



Adam Was Placed in Gan Eden to Work It and Guard It Adam HaRishon Did Not Want to Enter Gan Eden but HKB”H Enticed Him with “Pleasant Words”

Shabbas Bereishis was the first Shabbas that Adam HaRishon experienced outside of Gan Eden after he was banished from the garden for the sin of partaking of the Eitz HaDa’as. Hence, it is fitting for us to focus on how he entered the garden (Bereishis 2, 15): **“וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם וַיְנַיִחָהוּ בְּגֶן עֵדֶן לַעֲבֹדָה וּלְשֹׁמְרָה”—Hashem Elokim took the man and placed him in Gan Eden to work it and to guard it.** Citing the Midrash (B.R. 16, 5), Rashi explains: **He took him with pleasant words and persuaded him to enter.**

The Maharal and the Mizrachi explain that Rashi was bothered by the language of the passuk—by the terms **“וַיִּקַּח”** (meaning He took) and **“וַיְנַיִחָהוּ”** (meaning He placed him). These terms suggest that Hashem treated Adam like an object that He picked up and placed someplace. Seemingly, for a human being with an intellect, it would have been more appropriate to use the term **“וַיִּוְלֶךְ”**, indicating that Hashem Elokim instructed Adam and guided him to the desired destination. This prompted Rashi to interpret the passuk to mean that Hashem took Adam with pleasant, diplomatic words to entice him to enter Gan Eden.

This raises an obvious question. Why didn’t Adam want to enter Gan Eden? Why did he need to be persuaded to do so? Additionally, what were the **“pleasant words”** HKB”H used to entice him?

Adam HaRishon Knew that the Ultimate Plan Was Not for Him to Remain in Gan Eden

I would like to propose an intriguing explanation based on an incredible, yet daunting, teaching of Chazal

concerning the death penalty that HKB”H imposed on Adam HaRishon and on all future human beings. They suggest that the original, divine plan, even before Adam was created, was for all human beings to eventually die. Hence, it was necessary for HKB”H to find, so to speak, a compelling reason to issue the death decree on mankind. Here is the pertinent, fascinating passage in the Midrash Tanchuma (Vayeishev 4):

This is the meaning of that which is written (Tehillim 66, 5): “Go and see the works of G-d; He is terrifying in His acts concerning mankind.” Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah said: Even the terrifying events you subject us to, You do so with a divine scheme. Come and see. When HKB”H created the world, the Malach HaMaves was created on the very first day . . . Yet, Adam was only created on the sixth day, and blame was attached to him for bringing death to the world . . .

This is analogous to a man who wishes to divorce his wife. Before returning home, he writes a “get.” Upon entering the house with the “get” in hand, he seeks a pretext under which to give it to her. He instructs her to pour him a beverage to drink. She pours it for him. After taking the cup from her hand, he says to her, “Here is your ‘get.’” She inquires of him, “What did I do wrong?” He says to her, “Leave my house; you poured me a tepid beverage.” She in turn says to him, “You knew in advance that I would pour you a tepid drink; you had already prepared the ‘get’ and brought it in your hand.”

In similar fashion, Adam said to HKB”H, “Master of the Universe, before you ever created Your universe, the Torah was in Your possession for two thousand years . . . In it, it is written (Bamidbar 19, 14): ‘These are the laws regarding a man should he die in a tent.’ Had You not already arranged for creatures to die, would You have written such a thing in the Torah? Rather, You have come to blame me under false pretenses.” This is how His acts are terrifying regarding mankind. [Translator’s note: The word “עלילה” can be translated as an act or deed; however, it also connotes a form of libel and false pretense. Thus, “נורא” can imply simply that G-d’s deeds are awesome; or it can suggest that there is an element of deception involved to serve His divine scheme.]

