

And they heard the sound of Hashem Elokim walking in the garden in the wind of the day, and Adam and his wife hid from before Hashem among the trees of the garden. (3:8)

The concept of Hashem “walking” in the garden or the “sound” that He makes in the wind has anthropomorphic overtones which do not apply to Hashem, Who has no physical presence. *Rashi* and *Ibn Ezra* define *kol* as voice, rather than sound, and *ruach* as direction, rather than wind. This would be a reference to the direction of the sun at the end of the day. A voice travels as it increases with intensity. Thus, the *pasuk* is interpreted: And they heard the voice of Hashem steadily increasing in the garden towards the end of the day.

Bearing this in mind, **Horav Yisrael Belsky, zl**, asks three questions: First, what is the significance of a steadily increasing voice? Second, why are we told that this voice was heard specifically towards the end of the day? Last, since voice is usually associated with words, what was Hashem’s voice telling them?

Let us first understand the depth of Adam and Chavah’s sin. The sin was initially catalyzed by Chavah’s desire for the fruit after she saw it. Looking at the tree, she realized the potential for knowledge, power and intelligence that would result from partaking of the tree’s fruit. Adam acted accordingly when he saw the tree. Thus, gazing at the tree generated a powerful passion for its fruit. The allure was too strong for either of them. They succumbed and ate of the fruit.

Nonetheless, Adam and Chavah were not simple people. They possessed a singular knowledge and understanding of Hashem’s way. To ignore a direct *tzivui*, command, order from Hashem, was unconscionable for them. What took place that resulted in such a metamorphosis?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* brilliantly explains that, when Chavah saw the fruit and perceived all of its benefits, the echo of Hashem’s command, “Do not eat of its fruit,” became nothing more than a mere whisper. The power of eating of the *Eitz Hadaas* was so strong, so overwhelmingly compelling, that the prohibition against eating the fruit became a minor detail which was easily subsumed by the obvious and immediate urge to eat the fruit.

Soon after, the sun began to set, and the brilliance of the fruit’s image lost some of its sublimity and beauty, ultimately fading away in the evening shadows. When this occurred, Hashem’s original voice declaring the prohibition against eating the fruit, which had heretofore faded to whisper status, now returned in all its power and glory. Now, they could hear clearly: “Do not eat of its fruit!” The mirage that had overtaken them had dissipated; the voice had returned. They were now confronted with the full-blown tragedy of their sin.

They ran to the tree, seeking to reinspire themselves through its brilliance, only to discover that it was too late, the dazzling seductiveness of the tree was gone. They were left alone, bereft of the

many lessons the tree could have taught them, confronting the terrible sin which they had committed.

The sin of the *Eitz Hadaas* might have been the first such sin, but, throughout history, we have fallen prey to the *yetzer hora*'s ruse, its power of illusion, its ability to present sin in a background of aura, piety and goodness. How often has he obscured Hashem's will behind the veil of a compelling world view and philosophy? As we have tried to understand and cope with society's realities, we have reneged on our commitment to the Torah's code of theology and ethics. As always, we follow the latest fad or whatever theory is in vogue at the time – all at the expense of the Torah. Over time, as the fad or whatever *narishkeit*, foolishness, that we have been gullible enough to fall for, loses its allure, and we wonder about how nonsensical we had been, appalled at how we allowed ourselves to be misled.

The only protection that we have against the allure of these pretenses which claim to save us, is the Torah, with its lens of clarity that pierces through ambiguity and illusion. It is our touchstone of reality, our anchor in a sea of confusion. We cannot afford to wait for *the ruach hayom*, when, towards "evening" the voice of Hashem becomes steadily and increasingly stronger. Then it will be too late. The damage will have already been done.