to the eyes, and that the tree was attractive as a means to gain intelligence." The key emotion in the story is shame. Before eating the fruit the couple were "naked, but unashamed." After eating it they feel shame and seek to hide. Every element of the story – the fruit, the tree, the nakedness, the shame – has the visual element typical of a shame culture.

But in Judaism we believe that G-d is heard not seen. The first humans "heard G-d's voice moving about in the garden with the wind of the day." Replying to G-d, the man says, "I heard Your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." Note the deliberate, even humorous irony of what the couple did. They heard G-d's voice in the garden, and they "hid

themselves from G-d among the trees of the garden.” But you can’t hide from a voice. Hiding means trying not to be seen. It is an immediate, intuitive response to shame. But the Torah is the supreme example of a culture of guilt, not shame, and you cannot escape guilt by hiding. Guilt has nothing to do with appearances and everything to do with conscience, the voice of G-d in the human heart.

The sin of the first humans in the Garden of Eden was that they followed their eyes, not their ears. Their actions were determined by what they saw, the beauty of the tree, not by what they heard, namely the word of G-d commanding them not to eat from it. The result was that they did indeed acquire a knowledge of good and evil, but it was the wrong kind. They acquired an ethic of shame, not guilt; of appearances not conscience. That, I believe, is what Maimonides meant by his distinction between true-and-false and “things generally accepted.” A guilt ethic is about the inner voice that tells you, “This is right, that is wrong”, as clearly as “This is true, that is false”. But a shame ethic is about social convention. It is a matter of meeting or not meeting the expectations others have of you.

Shame cultures are essentially codes of social conformity. They belong to groups where socialisation takes the form of internalising the values of the group such that you feel shame – an acute form of embarrassment – when you break them, knowing that if people discover what you have done you will lose honour and ‘face’.

Judaism is precisely not that kind of morality, because Jews do not conform to what everyone else does. Abraham was willing, say the sages, to be on one side while all the rest of the world was on the other. Haman says about Jews, “Their customs are different from those of all other people” (Esther 3:8). Jews have often been iconoclasts, challenging the idols of the age, the received wisdom, the “spirit of the age”, the politically correct.

If Jews had followed the majority, they would have disappeared long ago. In the biblical age they were the only monotheists in a pagan world. For most of the post-biblical age they lived in societies in which they and their faith were shared by only a tiny minority of the population. Judaism is a living protest against the herd instinct. Ours is the dissenting voice in the conversation of humankind. Hence the ethic of Judaism is not a matter of appearances, of honour and shame. It is a matter of hearing and heeding the voice of G-d in the depths of the soul.

The drama of Adam and Eve is not about apples or sex or original sin or “the Fall” – interpretations the non-Jewish West has given to it. It is about something deeper. It is about the kind of morality we are called on to live. Are we to be governed by what everyone else does, as if morality were like politics: the will of the majority? Will our emotional horizon be

bounded by honour and shame, two profoundly social feelings? Is our key value appearance: how we seem to others? Or is it something else altogether, a willingness to heed the word and will of G-d? Adam and Eve in Eden faced the archetypal human choice between what their eyes saw (the tree and its fruit) and what their ears heard (G-d’s command). Because they chose the first, they felt shame, not guilt. That is one form of “knowledge of good and evil”, but from a Jewish perspective, it is the wrong form.

Judaism is a religion of listening, not seeing. That is not to say there are no visual elements in Judaism. There are, but they are not primary. Listening is the sacred task. The most famous command in Judaism is Shema Yisrael, “Listen, Israel.” What made Abraham, Moses and the prophets different from their contemporaries was that they heard the voice that to others was inaudible. In one of the great dramatic scenes of the Bible G-d teaches Elijah that He is not in the whirlwind, the earthquake or the fire, but in the “still, small voice.”

It takes training, focus and the ability to create silence in the soul to learn how to listen, whether to G-d or to a fellow human being. Seeing shows us the beauty of the created world, but listening connects us to the soul of another, and sometimes to the soul of the Other, G-d as He speaks to us, calls to us, summoning us to our task in the world.