Clearly, this is extremely profound and defies simple comprehension. After all, we have a fundamental principle of faith based on the passuk (Devarim 32, 4): “הַצֹּר תָּמִים פְּעֻלּוֹ:” —the Rock, perfect is His work, for all His ways are justice; a G-d of faithfulness, without iniquity; He is righteous and proper. In light of this principle, the scenario described above cannot be understood at face value—that HKB”H had already decreed 2,000 years before the creation of the world that man must die; and it was necessary for Him to use the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as” as a pretext for that decree. Why didn’t HKB”H simply create man from the outset as a being with a limited lifespan without looking for any false pretenses?

“What man lives and will not see death?”

It appears that we can provide a simple, straightforward explanation of the Midrash based on the commentary of the Panim Yafos on this parsha. He explains the rationale of HKB”H for punishing Adam HaRishon specifically with the death penalty. He begins by commenting on the words of David HaMelech (Tehillim 89, 49): “מִי גִבֹר יַחִיָּה וְלֹא יִרְאֶה מוֹת—what man lives and will not see death; who will rescue his soul from the grasp of the grave? Selah. In truth, HKB”H had already warned Adam that if he sinned by eating from the tree, he would die (Bereishis 2, 16): “וַיֹּצֵא ה' אֱלֹקִים עַל הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל עֵץ הָגֵן

אֲכֹל תֹּאכַל, וּמִעֵץ הָדֶעֶת טוֹב וְרַע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכַלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ” —and Hashem Elokim commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may eat freely; but of the Eitz HaDa’as Tov VaRa, you must not eat thereof, for on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.” However, Adam had never seen anything die.

Hence, HKB”H imposed the death decree on mankind, so that he would see with his own eyes what it means to die. As a result, when the yetzer hara would come to persuade a person to sin, he would take into account that it is not worth his while to transgress the word of Hashem. For, he would ultimately die and would be held accountable by HKB”H, the King of Kings, for all of his deeds and misdeeds. This then is the message conveyed by the passuk: “מִי גִבֹר יַחִיָּה—”who is the man who wishes to live a life of Torah; “וְלֹא יִרְאֶה מוֹת”—without experiencing death, which is the fate of all men; “יִמְלֹט נַפְשׁוֹ מִיַּד שְׂאוֹל סֵלָה”—it is impossible; death is inevitable. Therefore, HKB”H decided even before He actually created the world that man must die, so that he would be motivated to withstand the persuasions and counsel of the yetzer hara.

Thus, we can explain the Midrash as follows: HKB”H knew from the outset, even before man was created, that as a mere creature of flesh and blood, he would not be capable of withstanding the potent powers of the yetzer hara. Now, if HKB”H had subjected man to death even without the pretext of a sin, man was liable to complain that he could overcome the yetzer hara even without the fear of death.

HKB”H Wanted Man to Realize Why Death Is Necessary

In this manner, HKB”H wanted to teach man that all His ways are just and necessary including the necessity of death. To accomplish this, He had Adam enter Gan Eden and gave him total control over all the trees in the garden. Adam did not have to tend to the fields or vineyards, and all of his needs were provided for without any effort on his part. Here is how the Gemara (Sanhedrin 59b) describes his situation: “אָדָם הָרֵאשׁוֹן מִיִּסְבַּב בְּגֵן עֵדֶן הָיָה, וְהָיוּ מְלָאכֵי הַשְּׂרָת

צולין לו בשר ומסגנין לו יין—Adam HaRishon would recline in Gan Eden; ministering angels would broil meat for him and strain wine for him. This enabled Adam to serve Hashem through Torah-study and the performance of mitzvos without any mundane, earthly obligations or distractions. Thus, when the Torah states that Adam was placed in Gan Eden “לעבדה ולשמרה”, they expounded in the Midrash (Eikev): **“To work it” refers to Talmud** (the study of Torah), and **“to guard it” refers to mitzvos.**

Yet, after providing Adam with all the earthly pleasures of Gan Eden, HKB”H prohibited him from eating the fruit of one particular tree: **“But of the Eitz HaDa’as Tov VaRa, you must not eat thereof.”** This was meant to test him to see whether or not he could withstand the yetzer hara. Furthermore, HKB”H went on to warn him of the consequences of sinning, if he failed to heed this directive: **“For on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.”**

When all was said and done, Adam was not able to resist the powerful, persuasive subterfuge of the “nachash hakadmoni.” It defies our comprehension how the primeval serpent succeeded in tripping up Adam and Chava, the products of HKB”H’s handiwork. Therefore, after they sinned, HKB”H subjected them to the decree of death, so that man would understand why death was necessary and inevitable. For, only in this manner—and even then it was not guaranteed—that man would be able to overcome the yetzer hara.

