The Tree of Life
The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

Tub’Shevat Jan. 26
The Rhythm of Hashem

Part I

Serpents of Desire:

Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden

Introduction

Beyond the Lullaby Effect:

Reading the Bible with Open Eyes

Chapter One

Adam, Eve, and the Elephant in the Room

The Lullaby Effect

1 restriction – Cannot eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

Nachash – Crawl on belly, eat dust

Woman – pain in childbirth, subject to man

Man – work by the sweat of their brow to make bread,

Death

Driven from Eden, essential that man cannot eat of the Tree of Life – Yet
Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

An ability to distinguish

Why would Hashem want to deny this ability to anyone?

Right to obey, wrong to disobey.

If Adam and Eve already understood the categories of good and evil before reaching for the fruit, well then, they already possessed what the tree was supposed to give them/ What, then, would be the purpose of the tree?

It doesn’t make any sense.

You can be redeemed by Hashem without realizing that Hashem has already come.

The tree didn’t give us an understanding of right and wrong when we had none before. Rather it transformed this understanding from one thing into another. It transformed our earlier understanding of right and wrong into something called a Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Chapter Two

A Tale of Two Trees

Bereishit 2.9, 3.22.

Everything changes

Where the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was off limits now the Tree of Life is off limits.

Bereishit 3.24

Shemot 25.18-20

Mishley 3.18

Compare the Trees
You will immediately become transformed into beings that will eventually die.

Both trees are right

He was perched precariously between mortality and immortality, but, as of yet, his nature was undetermined.

Devarim 30.14-19

Wilderness

Chapter Three

The Dark side of Paradise

The Snake — the story is about him almost as much as it is about us.

Heavenly prosecutor

He talks, we are not surprised that he talks.

Bamidbar 23 – donkey

He walks

Dines on something more appealing than dust

Bereishit 3.1

Like a human

The Snake like a human, The human like a snake.

The essential dividing line between animal and human.

Af ki amar elokim lo tochlu mikol etz hagan

Did G-d really say that you may not eat from any trees of the Garden? Bereishit 3.1

“Even if G-d said do not eat from any of the trees of the Garden...”
So what, do it anyway.

To BE AS G-D

Bereishit 3.5

Bereishit 3.22

Chapter Four

The Naked Truth

Milah hamanchah

Every once in a while, when you are reading a biblical narrative, you will find that the text seems to go out of its way to use a certain, word, phrase, or idea, consistently and repetitively throughout a story. When this happens, it often indicates that this repetitive element holds a key to the meaning of the narrative.

Arom – nakedness.

The Strange Prominence of Nakedness

Nakedness appears everywhere

Bereishit 2.24

Bereishit 3.11

Nakedness is central to the story.

Embarrassed at what he had done.

I hid because I was naked.

A Phantom Nakedness

Bereishit 2.25-3.1

And they were both arum, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed. Now the serpent was more arum than any beast of the field...
Bereishit 2.25-3.1

Naked – cunning – related conceptually in any way?

Opposites

Exposed/cloaked mirror images of each other

Nachash - Somehow he was cunning, but naked as well.

An Innocent Deception

No fur, no hair to be a covering.

Both honesty and stealth

Deceptive but straightforward.

Chapter Five

What’s in it for the Snake?

In pursuit of some goal.

Forbidden Fruit

Where Does our Story Begin?

Bereishit 2.16-17

Helpmate – aizer

Comparable to him – ki’negdo

All the beasts of the field

צֵלָע 41 n.f. (m. 1 K 6:34, and appar. Ex 26:26) rib, side;—abs. יַצֵּל Gn 2:22 +, cstr. צֶלַע Ex 26:26 +, also 2 S 16:13; sf. צֵלֶן Ex 25:12 +; pl. צְלָע 1 K 6:34,
צְלָעוֹת
v:3 +; cstr. צֶלַע Gn 2:21 +; —
1. rib of man Gn 2:21, 2:22 (J).
2. rib of hill, i.e. ridge, or terrace 2 S 16:13.
3. side-chambers or cells (enclosing temple like ribs) 1 K 6:5, 6:6 (rd. הַצּ׳ for הַצּוּעַו, v. [נ׳], 7:3, so of Ezek.'s temple Ez 41:5 + 10 t. 41 (on text v. Co Toy Krae).
4. ribs of cedar and fir, i.e. planks, boards (pl.), of temple wall 1 K 6:15, 6:16 floor v:15.
5. leaves of door v:34.

Ephesians 5

Rabbit trails

Spoon fed

Hebrews 5 & 6

Why does it interrupt the story of the tree?

Maybe the Digression is Really Part of the Story

Actually crucial to the entire Forbidden Fruit narrative. Utterly impossible to understand the snake and his temptation without all of this.