If I were asked how to find G-d, I would say, Learn to listen. Listen to the song of the universe in the call of birds, the rustle of trees, the crash and heave of the waves. Listen to the poetry of prayer, the music of the Psalms. Listen deeply to those you love and who love you. Listen to the words of G-d in the Torah and hear them speak to you. Listen to the debates of the sages through the centuries as they tried to hear the texts’ intimations and inflections.

Don’t worry about how you or others look. The world of appearances is a false world of masks, disguises and concealments. Listening is not easy. I confess I find it formidably hard. But listening alone bridges the abyss between soul and soul, self and other, I and the Divine.

Jewish spirituality is the art of listening. *Covenant and Conversation is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl zt”l* ©2015 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks z”l and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

Our nation, Israel, has just concluded a most intensive Festival period which encompasses a rollercoaster of religious emotions. We have moved from the intense soul searching of Rosh Hashanah to the heartfelt prayers for forgiveness of Yom Kippur. We have built and dwelt for seven days in

a make-shift house reminiscent of the booths in the desert as well as of the “fallen sukkah of King David”, the Holy Temple. We have punctuated our prayer for rain with joyous and sometimes even raucous dancing around the Torah, whose reading we conclude just at Festival end. After a full month of festivities, we are now entering our first post festival Sabbath, on which we shall read of the creation of the world.

Although these segments seem disparate, I truly believe that there is a conceptual scheme which connects them all. I also believe that many observant Jews miss the theological thread which magnificently unites this particular holiday period because the religious establishment does not sufficiently stress the real message which Judaism is trying to teach.

Despite the hundreds of years between them, two great theologians – Rav Yosef Albo (1380-1444), in his *Sefer Haikkarim* – “Book of Essential Jewish Beliefs” and Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) in his “Star of Redemption” – insist that the fundamental principles of Jewish faith are outlined in the three special blessings of the Rosh Hashana Musaf Amidah. Conventional wisdom sees the High Holy Days as frightening days of judgment, but Rosh Hashana actually teaches us that a major function of the Jewish people in this world is to establish the Kingship of our God of love, morality and peace throughout the world. Indeed, the Hassidim – and especially Habad – refer to the night of Rosh Hashanah as the Night of the Coronation.

Yom Kippur is our Day of Forgiveness. In order for us to dedicate ourselves to the task of bringing the God of compassionate righteousness and justice to the world in the coming year, each of us must take to the task with renewed vigor. We can only muster the necessary energy if we have successfully emerged from our feelings of inadequacy resulting from improper conduct towards humanity and to God.

Yom Kippur is not only a day of forgiveness for Jews. Our reading of the Book of Jonah with God’s command that the prophet bring the gentile Assyrians to repentance and the refrain which we iterate and reiterate during our fast, “for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations” (Isaiah 56:7) demonstrate that God desires repentance and forgiveness for all of humanity.

The Mussaf Amidah on Yom Kippur describes in exquisite detail every moment of the Temple service for forgiveness; indeed, it transports us to the Holy Temple itself. Our sukkah represents the Holy Temple, or at least the model of the sanctuary in the desert after which it was crafted. The guests of the sukkah (ushpizin) are the great personalities of Biblical history, and the most fitting decorations for the sukkah are scenes from the Temple service (so magnificently reproduced by Machzor Hamikdash). It is not accidental that the depiction of the Temple service of the musaf

amidah in the Yom Kippur service begins by invoking the creation of the world. The Temple should somehow serve as a magnet for all nations and the conduit through which they will accept the Kingship of God and a lifestyle reflecting His morality and love.

