

For you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (3:19)

Chavah – and by extension every human being who followed after her – was meted with a grave punishment. Death, in its various forms, comes to all of us as a result of Chavah's transgression. She ate from the forbidden fruit and so her life and that of all her future progeny was put on temporary status. Why was she given such a serious punishment? True, she transgressed Hashem's command; and true, she had only one command to observe, but still, did she deserve death for that? Is it fair that one woman sins, and the entire world pays?

I recently came across the *Gemorah* in *Sanhedrin* 38b which posits that both Kayin and Hevel were born in *Gan Eden* – before the *chet* of *Eitz Hadaas*, sin of eating of the Tree of Knowledge. According to *Chazal's* timeline, Kayin and Hevel were born during the eighth hour. During the ninth hour, Hashem commanded Adam and Chavah not to eat of the *Eitz Hadaas*. The tenth hour was when the sin was carried out. When Chavah sinned, she did so as a mother. Her status was different. A mother's responsibility for her actions is quite different, and has greater ramifications, than one who does not have the next generation under her wings.

A mother's actions affect her family, affect generations, because someone is always observing and eventually emulating. This is why Chavah's sin was punished with a *b'chiah l'doros*, generations of weeping. We do not live for ourselves. Our children are watching. We might find it hard to pass on "certain" activities, but when our impressionable children are entered into the equation, we suddenly have a change of heart – or, at least, we should. Chavah's sin was not the action of a lone woman. It was the action of a mother – not just any mother, but the mother of all life. Her actions carried serious consequences. Thus, her punishment affected not only herself, but all life that would extend from her.

We often conveniently forget or ignore the far reaching ripples our actions have on others; or how, over time, the implications of a slight deviation can generate a virulent backlash on ourselves and others. Let us look at the following example. *Chazal* teach that the earth/fruit tree was the first creation guilty of non-compliance with Hashem's command. Hashem commanded the earth to produce fruit trees whose bark would be as flavorful as its fruit. The earth did not do so. Instead, it brought forth trees whose fruit was tasty, but whose bark was inedible. Therefore, when Adam *HaRishon* was cursed for his sin, the earth, too, was taken into account for its sin and also cursed. What does this have to do with Adam, Chavah and their sin?

The **Chasam Sofer** explains that Chavah was tempted by the *Eitz Hadaas* because it was different from all of the other trees. While the bark of all other trees was inedible, resulting from the earth's deviation from Hashem's command, the bark of the *Eitz Hadaas*, was edible and quite appealing. He derives this from the *pasuk's* description of the *Eitz Hadaas*, *ki tov ha'eitz l'maachal*, "The tree was good for eating" (Ibid. 3:6). This implies that – not only the fruit- but the tree itself was good for eating.

Now, let us imagine that if all of the trees had been like the *Eitz Hadaas*, whereby the bark was flavorful, Chavah would not have been tempted to eat. It was the allure of the unknown, something different, that swayed her to eat from the forbidden tree. Thus, had Hashem's original command been strictly followed, Chavah's sin would not have occurred, death would not have been decreed and life on this world would be much simpler and happier. For the role the earth played in catalyzing Chavah's sin, it was also punished together with Adam and Chavah. One deviation brought down a world.