Missing motive

Chayat haSadeh (2)
A fitting companion

Bereishit Rabbah, 18.6. as cited by Rashi to 3.1

Midrash Rabbah - Genesis XVIII:6

6. AND THEY WERE BOTH NAKED, AND WERE NOT ASHAMED-YITHBOSHASHU (II, 25). R. Leazar said: Three there were who did not remain in their tranquillity six hours, viz., Adam, Israel, and Sisera. Adam, for it is written, AND THEY WERE NOT ASHAMED (LO YITH - BOSHASHU), which means, lo ba’u shesh sha’oth (six hours had not come). Israel: And the people saw that Moses delayed-boshesh (Ex. XXXII, 1), i.e. the six hours had come. Sisera: Why is his chariot so long (boshesh) in coming (Judg. V, 28)? Every day he is wont to return at three hours or at four hours of the day, while to-day six hours have arrived (ba’u shesh sha’oth) yet he is not come!

(1) ‘Incest’ connotes here all forms of forbidden intercourse, and thus includes adultery, pederasty, and bestiality.-The whole of the preceding passage, which is really irrelevant, leads up to this piece of exegesis.

(2) Scriptural laws relating to Israelites are technically divided into these two categories; the violation of the former is not punishable at all (by Scriptural law), while that of the latter involves flagellation. In the case of a Noachide, however, his prohibition ranks as neither, but is punishable by death (in theory only).

(3) About unnatural intercourse.

(4) I.e. only natural intercourse is permitted him. V. Sanh. 57a, 58a and b.

(5) V Ex R XLI, 7.

(6) In the case of Adam this means that from the time of his intercourse with Eve until his expulsion less than six hours elapsed; v. Sanh. 38b. Obviously it cannot have the same meaning in the case of Israel and Sisera, but that at the sixth hour on the day of their downfall they were no longer enjoying their usual tranquillity.-Mah.
AND THEY WERE NOT ASHAMED. NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE, etc. Now surely Scripture should have stated, And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skin (Gen. III, 21)1 [immediately after the former verse]? Said R. Joshua b. Karhah: It teaches you2 through what sin that wicked creature inveigled them, viz. because he saw them engaged in their natural functions, he [the serpent] conceived a passion for her. 3 R. Jacob of Kefar Hanan said: It is thus written in order not to conclude with the passage on the serpent. 4

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(1) The questioner holds that God made these garments before Adam sinned, and as a natural covering for their nakedness. But in that case it should immediately have followed this verse.

(2) Viz. the interpolation about the serpent.

(3) Hence he sought to encompass Adam’s death through sin.

(4) And the curse he brought. Therefore ‘And the Lord God made... garments’ is reserved for the ending, so as to conclude on the brighter note of God’s care.

Midrash Rabbah - Genesis XIX:1

1. NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE, etc. (III, 1). For in much wisdom is much anger, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow (Eccl. I, 18): Because man increases his wisdom he increases anger against himself, and because he increases his knowledge he adds to his sorrow.1 Solomon said: Because I have multiplied wisdom to myself I multiplied anger against myself, and because I increased my knowledge I increased my sorrows. Did you ever hear anybody say: ‘This ass went out and caught the sun [i.e. ague], or caught a fever’?2 And where is suffering prevalent? With human beings. Rabbi said: A scholar does not require a warning.3 R. Johanan said: It is like the fine linen garments which come from Beth Shean4: if they are even slightly blackened they are ruined; but as for the [coarse] linen garments which come from Arbel,5 what is their value altogether?6 R. Ishmael taught: According to the camel so is its load. 7 It often happens that two people enter a tavern; one orders, ‘Bring me roast meat, white bread, and good wine,’ while the other orders, ‘Bring me bread and beets’: the former eats and suffers afterwards, while the latter eats and does not suffer. Thus human ills weigh heavily upon the one but not upon the other. It was taught in R. Meir’s name: According to the greatness of the serpent so was his downfall: because he was MORE SUBTLE THAN ALL, he was More cursed than all (Gen. III, 14). NOW THE SERPENT WAS MORE SUBTLE THAN ANY

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(2) Animals, though lacking intelligence, are generally free from these ills.

(3) Sanh. 8b. Flagellation for violating a negative precept (v. p. 146, n. 2) is imposed only if the offender was previously warned, but in the case of a scholar this is unnecessary, as he is assumed to know that the act is forbidden. Thus through increasing his knowledge he increases his sorrow, being punished where another would be exempt.

(4) Scythopolis in Galilee.

(5) In Galilee, near Sepphoris.

(6) Very little, and a flaw does not matter. similarly, the greater one is the greater is his punishment, and the same applies to the serpent, ‘the most subtle’ of all animals.

(7) Sot. 13b.

Gen. 148

BEAST OF THE FIELD. R. Hoshaya the Elder said: He stood out distinguished [erect] like a reed, and he had feet.1 R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar said: He was an unbeliever.2 R. Simeon b. Eleazar said: He was like a camel. He deprived the world of much good, for had this not happened, one could have sent his merchandise through him, and he would have gone and returned.3

At face value, the Midrash seems preposterous. “Assassinate Adam and marry Eve? What would the children look like?” you protest. But let me offer a quick word to the wise: the Midrash frequently speaks in the language of allegory, and it intentionally cloaks its message in metaphoric garb. Traditional commentators from Luzzatto to Maharal have rarely taken the statements of the Midrash literally. The sages often convey deep truths through the mysterious, allegorical garb of Midrash.

