

Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. (3:18)

The Bnei Yissachar offers a homiletic rendering of this pasuk. Prior to the sin of eating of the Eitz HaDaas, Tree of Knowledge, man's perception of good and evil was unequivocally clear. There was good and there was evil, with no question whatsoever concerning their distinct definitions. Then Adam ate the forbidden fruit, and his vision blurred. Good and evil suddenly took on a new look – one that was ambiguous – one that was subject to personal prejudice and pre-disposition. This is implied by the words kotz v'dardar tatzmiach lach, "Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you." Every letter of the Hebrew alphabet can be clearly recognized without problem, even from a distance, except for the daled and reish. The only difference between these two letters is the kotz, tiny point that sticks out from the daled.

We find two pesukim in the Torah in which these two letters are enlarged. In the pasuk Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad, "Hear O' Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One" (Devarim 6:4), the daled at the end of echad (one) is enlarged. In Shemos 34:14, Ki lo sishtachaveh l'eil acheir, "For you shall not prostrate yourselves to an alien god," the reish of acheir (alien) is likewise augmented. The sin of the Eitz HaDaas created a possibility of "confusing" the daled of echad with the reish of acheir and vice versa. The difference between the daled, reish, daled, reish or dardar became jumbled. It is only a little kotz that delineates the letters, but it can make a world of difference between "one" G-d and alien gods.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, embellishes this exegesis with a story: A simple villager hired a tutor to teach his son Torah. One night, he went upstairs to the tutor's room to find him on the floor, weeping. The villager could not understand what he was doing. "Why are you sitting on the floor weeping?" he asked. "I am mourning the destruction of our Temple," the tutor replied.

"May I join you?" the villager asked. "Certainly," the tutor responded. After a while, the villager asked, "Is there any reason we cannot have a little vodka?" "I see no reason why not," answered the tutor.

This went on for a few shots of vodka until the tutor, unfamiliar with the effect of alcoholic beverages, became extremely "happy." Now that both the villager and the tutor were in excellent moods, they decided they might as well have a little dance. Shortly thereafter, one of the

townspeople, hearing all of the racket and seeing two men dancing together in the middle of the night, asked them incredulously, "What are you doing? Why are you dancing?" The response from the villager was straightforward, "We are mourning the destruction of the Temple."

When one's vision is blurred, when the reish appears to be a daled – and vice versa – one can begin dancing for the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash and weeping for what should be viewed as a joyous occasion. This is all the result of eating the forbidden fruit.