

## But of the Tree of Knowledge, of Good and Bad, you must not eat thereof. (2:17)

*Adam Ha'Rishon* was the *yetzir kapav shel HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, formed and created by Hashem. Yet, he sinned. He had one single mitzvah – not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. He could not withstand the temptation, however, and he sinned. We have 613 *mitzvos* and are commanded to observe them all. Obviously, a disparity exists between us and Adam. Adam did not have a *yetzer hora*, evil inclination – nothing to provoke him to commit anything negative; yet, he sinned.

In his *Moreh Nevuchim*, *Rambam* posits that by sinning, Adam gained his greatest glory: the faculty of *bechirah chafshis*, free-will. Did he not have free will prior to the sin? The *Rambam* explains that, prior to his sin, Adam, with his extraordinary intellect, was able to discern clearly between that which is true and that which is false. The concepts of good and evil, proper and inappropriate behavior, had no meaning to him, because, without a *yetzer hora*, it was about absolute truth versus falsehood, not good versus evil.

In his *Michtav Mei'Eliyahu*, *Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl*, explains this practically. Everything exists only by virtue of Hashem's will. As such, it follows that what He rejects has no true existence. Since He desires only good, only good can be called true and real.

Prior to partaking of the *Eitz HaDaas*, Adam saw this so clearly that he saw the world only in terms of two competing realities: good versus evil.

*Rav Dessler* illuminates for us the challenge that confronted Adam before the sin. Since good and evil were not yet intermingled, the test had to be between two forms of good. The purpose of Creation is *Kiddush Shem Shomayim*, sanctifying Hashem's Name. Had Adam maintained his resolve and not eaten of the fruit, *Kiddush Shem Shomayim* would effectively have been consummated. Adam's tension came from his desire to do more, to triumph over a greater challenge. Since he was in *Gan Eden* with no exposure to evil, he felt that, if he lowered his *madreigah*, spiritual level, to allow evil to enter him, he would overcome it and emerge triumphant, thereby succeeding in effecting a greater *Kiddush Hashem*. Thus, he convinced himself that an *aveirah lishmah*, sin for the sake of Heaven, was appropriate. The snake was overjoyed. He was willing to enable Adam to have a *yetzer hora* to complete his freedom to choose. We are all aware of the results of Adam's decision. It did not work out exactly as he had planned. Why?

*Rav Dessler* explains that man was created for one purpose: to serve Hashem and carry out His will. A servant must be obedient. Indeed, obedience defines servitude. The servant's cognitive abilities are not relevant to his service to his master. He does what he is told to do – no more, no less. It is not up to him to determine what is best for his master. He is required to do, not to think.

While it is possibly true that Adam might have made a greater *Kiddush Hashem* if he indeed had eaten of the *etz ha'daas*, his function was not to transgress the *ratzon Hashem* in order to make a *Kiddush Hashem*. He was created to serve without *cheshbonos*, calculations. Hashem has His reasons, which are beyond the scope of our limited cognitive abilities. Adam sinned in not following the *ratzon Hashem*, despite his personal misgivings. Perhaps he would have been the agent for greater sanctification of Hashem's Name, but that was not what Hashem expected of him.

Are we any different? By nature, we are competitive and opinionated; we think that we can do it better, we can achieve greater. Despite this, Hashem wants us to put our feelings aside and carry out His will. This is the true challenge.

In his *sefer*, *L'Ha'ir*, *Horav Yechiel Tzukor, Shlita*, cites a number of instances in which the concept of observing Hashem's Will, even when we think we might improve matters, came into play. Our *gedolim* understood what it was/is demanded of us and instructed us to act objectively, carrying out His will. *Horav Moshe Feinstein, zl*, was *niftar*, passed away, on *Adar 13, Erev Purim*, and his *aron*, coffin, brought to *Eretz Yisrael* for *kevurah*, burial, on *Adar 15*, which is *Purim* in *Yerushalayim*. Hundreds of thousands of *Yidden* walked through the streets with sadness all over their faces. The *gadol hador*, the preeminent Torah giant and *posek*, halachic arbiter of the generation, had been taken from them. *Klal Yisrael* was left bereft of their leader. Upon returning from the funeral, a distinguished lay person asked *Horav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, zl* (upon whose shoulders the mantle of *halachic* ruling was now placed), how it was possible to approach the *seudah*, festive meal, of *Purim* enveloped in mourning.

*Rav Shlomo Zalmen* replied (in his signature gentle manner), "Concerning *avodas Hashem*, service to the Almighty, our cognitive understanding and emotions do not play a role. Our function is to carry out the *ratzon Hashem* as it is at this juncture. Until now, the *ratzon Hashem* was for us to mourn the loss of *Rav Moshe*. Now, the *ratzon Hashem* is for us to celebrate the miracle and festival of *Purim* with appropriate joy."

*Horav Eliezer Turk, Shlita*, relates that he was present when *Horav Shmuel HaLevi Vosner, zl*, came to be *menachem aveil*, comfort the bereaved, *Horav Nissim Karelitz, zl*, who was sitting *shivah*, mourning, over the untimely passing of his daughter, *Rebbetzin Rosenberg, a"h* (wife of *Horav Sariel Rosenberg*). *Rav Vosner* said, "It is impossible to comfort a father over the loss of his daughter. Young children are also impossible to comfort over the loss of their mother. It is, likewise, unfeasible to console a young husband over the passing of his wife. It is the *ratzon Hashem*, however, that we attempt to comfort the bereaved. It is, likewise, the will of Hashem that the bereaved accept and acquiesce to the consolation. Hashem has the power to ease our grief. As such, I say to you, *HaMakom yinacheim eschem*; 'The Almighty should comfort you.'"

Hashem speaks to us and says, "Ascertain what is My will and carry it out. Do not attempt to be smarter and do the impossible. Do what I ask of you. No situation is perfect. Some confront life-

altering challenges. This is the *ratzon Hashem*: to live with them and continue with life as best as you are able under the circumstances.

The common theme that resonates in moments of challenge is the belief that difficulties are actually tests of faith and strength. Furthermore, we believe that Hashem presents a challenge only to those whom He knows have the capacity and fortitude to triumph over them. This perspective encourages perseverance, resilience and faith in the face of adversity.

Throughout history, heralding back to Rabbi Akiva, our Torah giants have demonstrated this resolve and have taught us that we are able to overcome adversity by continuing to comply with the *ratzon Hashem*.

Horav Nachman Breslauer, zl, suffered from debilitating illness and personal loss, including the deaths of his wife and children; yet, he remained deeply committed. His innovative and mystical approaches to serving Hashem continue to inspire many. The saintly *Chafetz Chaim* suffered the loss of his son, who was a brilliant *talmid chacham* without peer; yet, he carried on and carried the Jewish people upon his shoulders.

*Horav Elchanan Spector, zl*, grew up amidst abject poverty and suffered from the political turmoil that raged in Eastern Europe. Yet, he became a leading halachic authority during the nineteenth century. Closer to home, *Horav Yisrael Meir Lau, Shlita*, a child survivor of the Buchenwald concentration camp, went on to become the Chief Rabbi in *Eretz Yisrael*. Despite the inestimable trauma of his youth, he devoted himself to personal spiritual growth and then dedicated himself to the Jewish community. He was a respected leader and advocate for our People. He had the excuse that so many others had, but he understood that, since he had been spared, it was for a reason. He, as well as each Jew who survived, has a mission in life: performing the *ratzon Hashem*. We each have our own personal mission, based upon the G-d-given gifts with which we have been bestowed.