Animals to humans – “What makes you so special? What makes you so different from us that you stand alone and require one another as mates? We can be you soul-mates, too…”

It is Not Good for Man to Be Alone
Why couldn’t an animal be a helpmate for Man
Snake people
Bereishit 2.23

UNIVERSAL TORAH: TERUMAH

By Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum

Torah Reading: TERUMAH Exodus 25:1-27:19

ABOVE SHALL BE BELOW, BELOW ABOVE

>From this week's parshah of TERUMAH onwards until the end of the book of Exodus -- five parshahs -- the central theme is the Sanctuary built by the Children of Israel in the Wilderness. The Sanctuary is the prototype of the Holy Temple destined to stand eternally in Yerushalayim.

This week's parshah explains the design of the Sanctuary and its vessels, while next week's parshah of TETZAVEH explains the garments that were to be worn by those who were to minister in that Sanctuary -- Aaron and his sons. TETZAVEH also explains the sacrificial rituals that were to inaugurate the Sanctuary and its priests.

After TETZAVEH comes KI TISA, which continues the explanation of the form of the Sanctuary vessels and the sacrifices. When this explanation is complete, KI TISA goes on to narrate the sin of the Golden Calf and how Moses secured atonement for the people through the 13 Attributes of Mercy.

Then come the last two parshahs of Exodus, VAYAKHEL and PEKUDEY, which explain how Bezalel and the other craftsmen actually constructed the Sanctuary and made the priestly clothes. VAYAKHEL and PEKUDAY repeat practically word for word some of the corresponding passages in TERUMAH and TETZAVEH. PEKUDEY then concludes the book of Exodus with the account of the inauguration of the Sanctuary and the priests on the New Moon of the first Nissan after the Exodus. This was exactly one year to the day since Moses received the first
commandments while still in Egypt: the law of the New Moon and the Pesach sacrifice, prototype of Temple sacrifice.

At the close of TETZAVEH and Exodus, we read how G-d's Cloud of Glory dwelled constantly over the Sanctuary. Leviticus opens immediately with the Voice of G-d emanating to Moses from between the mouths of the Cherubs in the Holy of Holies, giving him the detailed laws of the Temple sacrifices.

>From this overview of the remaining five parshahs of Exodus, we see that the subject of the Sanctuary -- central to the Torah and to the whole world -- is introduced in "sandwich" form. TERUMAH and TETZAVEH explain the intended form of the Sanctuary and priestly garments BEFORE they were executed, when they were in the "mind" and will of G-d. In the middle of the "sandwich" is the account of the sin of the Golden Calf and it's atonement through the 13 Attributes of Mercy. Then on the other side of the "sandwich" come VAYAKHEL and PEKUDEY, which tell how the Sanctuary IDEA was brought from POTENTIAL TO ACTUAL through the thirty-nine labors of the craftsmen who made it.

At the very center of this "sandwich" structure is the account of the sin of the Golden Calf -- which changed everything for the Children of Israel. In the heady days of the Exodus and the Giving of the Torah, the Children of Israel were elevated to the greatest heights. Then suddenly, forty days after hearing the Voice of G-d at Sinai, in one single orgy they sank to the lowest depths of degradation. From then on they had to learn the terrible pain of retribution, suffering and contrition. This was a loss of innocence parallel to the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

But God had already prepared the remedy before the illness. Indeed, we might even say that the illness was sent with the very purpose of revealing the great power of the remedy. The remedy for sin is repentance, which saves man from himself and brings him back to the One G-d, bringing him atonement -- AT-ONE-MENT. The penitential "system" of the Torah is contained within the Sanctuary and its sacrificial rituals, which are a teaching to mankind about how man draws close (KaRoV) to G-d through his KORBAN ("sacrifice") -- literally, his "coming close". As the way of repentance for having elevated wealth to the status of a god, man is commanded to take gold, silver, copper and the richest fabrics in order to glorify and magnify the One True G-d. Man is taught how to configure
the materials of this world so that instead of separating him from G-d through idolatrous uses and configurations, they will serve to draw him ever closer, until G-d Himself "dwell[s]" with man.

TERUMAH and TETZAVEH present us the Sanctuary and sacrificial IDEA before we have even learned about sin. The lesson of the Golden Calf in KI TISA is harsh. But it is sweetened, because immediately after Moses secured atonement for Israel through the 13 Attributes of Mercy, the very next day he assembled the people and told them to bring gifts of materials and to get busy making the ACTUAL sanctuary, as told in VAYAKHEL and PEKUDEY. Thus the bitterness of sin in KI TISA is "sandwiched" between the sweetness of TERUMAH & TETZAVEH (the Teshuvah IDEA in all its innocent purity) and VAYAKHEL and PEKUDEY (the ACTUALIZATION of Teshuvah in the Sanctuary in this world.) [This "sandwich" is reminiscent of how in Temple times, Hillel would eat his Pesach sacrifice with the bitter herbs in a "sandwich" with his Matza.]

