

## **So Hashem G-d banished him from Gan Eden to work the soil from which he was taken. (3:23)**

The sin of *Adam HaRishon* had immediate and long-lasting repercussions. It was now impossible for Hashem to allow him to remain a guest in *Gan Eden*. Eating from the fruit of the *Eitz HaDaas* had changed him from a creation whose entire focus was spirituality – who had no inclination for anything but good – to a man who could now discriminate between good and bad. He was on a higher spiritual plane than animals, but was no longer on a level on par with angels. Man had now become unique among the terrestrial creatures, just as Hashem is unique among the celestial ones, for now man is able to discern between good and evil. While it is wonderful to be able to discriminate, nonetheless, the awareness that evil exists heightens one's sensual desires, enhancing the need for gratification. If man were to maintain the capacity to elude death, to live forever, his days quite possibly (if he is weak) may be spent pursuing his physical passions, thereby abandoning the opportunity for intellectual and spiritual growth. Good deeds would unfortunately follow out the door, and the purpose of man achieving spiritual perspective and bliss would never be realized. Thus, Adam had to be banished from *Gan Eden*, because he might eat of the *Eitz HaChaim*, Tree of Life, thus enabling him to live forever.

All of the above are good reasons for Adam's banishment, but let us for a moment reflect on Adam's punishment – from his perspective. Anyone who has ever achieved an exalted position, a milestone position, climbed the ladder of success – only to have everything yanked out from under him and be left on the bottom of the ladder – understands. What must have gone through *Adam HaRishon's* mind when he was told, "Goodbye?" We have no way of fathoming the meaning of expulsion from *Gan Eden*. One thing is for certain: to be ensconced in Heaven, only to be dismissed due to one unpardonable infraction must have carried with it an overwhelming sense of guilt, a feeling that could be devastating. While some might focus on past achievements, the mere fact that one had been so elevated, and then (in contrast) was so demoted, can be quite disheartening.

Obviously, *Adam HaRishon*, Primordial Man, the apex of Hashem's handiwork, was no ordinary creation. He was able to "shake himself off" (so to speak) and start anew. While this might be the reason, I recently came across an inspiring story that might illuminate our enigma. It certainly allows for a unique insight into the concept of *Gan Eden*.

*Gedolei Yisrael*, our Torah giants, possess not only an uncanny knowledge of all aspects of Torah erudition, they are blessed with a unique insight into people and occurrences, via a "sixth sense": *Ruach HaKodesh*, Divine Inspiration, whereby their insight penetrates far beyond and deeper than what the average eye can see. They are privy to visions on a level far-separated from what we are able to perceive. The following story is classic and demonstrates this awesome perspective.

Mr. Moshe Friedman (not his real name) was born in Poland in 1930. Hashem's Divine Hand guided him and his family, allowing them to survive the war through a series of miracles that brought them to Siberia. While Siberia has far from an inviting climate – plus the natives are less than friendly – they were at least away from the killing fields of Poland and Germany. Following the war, Moshe's father heard that the accursed Nazis had made soap out of the remains of their Jewish victims. He decided to return to Poland to find and buy as many

of these bars of soap as possible and have them buried in a Jewish cemetery. So, father and son traveled to their hometown in search of these "remains." After spending days combing the city and neighboring communities, they were ready to return to Siberia. Eventually, Moshe Friedman moved to America, married and became a successful businessman. One of his daughters married a wonderful young man of Syrian descent. Life was good. As he was getting on in years, his children suggested that perhaps now was the time to take a trip to visit the Holy Land. He agreed and went in the company of his Syrian son-in-law, who had special access to the *Sephardic gedolim*, especially *Chacham* Ovadiah Yosef, *zl*.

They made the journey which was very inspiring, but uneventful, until they visited *Horav* Ovadiah. No sooner had they walked into the *gadol's* study, than *Rav* Ovadiah looked up from his *sefer*, looked at Moshe Friedman and asked, "Why do I detect the scent of *Gan Eden* on your clothing?" At first Moshe demurred from answering, until he finally said, "I have a number of children who are learning full-time that I am supporting."

"That is not it," *Rav* Ovadiah countered. "Many people support their children, allowing them to devote themselves full-time to Torah study, yet they do not carry the scent of *Gan Eden* with them. You did something very special that warranted this gift. What is it?" Sensing that Moshe was reluctant to speak in public, *Rav* Ovadiah cleared the room, leaving only himself, Moshe Friedman and his interpreter.

Once everyone left the room, Moshe related to *Rav* Ovadiah an incident which had taken place on their last day in Poland. Father and son had separated for a few hours prior to leaving on the harrowing return trip to Siberia. The winter would soon arrive, and it would not be pretty. Moshe was alone walking the street when a Pole came over to the fifteen year old and asked, "Are you the one who is purchasing human soap?" When Moshe confirmed that, indeed, he was, the man said, "I have a full box of such soap which I am willing to sell." The man named a price. Sadly, Moshe did not have that much money with him. His father carried the money.

"My father went away," Moshe began, "and I'm not certain when he will return. Please trust me with the soap; I will buy it and somehow reimburse you at a later date," Moshe said.

"No," demanded the Pole. "I want my money now! I am not waiting for you to return - if you even will!" He was about to leave, when Moshe struck upon an idea. "Look," he said, "I am wearing warm wool pants to protect me this winter in Siberia. You are wearing a light pair of cotton pants.

They might protect you during the Polish summer, but winter? If you will sell me the bars of soap, I will trade you my wool pants for your cotton ones.”

A pair of warm pants was a commodity which

one did not quickly pass up. The deal was made. The soap was buried, and Moshe Friedman froze that winter. When *Rav Ovadiah* heard the story he said, “This is why your clothes carry the scent of *Gan Eden*. The *neshamos*, souls, of all the Jews whose remains you buried were all *kedoshim*, martyrs, who were murdered *al Kiddush Hashem*, to sanctify Hashem’s Name. They are all in *Gan Eden*, and these *neshamos* have been accompanying you throughout your life.”

When Adam was banished, he was told that remaining in *Gan Eden* was no longer an option. Based upon a person’s good deeds, Torah study and *mitzvah* performance, however, he can bring a little bit of *Gan Eden down to earth*.