Please note the following amazing parallels when the Bible describes the building of a sanctuary; it uses the following words: “Behold I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri the son of Hur from the tribe of Judah and I have filled him with the spirit of God: with Wisdom (Hakhmah), with Understanding (Tevunah and with Knowledge (Daat)” (Exodus 31:2,3)

In the Book of Proverbs, which invokes God’s creation of the world, a parallel verse is found

“The Lord founded the earth with Wisdom (Hakhmah), fashioned the heavens with Understanding (Tevunah) and with Knowledge (Daat) pierced through the great deep and enabled the heavens to give forth dew.” (Proverbs 3:19,20)

Apparently, the Bible is asking us to recreate the world with the Holy Temple from whence our religious teachings must be disseminated throughout humanity.

From this perspective, we understand why our rejoicing over the Torah takes place at the conclusion of this holiday season rather than during the Festival of Shavuot. Pesach and Shavuot are national festivals on which we celebrate the founding of our nation from the crucible of Egyptian slavery and our unique status as the chosen people resulting from the revelation at Sinai.

The Tishrei Festivals are universal in import, focusing on our responsibility to be a Light unto the Nations. This is why on Simchat Torah, we take the Bible Scrolls out into the street, into the public thoroughfare and dance with them before the entire world. From this perspective we can well understand why Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah moves seamlessly into the reading of Bereishit of the creation of the world. ©2022 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Light

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss

Certain *mitzvot* are dependent upon light, whether daylight, moonlight, or candlelight. *Mitzvot* which require daylight include a *Kohen* looking at *nega'im* (leprous lesions) to determine if they are impure, and a rabbi determining whether a particular stain renders a woman a *niddah* (menstruant). Additionally, rabbinic courts do not convene at night.

There is one *mitzva* – *Kiddush Levanah* (the prayer sanctifying the new moon) – which requires moonlight.

For some *mitzvot*, we are required to make use of candlelight. For other *mitzvot*, we are not allowed to

make use of the light. For still other *mitzvot*, a candle is not required, but it still contributes honor and joy.

Mitzvot for which we are required to make use of candlelight include the search for *chametz* on the night before Pesach. Shabbat and Yom Tov candles are meant to provide useful light. By helping people to avoid tripping and bumping into each other in the dark, the candles contribute to *shalom bayit* (peace in the home). The blessing over the light of the Havdalah candle is not recited unless one needs the light and derives benefit from it. This is one of the explanations for our custom to hold our hands up to the light and look at our fingernails during Havdalah.

In contrast, one may not derive any benefit from the light of a Chanukah menorah. (This is to make it clear that the candles are being lit to publicize the miracle, and not for any other reason.) In earlier times, when the original Menorah was lit in the *Beit HaMikdash*, the *Kohanim* may have avoided using its light. (When guarding the Temple, they would carry torches to light their way.)

Sometimes we light candles to enhance honor and joy. We do this in the synagogue, as well as during celebrations such as weddings, circumcisions, and festive meals.

When studying the laws pertaining to light, an interesting question arises. May we substitute one type of light for another? For example, as we have seen, rabbinic courts convene only during the day. If a room is candle-lit, would the court be permitted to convene at night? Similarly, kosher slaughtering may not be done in the dark. If a room was lit up using a torch, would it then be permissible? *Acharonim* (15th to 20th century rabbis) disagree about this, with some insisting on sunlight for these activities.

Now let us flip the question around. When candlelight is required, may sunlight or moonlight be used instead? May one search for *chametz* during daylight hours?

Nowadays, these questions extend to electric lights as well. Some maintain that lightbulbs may be used as Shabbat "candles." (This does not necessarily mean they can be used for Chanukah candles or a Havdalah candle, since the reasons for the lights in each case are different.) People relate that Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski (author of *Achiezer*) made a point of using incandescent bulbs for Havdalah (others say it was for Shabbat candles). He did this to demonstrate that electricity is considered fire in *halacha*. People would then understand that turning electric lights on or off on Shabbat is absolutely forbidden. ©2017 Rabbi M. Weiss and *Encyclopedia Talmudit*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

In the whirlwind cascade of events that fill this opening parsha of the Torah, one can easily be

overwhelmed by the sheer number of subjects discussed. Nevertheless, I think we can all agree that the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, after they exercised their free will to disobey God's commandment, is an important issue to dwell upon and discuss.