The Torah never wastes a word or a single letter. It is therefore a great wonder that many of the passages about the Sanctuary, its vessels and the priestly garments that we read this week and next in TERUMAH and TEZTAVEH are, as mentioned, repeated almost word for word in VAYAKHEL and PEKUDEY. The "mirroring" of the explanation of the IDEA in the account of its ACTUALIZATION comes to communicate something that is at the very core of the Temple-Sanctuary idea. The Temple or Sanctuary are a "replica" and "mirror" of the Heavenly Sanctuary, which is in the "mind" or will of G-d. They are a "replica" in which the materials of this world -- metals, wood, fabrics, etc. -- are used to bring a "reflection" of heaven into the minds and consciousness of ordinary people.

In this way, what is "above" -- "in heaven" -- actually dwells and exists in material form in this world "below". And through this, "below" becomes "above". "And they will take for Me an offering. And they will make Me a Sanctuary, and I will dwell WITHIN THEM" (Ex. 25 vv. 2, 8).

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JACOB'S CEDARS
"And you shall make THE boards for the Sanctuary from the wood of cedar trees STANDING upright" (Ex. 26:15). On this, Rashi comments: "It should have simply said, 'you shall make boards' in the same way as was said of everything else. What are 'THE boards'? These were boards from those that were STANDING ready for this. Jacob our father planted cedars in Egypt and before he died, he instructed his sons to take them up with them when they left Egypt, and he said that the Holy One was going to command them to build a Sanctuary in the wilderness" (Rashi ad loc.)

In the Midrash which Rashi here brings about the wood of the standing boards or beams of the Sanctuary -- the "bones" that enable the entire structure to stand up -- he underlines the conceptual connection between the Sanctuary idea and Jacob.

As discussed in UNIVERSAL TORAH commentaries on the parshahs in Genesis dealing with Jacob, it was he who made synthesis, order and structure out of the opposing polar tendencies of the two fathers and teachers in whose tents he sat - - Abraham (CHESSED, kindness and expansiveness) and Isaac (GEVURAH, power and restraint).

Jacob was the house-builder who built the House of Israel. And Jacob was a genius house-builder precisely because he understood domestic life perfectly. In his first appearance in the Torah (at the beginning of TOLDOS, Gen. 25:29) he is cooking lentil soup -- using the round lentils as a hint to his father Isaac (who was in mourning for the loss of Abraham, see Rashi) that life and death go in cycles. Jacob's grip on the heel of Esau indicates that Jacob possessed the power to take the simple things of this world (ASIYAH, Esau) and transform them into communicators of G-dliness.

Thus the components of the Sanctuary-Temple are the same as those of a home. It exists within a defined space, a court-yard, where curtains of modesty separate between what is outside (profane) and what is inside (holy).

The Sanctuary contains different areas. Its very heart is the hearth, the "kitchen". This is where the food is prepared (slaughter of animals) and cooked (on the "oven", the Altar). Within the "domestic quarters" of the House itself, there is a secluded, intimate living area with a lamp (the Menorah) and a table (the Show-
bread Table), and a pleasant aroma (from the Incense Altar). Most secluded and intimate of all is the "bedroom", to which no-one except the most trusted has access. This is the Holy of Holies, where the "faithful of His house" may come "face to face" with the King in the height of prophecy.

The Sanctuary and Temple are replete with messages to us about how we must try to build our private homes and structure the lives we lead in ways that "reflect" G-dliness and enable G-d to dwell with us here in this world. This is how we lift up and elevate this world.

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TERUMAH - LIFTING UP

The sin of the Golden Calf pulled the Children of Israel down to the depths of degradation. But the remedy existed already from before: TERUMAH -- the elevation of mundane objects and materials, gold, silver, wood, fabrics -- through the service of G-d in "homely" ways.

The great beauty of the way of repentance that G-d has provided is that it enables man to repent with honor. Despite having sinned, man is invited to become a contributor. He is asked to give a TERUMAH -- to take the gold and silver that he has, the very thing with which sinned, and "contribute" and "elevate" it so that now it too has its proper place in what becomes a Sanctuary. Then the proper order is restored, and everything sings out the glory of G-d.

One of the ways we "contribute" is through the words of our daily prayers and blessings. For in essence, the Sanctuary is a House of Prayer. So too our homes should be filled with our blessings and thanks for all the good things of life that we enjoy and with our prayers for all of our needs.

King David (who prepared the way for the Temple) instituted that One Hundred Blessings should be recited daily (Rambam, Laws of Prayer 7:14). These hundred blessings (made up of the morning blessings, the thrice repeated Shmonah Esray, the blessings before and after two daily meals, etc.) correspond to the hundred ADNEY KESEF, "sockets of silver" (Ex. 26:19; Shaarey Orah). These ADNEY KESEF were the solid bases in which the "standing" boards that made up the Sanctuary
walls were planted. These "sockets" of solid silver are what kept the boards upright. This silver came from the 100 KIKAR of silver contributed by the Children of Israel in response to the command with which our parshah of TERUMAH begins: "Let them take an offering and silver" (Ex. 25:3 and Rashi ad loc.; Ex. 38:26-7).

