

## Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

### פרשת בראשית

ויעש אלקים את שני המארת הגדלים את המאור הגדל לממשלת היום ואת המאור הקטן לממשלת הלילה ואת הכוכבים

**“And Hashem made the two great luminaries, the greater luminary to dominate the day and the lesser luminary to dominate the night; and the stars” (1:16)**

Rashi notes that the word המארת, “luminaries,” is written without a ו in it. The root of the word can thus be interpreted as מארה, “curse.” Rashi explains that this teaches us that the fourth day, the day on which the luminaries were created, can be a curse because it is the day on which people are more susceptible to debilitating diseases such as croup.

R’ Dovid Feinstein has a different explanation for the connection between the luminaries and a curse. The luminaries are representative of Torah, which is the guiding light of our lives. Torah can be both a light and a curse. If one approaches Torah with the tradition of our Sages and talmidei chachamim, it serves as a light. But if one ignores the tradition, the Torah will bring nothing more than a curse. His proof to this is the very reading of the word המארת. When one reads it with the traditional vowelization, as passed down through the generation, the reading is translated as “luminaries,” symbolizing the light that is brought to us when Torah is studied properly. However, when one reads the word as it is written in the Torah, ignoring the oral tradition, one reads it to mean “curse.” Studying the Written Law but neglecting the Oral Law can only bring a curse.

The first word in the Torah, בראשית, is spelled with a large ב. There are many explanations for this. One explanation, given by the Baal HaTurim, is that the ב, with a numerical value of 2, represents the two parts of Torah: the תורה שבכתב and the תורה שבעל פה. The Torah indicates its dual nature right at the very start so that one understands that it is necessary to be aware of the Oral Law in order to properly understand the meaning of the Written Law.

ומפרי העץ אשר בתוך הגן אמר אלקים לא תאכלו ממנו ולא תגעו בו פן תמתון  
**“Of the fruit of the tree which is in the center of the garden Hashem has said: You shall neither eat of it nor touch it, lest you die” (3:3)**

Hashem only commanded man not to eat of the עץ הדעת but never prohibited touching it. Yet the woman told the snake that she could not touch the tree on Hashem’s command. Rashi explains that this is because she added a protective layer to the prohibition, preventing touching the tree in order to avoid potentially eating from it.

However, shortly thereafter, Rashi comments that what led the woman to eat from the tree was that the snake pushed her into the tree and showed her that nothing happened to her. Since nothing bad happened after she touched the tree, it followed that she could eat from it too. Based on this argument from the snake, she ate from the fruit of the tree. However, if she had added the prohibition against touching of her own volition, why would this trick have fooled her and convinced her that it was okay to eat from the tree? After all, she knew perfectly well that Hashem had, in fact, not said that there was anything wrong with touching the tree.

The Sifsei Chachamim answers that when Rashi wrote that she added the prohibition of her accord, it does not mean that it was she who came up with this idea. Instead, it was Adam, who was the only one of them to hear this command directly from Hashem, who invented this extra dimension of the prohibition. When relaying the word of Hashem to the woman, he was afraid that she would touch the tree and thereby be tempted to eat from it. Therefore, he told her that Hashem had commanded them not to touch the tree or eat from it. But the plan backfired. When the snake pushed her into the tree, she saw that the first part of Adam’s warning in the name of Hashem was not true so she saw no reason to believe that the second part was true.

The Steipler Gaon says that the woman did hear the command from Hashem but she interpreted it to mean that she was forbidden to touch the tree in addition to being proscribed from eating of its fruit. Then the snake showed her that touching the tree did not bring her any harm. At that point, she should have realized that she had misinterpreted the word of Hashem. She should have rethought what Hashem meant or consulted with Adam

regarding what he thought Hashem had said. But a desire to eat from the tree had taken a hold of her senses. Rather than believe that the word of Hashem was valid and it was she who had erred in her misinterpretation, she chose to discredit the word of Hashem since it did not fit with her understanding of what it meant. She ate from the tree because her physical desires blinded her and removed her capacity for intellectual honesty. When we learn about Hashem's commandments, we must remember that they are absolute and if we fail to comprehend them because they do not fit with our observations and understanding, it is still us who fail to understand the full meaning of what Hashem wants. Hashem's word is absolute and we should not allow our temptations to convince us otherwise.

ויקרא האדם שם אשתו חוה כי הוא היתה אם כל חי

**“The man called his wife's name Chava, because she had become the mother of all the living” (3:20)**

The first thing that Adam did after the sin of the עץ הדעת was to give his wife the name Chava. Why was this the first matter that Adam turned his attention to after the sin? R' Shimon Schwab answers that Adam recognized that he had sinned by being ungrateful to Hashem for the amazing gift that He had given him in the form of his wife. When accused by Hashem of eating from the עץ הדעת, Adam replied with the excuse that “the wife that You gave me, she gave me from the tree and I ate,” as if to say that the sin was all Hashem's fault because He had created the woman. This was a terrible thing to say because Hashem created the woman as a tremendous act of kindness for Adam. Therefore, after Adam recognized his wrongdoing, he sought to rectify his mistake by showing gratitude again. By giving his wife the name Chava, referring to her capacity to bring life into the world, he expressed his gratitude for the role that she would play in the building of the world. He wanted to show that he did appreciate the woman and that she was important to him despite what he said earlier.

ויאמר ה' אל קין למה חרה לך ולמה נפלו פניך

**“And Hashem said to Kayin: Why are you angry and why has your countenance fallen?” (4:6)**

Why did Hashem ask Kayin the reason for his anger? After all, it was fairly obvious that Kayin was angry because Hashem had not accepted his sacrifice. What was the point of asking this question?

A story can help illustrate the reason for the seemingly unnecessary question. There was once a slaughterer in Brisk who brought a large, expensive animal that had been slaughtered to R' Chaim of Brisk for inspection because a question had arisen regarding whether the slaughtering was done properly. R' Chaim ruled that the animal was not kosher, which caused a large financial loss to the slaughterer. However, the slaughterer accepted the rabbi's ruling without complaint. A few days later, he once again came before R' Chaim, this time because of a monetary dispute that he had with his friend. R' Chaim ruled against the slaughterer, but this time he did not accept the ruling without protest. He argued vehemently that he was correct and that he was being cheated out of his money. R' Chaim noted that the slaughterer had been angry after the second ruling but not the first even though they both caused him a financial loss. The reason for this, explained R' Chaim, was because in the second case, not only did he lose money but his counterpart gained money. He could deal with losing money but he could not deal with someone else getting money instead of him. This bothered him and made him extremely angry.

The same is true of Kayin. Hashem asked Kayin: Why are you angry? Is it because your sacrifice was not accepted or is it because Hevel's sacrifice was accepted? The first reason is a valid one. It should be an impetus for introspection and self-improvement. But the second reason can lead to no good. We should not begrudge others who succeed. Instead, we should feel happy for them and wish them the best. We can only worry about ourselves and if we are preoccupied with other people, we only become distracted from our main goal - improving ourselves.