What life was like within the Garden of Eden is pretty much an unknown to us. It is obvious that human nature was different there and that the prevalence of shame and titillating sexual desire was absent - certainly in a way that our world cannot countenance. But once driven from the Garden and apparently prevented from ever again returning, Adam and Eve and their offspring engage in a life and live in a world that is very recognizable to us.

Sibling rivalry, jealousy, murder, psychological depression, sexual laxity and abuse are now all part of the story of humankind. Human beings are now bidden to struggle for their very physical and financial existence in a world of wonder- complete with ever present dangers and hostility.

But the memory of the Garden of Eden has never departed from Adam and Eve or for that matter from their descendants, no matter how many centuries and millennia have passed since their expulsion. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the Torah records for us the hundreds of years that early human beings lived - to emphasize that even over nine hundred years later the memory of the Garden still burns bright in the recesses of the brains of Adam and Eve and their descendants.

It is this memory that still fuels within us our drive for a better and more ideal world. Once human beings, albeit only Adam and Eve alone, experienced what human life and our world can be - life in a Garden of Eden - the drive of society to constantly improve our world and existence is understandable. We are always trying to return to the Garden.

Even though human society has unfortunately perpetrated and witnessed millions upon millions of murders over its long bloody history, we still strive to create a murder-free society. And we do not feel that this is a vain and foolish hope on our part. Within each of us there still is a fragment of memory that recalls that human beings once lived in the Garden of Eden and were spared the woes of human society as we know it from our past history - and even from today.

It is interesting that human society never has really despaired, in spite of all historical evidence to the contrary as to the impossibility of the task, of creating this better world of serenity, spirituality, harmony and good cheer. It is the memory of the Garden that gives us no peace and does not allow us to become so desensitized that we would readily accept our current human condition as being unchangeable.

The angels that guard the entrance to the Garden were also represented in the Holy of Holies on

the lid of the Ark that contained God's message to humankind. Those angels have the faces of children in order to indicate to us that somehow, someday, in God's good time in the future perhaps, we will be able to once again enter the Garden and truly live in the better world promised to us by our holy prophets. ©2022 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. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

While some maintain that the human being is only physical form, the Torah, in one of its most important sentences, insists that every person is also created in the image of God—tzelem Elokim (Genesis 1:26,27). On the surface we see each others' outward appearance, but if we look deeply, we ought to be able to perceive a little bit of God in our fellow human being. In fact, it is the tzelem Elokim which makes the human being unique. In the words of Pirke Avot, "beloved is the human being who is created in the image of God." (Avot 3:18) Several fundamental ideas emerge from the tzelem Elokim principle. Bearing in mind that each and every human being is created with tzelem Elokim, it follows that all people—regardless of race, religion, nationality, age, mental faculties, handicap, etc.—are of equal value.

Human beings can relate to God "vertically" and "horizontally." In the sense that we have the capacity to reach upwards to the all powerful God through prayer and ritual, we relate vertically. Additionally, when we relate to our fellow person, we connect to that part of God in them. If one hurts another human being, God is hurt. Similarly, if one brings joy to another, God is more joyous. Hence, a horizontal relationship exists as well.

No matter how far one strays, one has the potential to return to the inner Godliness we all possess—which is, of course, good.

Even if a person holds him/herself in low esteem, he/she ought to have self-confidence. After all, God is in each of us. God, as the ultimate creator has given us the capacity to be endlessly creative – adding an important ingredient to our self-esteem.

As God is omnipresent, so too do people created in the image of God have the inner desire to reach beyond themselves. We accomplish this by developing lasting relationships with another. In that sense, one's presence is expanded. Similarly, as God is eternal, we, created in the image of God have the instinctual need to transcend ourselves. This need is met by raising children. Unlike animals, human beings are uniquely aware of historic continuity.