KESEF, "silver", is related to the word for "longing" -- as in KISUFin. Thus 100 ADNEY KESEF alludes to the hundred times we bless the name of G-d (A-D-N-Y), our Lord, with longing and yearning for His holiness to dwell with us! This small "contribution" on our part is what keeps the entire Sanctuary standing!

MESHEHICHNAS ADAR, MARBIN BESIMCHA!!! "When Adar arrives, we maximize SIMCHA!!"

Shabbat Shalom UMevorach

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Chapter Six

Beauty and the Beast

Even is G-d said not to eat from any of the trees of the Garden. . . .

Even if G-d said don’t eat, so what? Do it anyway!

Where’s the temptation?

Rabbi Sampson Raphael Hirsch – understanding the snakes words is a matter of emphasis.

“What if we read it differently, with the emphasis on the word ‘said?’”
Even if G-d said don’t eat, so what?

Read this way, the snake isn’t really challenging the authority of G-d, per se. His argument is much more limited, he’s just saying that G-d’s spoken words are not the things you should pay attention to. To paraphrase Hirsch, the snake would be saying something like the following:

G-d may have said to avoid the tree, but the question is: ‘Do you want to eat from the tree? Do you desire it? And let’s say you do desire the tree. Where do you think those desires came from? Who put them inside you? Wasn’t G-d the one who put them inside you? Certainly He did . . . . He is your Maker.

Snake pointing to a great and terrible contradiction - G-d’s voice instructs you not to eat of the tree.

Another voice of G-d – His voice within you; you passions your desires – beckons you indeed to eat of the tree.

Which voice should you listen to? Which divine voice is more primary?

“I don’t know about you,,: the snake says, “but, if I were in your shoes, here’s how I would see it. Even if G-d said don’t eat of the trees, so what? It’s not the voice that speaks to you in words that’s primary. It’s the voice inside you that’s primary!”

**The Naked Snake**

Malicious of even devious. Very innocent, very straightforward – very naked. He’s telling you what it’s like to be a snake.

How does Hashem make His will known to animals? Passions, desires, and instincts. This is the temptation of the snake.

What separates us from animals? How does Hashem speak to you? Which is the primary voice of G-d?

What the snake is really doing, then, is forcing Adam and Eve to confront what it means for them to be human beings and not beasts.
The snake really is “arom” – straightforward, but cunning, deceptive.

**Beauty and the Beast**

Bereishit 3.6

*Veneychmad ha’etz lehaskil – desireable to contemplate*

Good to eat/ delight to the eyes/ desirable to contemplate all – related somehow.

Aesthetically – at the level of desire

**You Are What You Eat**

You shall truly be godly?

**Chapter Seven**

**A World of Broccoli and Pizza**

The Tree of Knowledge

*Etz HaDa’at Tov Vara*

What Is Real Knowledge Made Of?

*V’ha’adam yada et chavah ishto*

And the man knew his wife – Bereishit 4.1

The word da’at doubles as a synonym for sexual intimacy.

“Knowledge” and “sexual union” significant.

Core understanding of Da’at.

What is the “core” understanding?

When a man “knows” his wife, what is he really seeking?
After Knowledge – Knowledge of the mysterious, alluring feminine that is so different from him, but so much a “missing part’ of him at the same time. To be sure, it is not intellectual knowledge that he seeks. He is seeking raw, first-hand knowledge. He is seeking to experience the feminine in a direct, unfiltered way.

Logic or analysis – Real knowledge

Da’at – you know by experience.

Not a better intellectual knowledge.

“Good and Evil” tav and ra

Right and Wrong from the Inside Out

Maimonides suggested that Adam and Eve were already aware of right and wrong, in some fashion, before eating from the tree. The Tree did not give them moral awareness where they had none before. Rather, it transformed this awareness from one kind into another. Before eating from the tree, they would not have called virtuous moral choice “good” and vile choices “evil.” They would have had a different way of thinking about such things and would have used different words to describe them.

True/False

True – objective reality, it’s real, whether I like it or not. If morality is a matter of true and false, this means that making moral choices involves discerning something objective. It involves figuring out what the right thing to do is, what my Maker expects of me – and then trying to align my behavior with that “truth,” whether I like it or not.

Good – What else does “good” mean besides “that which is ethically correct? Its other meaning is: “that which is pleasing.” That it is desirable.

A shift between a world in which I could stand outside my desire to look at choices objectively to a world in which I was confined to see things through desire’s eyes.
Pre-Tree
Before desire did not intrude on the terrain of the intellect. My own desires did not cloud that vision.

Post-Tree
The clarity is lost. My desire intrudes and becomes an inescapable part of the moral calculus.

Tree of Knowledge a tree of desire.
Before desire was something outside of my sense of self, something I possessed, now I could delude myself into thinking that desire was something I am.