From this perspective, we can explain the Midrash (B.R. 9, 10) regarding that which is written at the end of the chronicle of the creation (ibid. 1, 31): **“וירא אלקים את כל אשר עשה והנה טוב מאד—and G-d saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good:**

Rabbi Shmuel bar Yitzchak said: **“Behold it was very good”** (“הנה טוב מאד” where “הנה” is written without a “vav”)—**this refers to the malach of life; “and behold it was very good”** (“והנה טוב מאד” with a “vav”)—**this refers to the Malach HaMaves. But is the Malach HaMaves “very good”? This is a rhetorical question. Rather, it is**

analogous to a king who prepared a feast, invited the guests, and placed in front of them a plate filled with all kinds of delicacies. He said: **“Whoever eats and blesses the king, will eat and it will be pleasant for him; but whoever eats and does not bless the king, will be decapitated with a sword.”** So, too, whoever amasses mitzvos and good deeds, here is the malach of life, but whoever does not amass mitzvos and good deeds, here is the Malach HaMaves.

We can now make sense of the Midrash above that states that the decree of death falls into the category of **“נורא עלילה על בני אדם”**. Indeed, well before the creation of man, HKB”H knew that man would have to die to enable him to overcome his yetzer hara. Since, however, HKB”H also wanted man to comprehend why this was necessary, He contrived a situation to test Adam; He prohibited Adam to eat from the Eitz HaDa’as. As we know, Adam failed to withstand the ruse of the nachash in Gan Eden. That was the pretext for the death sentence imposed on mankind, although, in reality, it had been decreed much earlier.

Adam HaRishon Did Not Want to Enter Gan Eden because He Knew He Was Destined to Fail with the Eitz HaDa’as

Continuing on this sacred journey, we will proceed to explain the reluctance of Adam HaRishon to enter Gan Eden, which prompted HKB”H to entice him with pleasant words. Let us examine the creation of Adam HaRishon (ibid. 2, 7): **“וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם עֹפֶר מִן הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפֹּחַ בָּאָפִיו”**—**and Hashem Elokim formed man of soil from the earth and blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living soul.** Prior to forming Adam’s physical body, HKB”H watered the entire face of the earth, so that He could knead and form his body from a mixture of dust and water. This is evident from the passuk (ibid. 6) **“וַאֲדָר יַעֲלֶה מִן הָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת כָּל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה”**—**a mist ascended from the earth and watered the whole surface of the soil.** Rashi explains: **For the creation of man, He raised the waters of the deep and filled the clouds with water to saturate the soil; then man was**

created like one who kneads dough; he adds water to the flour and then kneads the dough; in similar fashion, HKB”H irrigated the soil with water and then formed man from the mixture.

With this in mind, we can truly appreciate the incredible kedushah of Adam HaRishon’s physical body. It was kneaded and shaped by HKB”H Himself, so to speak. Thus, his body constituted a sacred vessel prepared to receive the intense light of the neshamah—a portion of G-d from above—as per the description: **“He blew into his nostrils the soul of life.”**

The brilliance of Adam’s body is described in the Midrash (V.R. 20, 2): **The fleshy part of Adam HaRishon’s heel outshone the orb of the sun; how much more so, the radiance of his countenance.** It was so magnificent that it confounded the malachim above (B.R. 8, 10): **When HKB”H created Adam HaRishon, the ministering angels erred and sought to address him as “kadosh.” . . . What did HKB”H do? He cast a deep sleep upon him, and everyone knew that he was a mere man.**