The image of God points to life after death. As God lives forever, so too does the part of God in us, our

soul, live beyond our physical years. Of course, it must be remembered that tzelem Elokim does not mean that every human being is automatically good. Image of God is potential. If properly nurtured, it takes us to sublime heights. If abused, it can sink us to the lowest depths. Hence the words kitov, found after every stage of creation, are not recorded after the human being is formed. Whether we are tov depends on the way we live our lives; it is not endowed at birth.

And, the mystics add, that when we live our lives properly, the image of God in each of us merges with the omnipresent God to become One—Ehad. The tzelem Elokim is an eternal spark. Whether it is lit is up to us. ©2022 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

Chava and the Snake

The story of Chava and the Nachash (Snake) has always captured the minds of philosophers and commentators: "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field that Hashem Elokim had made, and it said to the woman, 'Did perhaps Hashem say you shall not eat of any tree of the Garden?' And the woman said to the serpent, of the fruit of any tree of the garden we may eat. And from the fruit of the tree which is in the center of the garden, Elokim said you will not eat of it nor will you touch it lest you die. And the serpent said to the woman you will surely not die. For Elokim knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like Elokim, knowing good and evil. And the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was desirable for comprehension, and she took of its fruit and she ate and she gave also to her husband with her and he ate. And the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked, and they sewed together a fig leaf and made themselves aprons."

According to Rashi, the serpent saw Adam and Chava eating from the trees and decided to cause doubt in her mind. Hirsch's translation of the words differs from our version: "Even if Hashem hath said it, should you not eat from all the trees of the Garden?" Hirsch implies that the serpent's question already calls for disobedience of Hashem, whereas Rashi's interpretation is that the serpent used a gradual approach. The Or HaChayim suggests that there were several reasons for the serpent's question. Firstly, the serpent wished to convince Chava that the prohibition was really given about all fruit. Secondly, he wanted to teach Chava that Hashem planted the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil before any other fruit trees, and that they each grew from it. He wanted her to believe that she had already eaten a by-product of

this tree. Thirdly, the serpent understood that Chava did not hear the prohibition directly from Hashem. The serpent hoped to convince Chava that the command had been on all fruits, but Adam ate from those other fruits anyway, acting as if he did not care what Hashem wanted.

Chava's answered the serpent, "And from the fruit of the tree which is in the center of the garden, Elokim said you will not eat of it nor will you touch it lest you die." The additional prohibition of "and you shall not touch it," was not part of Hashem's instruction. According to Rashi, it was Chava who added to the commandment because she wished a "fence" around the law to prevent her from eating, or she thought that the tree contained some poison. The Kli Yakar disagrees and explains that the serpent's argument would make no sense if she knew that she had created this restriction. It must have been Adam who instructed her not to touch the tree. When she did touch the tree and saw that it did not affect her, her opinion was also altered.

The serpent began his answer to Chava, saying, "you will surely not die." The Ramban implies that "you will surely not die" can also mean that one will attain the knowledge that someday you will die. Adam and Chava had no previous generations who could explain that at some point man will die. They most likely thought nothing of death. The serpent continued, "For Elokim knows that on the day you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like Elokim, knowing good and evil." Rashi interprets the serpent's argument to be that "every craftsman hates others of his own craft." It is out of jealousy that Hashem has withheld His craft's secrets. Eat from the tree and give your own blessings and creations to the world.

The Or HaChayim explains that Chava was not so quick to act against the word of Hashem. One of the aspects of the creation of trees was that the tree itself should have the same taste as the fruit. When the serpent pushed Chava into the tree, she only ate from the tree itself and not from its fruit in order to placate the serpent but still obey her husband and Hashem. Once she tasted the tree, she began to doubt that she had misheard the commandment and was observing this commandment by mistake. This, of course, was the ultimate purpose of the serpent, namely to cause doubt that any commandment given by Hashem had to be fulfilled.

