

The earth brought forth vegetation, grass producing seed of its kind, and trees producing fruit. (1:12)

There is a fascinating Midrash concerning this pasuk that should give us all something to ponder. Chazal teach us that when Hashem created iron, the trees became distressed, because the sharp blade of the axe could destroy them. Hashem replied to the trees, "Do not worry. As long as you do not provide wood for the axe handle, the blade will remain harmless." The simple lesson from this Midrash is: We are our own worst enemies. We shoot ourselves in the foot. No one can impose worse harm on us than the harm we cause ourselves. Ask anyone, however, who is at fault for a certain incident or situation, the response will, in all likelihood, be – the other person. The fault lies with parents, or teachers, or the community, but never oneself. Parents provide their children with all forms of gifts, both monetary and tangible gifts. We give them every electronic invention known to man, then we wonder why they have no time to study. The first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet – aleph and bais – spell the word av, which means "father". Veritably, it is from our fathers, our parents, that we learn the alphabet of life. The Jewish home is the primary institution in life. It is the place in which the character and proclivities of a child are molded and shaped for the future. Thus, parents must assume responsibility for their own actions. We would do well to examine ourselves vigorously before attributing our faults to others.

There is another lesson to be derived from Chazal. The trees complained about the possible destruction that could be wrought by iron. If we think about it, it is not the iron or the wood, nor is it the axe that destroys; it is man who swings the axe that destroys. Yet, the trees immediately complained. That is human nature. As soon as progress is about to commence, someone has to voice a complaint. They are afraid it might hurt them. It is always about "me." Considerable progress has abruptly come to a halt as a result of people's petty vested interests. As soon as the trees heard of another creation that might affect them, they complained. History has proven that this attitude still plagues us.