This enables us to better understand the Arizal’s contention in Sefer HaLikutim (Ha’azinu) that Adam HaRishon possessed immense kedushah and did not sin due to his own shortcomings. The “cheit Eitz HaDa’as” was attributable to the various neshamos incorporated in his being. Among them, in addition to the tzaddikim, were reshaim, thieves, and gluttons. His desire to partake of the forbidden tree stemmed from them. Thus, the sin was not really his fault but theirs. Notwithstanding, he performed teshuvah. Had it not been for the sin, he would have lived forever; however, he had been admonished: **“For on the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.”**

Based on this, I would like to propose a novel explanation with the utmost awe and reverence. Adam HaRishon’s reluctance to enter Gan Eden was because he was perceptive enough to foresee that the neshamos within him, which included reshaim, would not be able to resist the temptations and persuasions of the “nachash hakadmoni.” As we learned

above, he was also aware of the fact that death was already mentioned in the Torah two-thousand years prior to the creation of the world in the passuk: **“אדם כי ימות באהל”**. Thus, it was clear to him that HKB”H only associated the decree of death with the “cheit Eitz HaDa’as” as a pretext—**“נורא עלילה”**—**“על בני אדם”**. With this perception, he saw no benefit in going into Gan Eden. Why give the neshamos of the reshaim the opportunity to rebel against the sovereignty of Heaven? He figured that it would be preferable to have HKB”H enact the death decree over all living creatures without having them rebel against Hashem.

Adam HaRishon Paved the Way for All Neshamos Destined to Descend to Olam HaZeh

Following this line of reasoning, we will now explain what the **“pleasant words”** were that HKB”H employed to convince Adam HaRishon to enter Gan Eden. We will refer to what the Sefas Emes writes (5644) in relation to the passuk (ibid. 3, 23): **“וישלחוהו' אלוקים מגן עדן לעבוד את האדמה”**—so Hashem Elokim banished him from Gan Eden to work the soil . . . In his sacred, terse comments, he provides us with a wealth of information and a marvelous insight. He explains that the term **“וישלחוהו'”** implies that HKB”H sent Adam on a mission—**“shlichut”**—to rectify the lower worlds. With his previous experience in Gan Eden, he would possess the wherewithal to complete this mission. Hence, every neshamah that descends to this world is shown Gan Eden and the Torah beforehand.

First, let us provide a source for this notion. A passage in the Midrash Tanchuma (Pekudei 3) describes the fascinating journey of a Jewish neshamah before it enters a body in Olam HaZeh:

Rabbi Yochanan said: Why is it written (Iyov 9, 10): “Who performs great deeds that are beyond comprehension, and wonders beyond number”? You should know that all of the neshamos that were from Adam HaRishon and will be until the end of the world, were created during the six days of creation; they were all in Gan Eden, and they were all at Matan

Torah, as it says (Devarim 29, 14): “But with whoever is here, standing with us today before Hashem, our G-d, and with whoever is not here with us today.” And the statement: “Who performs great deeds that are beyond comprehension”—refers to the great deeds HKB”H performs in the formation of the fetus.

Further on, the Midrash continues:

Without delay, HKB”H would summon the malach in charge of the spirits (souls) and say to him: Bring Me a particular spirit which is in Gan Eden, whose name is so-and-so, and whose form is such-and-such . . . Immediately, the malach would go and bring the soul to HKB”H. When the soul arrived, it immediately prostrated itself and bowed before the King of Kings, HKB”H . . . Thereupon HKB”H responded to the neshamah, “The world I am placing you in will be better for you than the one in which you have dwelt” . . . Then, the malach returns and inserts the spirit in its mother’s womb, and two malachim are assigned to watch over him, so that he will not leave there and will not be miscarried. And a lighted candle is placed at his head, as it is said (Iyov 29, 2): “Oh, that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when G-d watched over me, when His light shined over my head, etc.” And it peers out and sees from one end of the world to the other.