The Or HaChayim asks an additional question which is also found in many other meforshim. Why did Hashem create an evil animal such as the Serpent? It appears that the only purpose that the animal served was to tempt man. Hashem was struck with a difficult contradiction. On the one hand, He wanted man to be righteous and follow His instructions. He therefore assigned one tree's fruit that man could not eat. Hashem understood that man needed one mitzvah, one

command from Him, in order to show his loyalty and obedience. Hashem chose a tree with beautiful, tasty fruit as His object for obedience. Adam was willing to obey this commandment, but he was concerned that Chava might be confused by the need to restrain herself. He therefore gave her an additional commandment of not touching the tree so that she would not eat from it. Chava may have surmised that the tree contained a poison which could harm her should she touch it. This fear of poison was dispelled by the serpent when he pushed her into the tree. She then thought that the entire commandment must have been misunderstood.

Here we see one of the fallacies of assigning a reason for observing a particular mitzvah. Hashem has not given us reasons for the mitzvot except in a few cases. Even then, the mitzvah is given for the purpose of following Hashem's commandments. Should a mitzvah appear to be "old-fashioned" or no longer valid, it is only because the "reason" that we assigned to this mitzvah was inaccurate on our part. Eating pork, which many assumed was because it was dirty and unclean, when new methods prevented the spread of disease, some discarded this mitzvah as no longer necessary.

It is clear when viewing today's society that the need for these mitzvot is greater than ever. Only through the observance of the mitzvot does one come to a greater understanding of the true meaning of "right and wrong." May we grow to love Hashem and serve Him with true understanding. © 2022 Rabbi D. Levin

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

"**A**nd Hashem cast a deep sleep upon Man, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed the flesh beneath the incision." (Beraishis 2:21) When naming all the animals in the world, Adam noticed that though there was a male and female of every species, there did not seem to be one for him. When he asked Hashem about this, he was immediately placed into a deep sleep and Chava (Eve) was created from Adam's rib. Thereupon, Man now had male and female counterparts, and would be able to populate the world. However, there are many questions here.

Why wasn't the woman created earlier? Why was she created from his rib? Why did he have to be asleep for the procedure? There are many Midrashim and other sources on what actually occurred, but we can make some sense of it with a basic theme of human appreciation and recognition.

Since obviously a female counterpart was necessary for normal procreation, why wait until Adam asked for it? Because by recognizing something was missing, Adam would thereby appreciate her more, because she completed him and enabled him to complete his life's mission as she did hers. Hashem

first wanted him to acknowledge this before giving him a wife, so Adam would understand how important she truly was.

So why create her from a rib, necessitating surgery and anesthesia, instead of creating her the same way Adam was created?

The commentaries explain the deep slumber was required so Adam not witness her creation and somehow look down on her. Presumably, were he to be awake, and suffer the pain of the extraction, it would have lessened her esteem in his eyes. However, this, too, was a crucial lesson so Man would learn that sacrifice is often necessary for the good of the world, and even for one's own needs. Adam needed an Eve, but he could not expect to receive something without being invested in it.

At the same time, Hashem minimized the pain to teach us that even when necessary, we should do whatever we can to lessen the pain others must endure. The rib is close to the heart, and also under one's arm, conveying the concept that this partner was to be valued and cherished, as well as protected. We are supposed to be caring and considerate of others, not just because we need them, but because they are creations of Hashem and without them, we, as part of Creation, would not be complete.

Even the fact that the incision was closed with flesh teaches us to try to do no harm. As much as possible, we are to consider the feelings of other people, and help them remain whole. We should seek to help and heal them, and not, Heaven forbid, to cause them pain.

All this took place when Mankind came into being because these lessons and behaviors are part and parcel of our humanity.

R' Aryeh Levin z"l, who lived in Yerushalayim during the first half of the twentieth century, was called "the tzaddik of Yerushalayim," and has many stories told of his righteousness and thoughtfulness towards others. One of the most poignant stories involves his wife, Chana.