Out of equilibrium.
Desire became a center of gravity, a lens to view things.
The tendency to rationalize.
Blur the distinction between virtue and desire

**A World of Broccoli and Pizza**
An arrow that hits its mark – flying “true.”
*Chet* – sin “having shot at a target and missed.”

Shoftim 20.16
When moral decisions are choices between truth and falsehood, it follows that I am trying to “hit a target” when I make these decisions.

“Missing the mark” – failing to align myself with the reality called the Will of my Creator.


Now it is not only about what Hashem wants, but equally or more, What I want.
In the brave new world of good and evil, what I think is right and worthwhile is not necessarily what really is right and worthwhile. That which is merely “good” – desirable to me – can easily masquerade self-righteously as the “true.”

I may think that “X” is what G-d wants – but perhaps it’s really just what I want.

**Are All Moral Dilemmas Created Equal?**

Column A Column B

“Is it ok to take a dying man off a respirator?”

“My elderly mother needs help organizing her house before she moves, but my kid needs me to help him prepare for finals. With whom do I spend the evening?”

“Should Billy lie to the teacher to protect his friend, Bobby, when the teacher asks him whether Bobby was cheating on his test?”

It’s a dark and rainy night in Manhattan. You throw your trusty Chevy Suburban into reverse and begin to back out of your parking spot, when you hear a sickening thud. You get out of the car to behold, right behind you, a shiny black Lexus convertible – with a badly dented front end. You look around. The street is entirely dark, not a soul to be seen. Do you leave a note or not?

The dilemmas do divide naturally into two groups.

Three are real

One is fundamentally illusory.

This one exists only in the mixed-up world of “good and evil.” In the world of “true and false,” it simply evaporates.

Now, which is which?

**Chapter Eight**

**A Dark and Rainy Night in Manhattan**

An illusory dilemma – the dark and rainy night in Manhattan
First three share a certain, basic quality - Choices between competing ideals.

Boxer

Each worthy or noble in its own light. – Competition

Dark and Rainy night

Honesty – counter argument. There is none.

One boxer --- Not so fast.

**A Boxer Named Desire**

Boxer One – Honesty

Boxer Two – What would you rather do?

Honesty vs. The Fact that You Don’t Want to Leave the Note

Rationalize, his fault for parking so close. His insurance will pay for it. That’s what uninsured motorist insurance is for, isn’t it.

Positively virtuous to walk away.

Robin Hood vs. the Bog Insurance Corporations

Welcome to the world of Good and Evil

The Mind-Games of Desire

The sages state that after a person die, the Heavenly Court allows him to view his Evil inclination – his *yetzer hara*. The Sages go on to say that if the person was righteous in his lifetime, his Evil Inclination appears to him as a mountain, but if he was wicked, it appears to him as a lowly hill. In either case, the person is astonished. The first person is amazed that he managed to surmount the mountain, while the latter is astonished that such a measly hill deterred him.

Desire looking backwards

Evil can get dressed up in pretty clothes, delicious foods, entertainment
Truly virtuous vz. Seductive

The Beginning of Desire

Which voice do I listen to, the desire within me, or the voice that dcommands me with words?

Passion does come from G-d.

Experiencing it is what makes us human.

What would we be without passion or desire?

Chapter Nine

The I of the Beholder

Eve changes what G-d actually commanded.

Outright inaccuracies, other shift emphasis.

Center of the garden

A big list

Why?

G-d’s Original Command

Bereishit 2.10

Bereishit 2.16-17

Eve’s Paraphrase of that Command

Bereishit 3.3-4

- Location of the Forbidden Tree
- Is Touching Against the Rules?
- Fruit vs. Tree
- Is Death a Certainty?
• When is Death a Reality?
• “All” the Trees or Not?

Is There a Pattern Here?
Eve’s changes do add up to something.
How things looked to her. How she wanted to see them.
This is the problem with us.
Read the word of G-d with each word like an individual with a contract, like a lawyer.

Recasting G-d’s commands in a different light.

The unseen mechanics by which desire can confound our perception of the way things really are.

When we want something what do we tell ourselves?

• We look at the reality in front of us, and we proceed to delude ourselves by exaggerating certain aspects of it and minimizing others.

• Extent of the Restriction – even touching the tree. It is easier to rationalize a wrong if we exaggerate how difficult it is to abide by the rules.

• I might minimize the significance of what I can have. The mind-games of desire shift the emphasis.

• Trivialize the consequences of transgressing.

• I might exaggerate the significance of the thing I can’t have.

A case study of the dynamics of desire
The Remaining Puzzle Pieces
How did eating from the tree – even the struggle over whether to eat from it – changed Adam and Eve? How has it changed us?

- Adam and Eve realize that they are naked and hide from G-d.
- G-d asks Adam where he is.
- Adam answers that he is hiding, for he is afraid because he is naked.
- After dismissing Adam and Eve’s excuses (she told me to do it; the snake told me to do it), the Almighty imposes various punishments on them, including death, exile, difficulty farming, and pain in childbirth.
- **Adam and Eve realize that they are naked and hide from G-d.** Distorted Reality.
- **G-d asks Adam where he is.** Why is G-d asking a question when He already knows the answer?
- **Adam answers that he is hiding, for he is afraid because he is naked.** Why fear?
- **The Almighty imposes various punishments on Adam and Eve.** Out of the grab bag.

