
בראשית

ADAM HARISHON.

HE SINNED FOR THE SAKE OF HEAVEN

Human history, as we perceive it, commenced with the expulsion of Adam *Harishon* from *Gan Eden*. Adam *Harishon's* life encompassed two phases: the almost perfect and the diminished. Both states impact on our lives to this day. His diminished phase represents our daily existence; his almost perfect state serves as a model to which we must aspire.

Before the sin, when Adam inhabited *Gan Eden*, his existence was not compatible with the material world (Maharal of Prague, *Tiferes Yisrael* 35). Rather, he was more akin to the angels in their spiritual world. Similarly, *Klal Yisrael*, at the time of *Kabalas Hatorah* (prior to the sin of the Golden Calf), was described as on a par with the denizens of the spiritual realm (*Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer* 41).

After eating of the *Eitz Hada'as* — the Tree of Knowledge — Adam and Chava underwent a change:

ותפקחנה עיני שניהם וידעו כי עירמם הם

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were unclothed (*Bereishis* 3:7).

Prior to the Sin when Adam looked at Chava he perceived that she was unclothed, but he was so perfect (without sin) that his focus was directed to spiritual values. Physicality did not interest him in the least. Subsequent to the Sin, he lost his ability to keenly focus and perceive in his partner a defined *Tzelem Elokim* — the image of G-d. Instead, his perceptions were dulled and he declined to a shallower level. It may be true that in a worldly sense, the sin of the *Eitz Hada'as* allowed him to observe more and become more acutely aware of his environment; but in an absolute sense, his perceptions became more superficial (*Rabbeinu Bechaya, Bereishis* 3:5).

אדה"ר לולא שחטא היה שולט במלאכים

Had Adam not sinned, he would have ruled over the angels (*Zohar Chadash* 14).

Prior to the Sin, “Adam’s stature reached from the Earth to the Heavens — from one end of the world to the other.” However, once Adam sinned he was reduced in stature, as the Talmud states:

אדה"ר מן הארץ עד לרקיע היה...מסוף העולם ועד סופו היה, כיון שסרח הניח הקב"ה ידו עליו ומיעטו

Once he sinned, Hashem put His hands upon him and minimized him (*Chagigah* 12•, *Sanhedrin* 38:, see *ibid.* 100•).

Hashem had created Adam in a near-perfect moral state and with very lofty intellectual capabilities. He understood that his role was to achieve as close a bond as possible to the Al-mighty, and sin was the furthest thing from his mind. He understood, however, that his existence in *Gan Eden* was a restricted one: he would only be able to worship the Al-Mighty with a limited exercise of his free will since he was largely unaware of other modes of existence. Adam, however, desired to worship Hashem precisely through the wide ranging exercise of his cognitive powers, by exercising his *bechirah* (free-will) in a broad spectrum of experiences. He hoped that through this route he would ultimately arrive at the lofty level of the angels in his relationship with the Creator.

In simple terms, Adam did not want to be created an “Angel,” but preferred to become the equivalent of one through the sweat of his brow and through the exercise of his free will. When Adam elected to eat the fruit of *Eitz Hadaas*, he hoped to obtain greater understanding of the Holy-One-Blessed-Be-He in order to achieve a significant spiritual elevation. However, Adam was badly mistaken; disobeying Hashem’s command and eating of the *Eitz Hadaas* was a sin (*Bereishis* 2:17), regardless of any higher motives. For this, he was banished from *Gan Eden* and became a mortal (see Maharal, *Tiferes Yisrael* 25).

The Ramban (*Bereishis* 6:3) explains that upon creation, man actually was invested with the potential to achieve the same heights as the angels. In fact the *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 93•) states:

גדולים צדיקים יותר ממלאכי השרת

The righteous are greater than even the ministering angels.

The Ramban (*Vayikra* 26:6) further states that the purpose of the commandments of the Torah is to provide mankind with the vehicle to restore man to the state of Adam prior to the sin. Hashem has put these commandments before us so that we, through *bechirah*, can achieve angelic perfection (*Meshech Chachmah*, Introduction to *Shemos*).

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