She had a problem with her foot and they went to the doctor. When they met with him, R' Aryeh explained, "My wife's leg is hurting us." ©2022 Rabbi J. Gewirtz and Migdal Ohr

RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN

Clouds of Chesed, Rain of Din

“Now all the trees of the field were not yet upon the earth, and all the herb of the field had not yet sprouted. Hashem Elokim had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to work the soil."

Beer Mayim Chaim: "How should we look at rainfall? Should we attribute it to din, the attribute of

judgment within G-d, or to chesed, to His attribute of lovingkindness?"

We may not have to look any further than our pasuk, and its puzzling use of two of G-d's Names: Hashem and Elokim. The pasuk may be hinting to us that rain should be appreciated as a combination of both attributes -- of chesed and of din.

Without our pasuk, we could make the argument on behalf of either attribute. On the one hand, rain is so vital to life, that we would place it squarely in the chesed column. We depend on what we grow for our nutrition. The success of agricultural endeavors depends on adequate rainfall. If life begins as chesed, rainfall sustains it.

Chazal, on the other hand, apparently link rain to din. They call the berachah in Shemonah Esrei that speaks of precipitation *gevuros geshamim*; (Taanis 2A) *gevurah*, of course, is practically synonymous with *din*. They point to the phenomenon of rain sometimes falling with great -- even destructive -- force as the reason for linking rain with *din*. The Zohar (Terumah 154B) speaks explicitly of rain originating in *chesed*, but handing it off, as it were, to *din*, which becomes an active agent in its delivery. (Think, says the Zohar, of the way we perform *netilas yodayim*. We hold the vessel in our right hand -- which is associated with the primary attribute of *chesed* -- in order to fill it. We then pass it to the left -- or *din*. It is the left that pours the water, but those waters were obtained through the right!)

It seems, then, that both *chesed* and *din* are important. We can offer a simple reason why. *Chesed*, as we experience it, comes about as a kind of partnership with *din* -- a mixture we sometimes call *rachamim*. The pure form of *chesed* is so powerful that it would overwhelm us. This world cannot deal with the intensity of its power. In effect, pure *chesed* must be tempered by the limitations of *din* to be available and useful to us. Rain, an offshoot of Hashem's *chesed*, reaches us in a cooperative venture between *chesed* and *din*.

This amalgam is expressed in the Name Hashem Elokim, combining both attributes. Seen this way, our pasuk says that this combination did not result in rain falling upon the earth, because Man had not yet been created to perform the work, the *avodah*, that was necessary. That *avodah* is Man's occupying himself with Torah and with prayer at all times. Hashem made His responsiveness to the needs of the earth contingent upon Man living up to Hashem's expectations of him.

How does Man's spiritual output relate to this special Name: Hashem Elokim? We need look only so far as another pasuk (Devarim 4:39) that uses this Name. "You shall know this day and take to your heart that Hashem, He is Elokim." The word for "your heart" is *levavcha*, which is a plural form. Chazal take that plural to suggest that Man need serve His Creator with two hearts, as it were. He need serve Hashem with the

two opposing tendencies he finds in his heart: the yetzer tov, and the yetzer hora. Now, the very existence of a yetzer hora and Man's capacity to make poor choices are sourced in din. Din, which limits the illumination of Hashem's chesed, allows Man to look away from it, or not notice it at all, and thus leaves room for finding evil attractive. Man often, however, summons up the determination to tame and even break the powers of evil within him. He finds that strength through joyously attaching himself to the yetzer tov, which is sourced in the goodness of Hashem's chesed.

In other words, Man is the constant platform upon which two Names of G-d -- Hashem and Elokim -- contrast with each other through their outgrowths: the yetzer tov, and the yetzer hora. By resisting the message of pure yetzer hora, Man "sweetens" din by forcibly combining it with the chesed of the yetzer tov.