Where are you?
Adam’s intense focus upon and fear of nakedness.
Almighty’s seemingly random imposition of punishments.

The aftershocks of eating from the tree.

Chapter Ten
Friedrich Nietzsche and the Disc Jockey

A disc jockey was offering to help love-stricken callers sort out their romantic troubles. A religious fellow who was explaining why he had chosen to remain sexually abstinent until he was married. Disc jockey advanced a religious argument. Are you a normal fellow? Do you have any desires?
Why do you think the L-rd placed those desires in you if He didn’t want you to act upon them? The Snake.

G-d’s commands, whatever they might be, are not primary. The real voice of the Divine whispers to you from the inside, though the desire and passion that He has instilled in your very being.

Fredrich Nietzsche – Beyond Good and Evil
Experience passion. If one fails to engage it, one has failed the most basic test of humanity.

Passion is necessary. To be human we must have passion.

It is for this reason, perhaps, that G-d is known as the ultimate “knower of Good and Evil.” Morality, from G-d’s perspective, really is a matter of will and desire. It is G-d’s will that we try to align ourselves with. From our perspective that will is external to us – hence, we can use the terms “true” and “false” to characterize it. But from G-d’s own perspective, that will is internal. The terms “Good and Evil,” which denote categories of desire, are entirely accurate.

As Shiliach.
Ani haDerech, V’haEmet, V’haChai.

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

**Torah and the Spice of Life**
The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Israel: “My son, I have created the Evil Inclination; and I have created the Torah, its antidote, If you involve yourself in the Torah, you will not be delivered into its hands. . . (Tractate Kiddushin 30b)

*Tavlìn* for the Evil Inclination. Antidote or salve

Medicine counter/Spice rack
Tavlin means spice.

Spice for the Evil Inclination.

You cannot live on spice.

What exactly is the Evil Inclination?

Yetzer Hara – the desire to create, the drive to create in evil form. Yetzer Hara is creativity gone awry.

Without energy you are dead.

Spice gives direction to the meat.

The Torah gives direction to our most basic, most powerful drives.

The Torah is not designed to extinguish passion, but to complement it, give direction.

The Torah’s commands are designed to direct passion toward productive ends, toward worthwhile, even holy endeavors,

**The Advent of Imbalance**

Before the Tree we were in sync with Hashem

After the Tree – we changed.

**A Newfound Fear**

The Awareness of the Voice of G-d
Fear

Bereishit 3.10

Adam knew he was naked before the tree. After the tree he was afraid of it.

The Price of Power

Consequences

Exile

Chapter Eleven
History’s First Question:
Where Are You?

Eiphoh
Ayeh

Eiphoh
Beresheith 37.16 – Hagidah na li eiphoh hem ro’im? Tell me, please where are they shepherding?

Ruth 19.2 - Eiphoh likatit hayom? “Where did you gather grain today?”

I Samuel 19.22 – Eiphoh Shmuel ve’David? – “Where are Samuel and David?”

Ayeh
Iyov 14.10 – Vayigva adam ve’ayo? “A man dies and then where is he?”

Bereishit 22.7 – Hineh ha’esh ....V’ayeh haseh l’olah? “Here’s the fire, but where is the lamb for the offering?”
Psalms 115.2 - Ayeh na Eloheichem – “Where are their gods?”

Lamentations 2.12 - Le’imotam yomru ayeh dagan veyayn “To their mothers, [starving children] will say: where are grain and wine?

Eiphoh is a straightforward request for location.

Ayeh – the questioner is not really interested in finding the location of the thing he is asking about. Wonder that the thing is not here, where one would have expected it to be.

Hashem was asking Adam where have you gone? Why are you not here?

“Where are you? Yesterday, you were with [me and] my da’at. And now, you are with the da’at of the snake.” Midrash Rabbah on Bereishit 19.9

Sadder, Mournful word

It happens that ayekah is spelled with precisely the same Hebrew letters (aleph, yod, kaf, hei) as ‘eichah, the cardinal word for “lament.” Eichah….Look how she sits in solitude!” (Lamentations 1.1), Jeremiah cries, looking upon a destroyed Jerusalem, pining for the bustling crowds who are no longer there, who have been exiled to Babylonia, Adam and Eve, too, have been exiled. And perhaps like Jeremiah’s “Eichah!” G-d’s outcry, “Ayekah?” is less a question than a lament – a lament at the gulf that now exists between human and Creator.