The malach took him from there and led him to Gan Eden; he showed him the tzaddikim sitting honorably with crowns on their heads. Then the malach would say to that spirit, “Do you know who these are?” And the spirit would reply, “No, my master.” Whereupon the malach would tell him, “These that you see were initially formed like you in the wombs of their mothers; then they went out into the world and observed the Torah and the mitzvos. Therefore, they were deserving and were selected for this beautiful place that you see. Know that you will ultimately leave this world, and if you are deemed worthy and observe HKB”H’s Torah, you will merit this and sitting like these. But if not, be assured, you will be assigned to another place.”

The Fetus Is Taught the Entire Torah in Its Mother’s Womb

When the Sefas Emes writes that the neshamah is shown the Torah before its descent into this world, he is obviously alluding to the following teaching (Niddah 30b): “דרש רבי שמלאי למה הולד דומה במעי אמו, לפנקס שמקופל... ואוכל ממה שאמו אוכלת ושותה ממה שאמו שותה... וגר דלוק לו על ראשו, וצופה ומביט מסוף העולם ועד סופו, שנאמר בהלו גרו עלי ראשי... ואין לך ימים שאדם שרוי בטובה יותר מאותן הימים, שנאמר מי יתנני כירחי קדם... ומלמדין אותו כל התורה כולה... וכיון שבא לאויר העולם בא מלאך וסטרטו על פיו ומשכחו כל.” Rabbi Simlai expounded: To what is a fetus comparable in its mother’s womb? To a folded ledger . . . it eats of what its mother eats and drinks of what its mother drinks . . . and a lamp is lit above its head, and it peers out and sees from one end of the world to the other end, as it states (ibid. 3): “When his lamp shone above my head, by its light I was able to walk in the dark” . . . And there are no days during which a person experiences more bliss than during those days (in his mother’s womb), as it states (ibid. 2): “If only I could relive the months of earlier times” . . . And they teach him (the unborn child) the entire Torah . . . but as soon as he emerges into the air of the world, a malach comes and strikes him on his mouth causing him to forget the entire Torah.

Now, since the newborn is made to forget all of the Torah that it was taught in utero, what purpose did that serve? In Likutei Shoshanah, the Noam Elimelech asserts that if a Jewish neshamah is not taught the entire Torah ahead of time, it would not be possible for it to attain and comprehend the Torah—the chochmah of HKB”H—by natural means after it is inserted in a physical, human body. Having learned the entire Torah in utero, however, leaves a lasting impression, which enables a Jew to restore what he has been forced to forget at birth through diligent Torah-study during his lifetime.

Let us now return to the remarks of the Sefas Emes. In truth, man was created so that he would descend into Olam

HaZeh to rectify his part in the lower world. Afterwards, if meritorious, he would deserve to enter Gan Eden. This is the message conveyed by the Mishnah (Avos 4, 16): **רבי יעקב אומר העולם הזה דומה לפרוזדור בפני העולם הבא, התקן עצמך כדי שתכנס לטורקלין—Rabbi Yaakov says: Olam HaZeh resembles an antechamber to Olam HaBa. Prepare yourself in the antechamber, so that you will be able to enter the banquet hall.**

Yet, since HKB"H knows that (Bereishis 8, 21) **"the yetzer of man's heart is evil from his youth,"** HKB"H arranges for the neshamah to enter Gan Eden prior to its birth. There, it sees the tzaddikim luxuriating in the splendor of the Shechinah in the merit of the Torah and mitzvos they were occupied with during their lifetimes in Olam HaZeh. This imbues them with powers of kedushah to study Torah and perform mitzvos during their time

in Olam HaZeh. This is precisely what happened with Adam HaRishon. Although he sinned by partaking of the Eitz HaDa'as because of the other neshamos within him, nevertheless, he derived powers of kedushah in Gan Eden that enabled him to fulfill his mission in Olam HaZeh.

These then are the pleasant words that HKB"H spoke to Adam HaRishon to entice him to enter Gan Eden. As we have learned, all the neshamos destined to be born into this world were part of Adam HaRishon. Therefore, it was necessary for him to initially enter Gan Eden to set a precedent and pave the way for them. They would also enter Gan Eden prior to descending into Olam HaZeh to draw powers of kedushah that would enable them to overcome the yetzer hara and serve Hashem with Torah-study and the performance of mitzvos.



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