The unusual implication of our pasuk turns out to be understandable. Our pasuk uses a full, compound Name to relate how Hashem did not make it rain in the Garden of Eden. Why would the Torah such a full Name to convey not what Hashem does, but what He did not do? We now understand. The blessing of rainfall, containing aspects of both chesed and din, requires that the two midos be merged. This could only happen through the avodah of Man.

Only Man, by virtue of the exercise of his free-will and suppressing his yetzer hora, can make a contribution to the cosmic drama of producing a gentler, kinder form of din. ©2013 Rabbi Y. Adlerstein & torah.org

RABBI YAAKOV HABER

What Simcha Is

The festival of Sukkos is associated with simcha (joy): "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered the produce of the land, you will celebrate the feast of the L-rd seven days ... and you will rejoice before the L-rd your G-d seven days" (Lev. 23:39-40). The Gemara tells us about a joyful event that used to take place during Chol HaMoed Sukkos. That was the celebration of Simchas Beis HaShoeva, in which men would dance in the sukka, and sing songs that they had composed. However there are certain things about this celebration that we should be aware of: only tzaddikim, and the Gedolei HaDor, would be eligible to participate. Others could watch from the sidelines. The Gemara records the type of songs that would be sung on these occasions: tzaddikim would sing: "Happy am I that the behavior of my youth does not compromise my old age", and baalei tshuva would sing: "Happy am I that my old age redeems the behavior of my youth". It also records what one of the participants, R' Shimon ben Gamliel, did: he would juggle eight lit torches in the sukka, without any two of them touching each other; and he would also stand on his thumbs.

The Mishne says: "Anyone who has not

witnessed Simchas Beis HaShoeva does not know what simcha is."

The question comes to mind: Why is simcha so associated with the sukka? We know that living in a sukka can be an uncomfortable experience, what with cold weather, and insects sharing our meals. No matter how humble our homes may be, we realize their comfort when we spend some time in a sukka, which, after all, does not even have a roof!

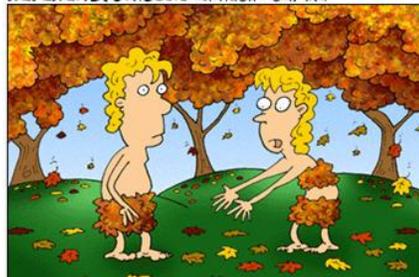
I was thinking about this, and concluded that that is the very reason for the joy! When we are in our homes, we tend to become involved with material concerns: Is the pile on our carpet thick enough? Should the wall-paper be changed? Should we get a better VCR? And so on, and so on. In a sukka, these concerns melt away, our neshamos (souls) have a chance to blossom, and each person can develop self-esteem, a feeling of his or her own worth.

This may explain the songs sung by the participants of Simchas Beis HaShoeva. The "B.T.'s", who might otherwise be depressed about their youthful behavior, would be glad about their present status, which more than compensated for it, and the other tzaddikim (the "F.F.B.'s"), who might otherwise be concerned about their apparent secondary status compared to B.T.'s (for it is written that "No tzaddik may stand in the place of a baal tshuva"), would be glad about their unsullied youth, as well they might.

The Gemara (ibid.) says that Hillel, on entering a sukka to participate in a Simcha Beis HaShoeva, would say, "Now that I am here, it is as if everyone is here," and on leaving, he would say, "Now it is as if everyone is leaving." This may seem uncharacteristically immodest of Hillel, who was a very humble man, but is understandable in terms of what we said above: he was, after all, the Gadol HaDor, and could justifiably view himself as such.

In the Talmud Yerushalmi is is written that the prophet Jonah, while on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the festival of Sukkos, entered a sukka during the Simchas Beis HaShoeva, and it was on this occasion that the spirit of prophecy descended on him. From here, says the Gemara, we learn that simcha is necessary for prophecy. Happiness is not an end, but the beginning of the loftiest spiritual heights. © 1987 Rabbi Y. Haber

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WILL YOU PLEASE PICK UP ALL YOUR CLOTHES?