I brought Adam into the Garden of Eden and commanded him.
He transgressed My commands.
I decreed exile upon him.
And [upon his departure], I lamented “‘eichah/ayekah’” [“where have you gone...”].
And so it was with his children.
I brought them into the Land of Israel and commanded them.
They transgressed My commands.
I decreed exile upon them.
And [upon their departure], I [once again] lamented “‘eichah/ayekah” [“where have you gone...”]
Midrash Rabbah on Bereishit 19.9

Twin Gifts
- The Almighty fashions clothes from animal skins for Adam and Eve to replace the more primitive coverings they had made out of leaves.
- After sending Adam and Eve out of the Garden, “lest they eat from the Tree of Life,” G-d stations angels, keruvim with flaming swords, at the entrance to Eden to guard the way back to the Tree of Life.

Keruvim – twice in Torah

Aron Kodesh – Tablets of Law (Luchot) – Tablets of Witness

Proverbs 3:1 My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands;
  2 For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you.
  3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart,
  4 And so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man.
  5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;
  6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.
  7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil.
  8 It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.
  9 Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase;
  10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.
  11 My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction;
  12 For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.
13 Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold.
14 She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.
15 Length of days is in her right hand, In her left hand riches and honor.
16 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace.
17 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her.

The Torah may be seen as a replacement Tree of Life. Why was Replacement necessary?

More passionate, more desirous, more insistently creative.

To wield wisely the fearsome power of creation. To control this power fully, not to be controlled by it.

A time to create, a time to desist from creating.

The Tree of Life was designed to help people cope with a new world.

**Adam’s Clothes and Moses’s Grave**

The Sages of the Midrash (*Tanchuma, Vayishlach #10*) tell is that the Torah begins with an act of kindness and it ends with an act of kindness. The kindness it begins with is G-d’s providing clothing for Adam and Eve. The kindness it ends with, the Rabbis write, is G-d’s act of burying Moses just after je died atop Mt. Nebo, having gazed at the Promised Land but never having set foot there.

Transition from one world to another.

When our children disappoint us, when they make choices we don’t approve of; when they exchange the world we have carefully crafted for them for a dubious
world of their own making - perhaps we too, after all consequences have been meted out, after all the words have been said, after all the anguish has been absorbed – perhaps we, too, can provide them with clothes for the journey.

Part Two

The World’s First Murder:
A closer Look at Cain and Abel

Introduction
From Eden to Murder

Linked
Read Side by Side

Key Phrases, ideas, events

Esther

The Aftermath

Chapter One
So Whose Picture Do You Like Better: Mine or Debbie’s

Cain and Abel, children of Adam and Eve, each bring offings to the L-rd. The Almighty expresses pleasure with the offering brought by Abel, but not with the one brought by his older brother Cain. Cain becomes very upset. Shortly thereafter, he kills his brother, Abel.
How Hashem deals with Cain and Abel.

Bereishit 4.4

The Children’s pictures

Hashem accepts Abel’s offering and rejects Cain’s.

**Bobbie and Debbie, Redux**

Bereishit 4.6-7

I begin by saying that I felt the questions I am asking here are not really legitimate. It is my view that the analogy to Bobby and Debbie is faulty and misleading. If you reread the story of Cain and Abel carefully, I think you should be able to spot the flaw’ you should be able to see why Bobby and Debbie’s sorry circumstance actually has little to do with the story of Cain and Abel

**Chapter Two**

**The Enigmatic Genius of Cain**

**Anthropomorphisms**

When the mother tells her kids whose painting she likes better, what exactly is she doing wrong?

**Why My Kids Hate Playing by the Rules of “Boggle”**

Pits two siblings against each other in a terrible battle for the love and approval of their Creator.

What is wrong is to judge one child using the other as a benchmark.
Unfair sense of completion.
Boggle

Each player looks at a grid of letters and has sixty seconds to identify a list of words that emerge from contiguous letters. There is a rule in Boggle that all my kids universally hate. The rule is tat if all the players around the table have discovered the same word, no one gets any credit for it. Every player is just supposed to strike those words from their list, they simply don’t count.

What you found, what you discovered, doesn’t count, if your brother Bobby found it too.

Was Cain Compared to Abel – or to Himself?

Why did G-d reject the offering brought by Cain?

Bereishit 4.3-5

Abel took of the first and best of his flock.
Cain offered some of his crop.

We do not know which is better. That’s not the point.

Compared not to each other, but to himself.

Runner

What he did is compared to what he could have done.

Bobby and Debbie

The Enigmatic Genius of Cain

The story is not about Abel.
Cain is the originator of bringing offerings.

Did Hashem need the offerings?

**A Question of Placement**

Is there any meaning in the fact that the Cain and Abel story appears where it does?

Forbidden Fruit – Banishment from the Garden?

**Chapter Three**

**Echoes of Eden**

Certain key phrases, ideas, or events appear in one story, then reappear unexpectedly in the next one.

**A “Missing Persons” Alert**

Bereishit 4.9
Bereishit 3.9

Ayeh – Where is he?

Eiphoh – Generic request for location.

Ayeh – why it is not here?

Where has Abel gone? What happened to him?

**Hide and Seek**

Bereishit 3.10
Bereishit 4.13-14
Adam hid in the past tense.  
Cain hides in the future tense.

No Place Like Home

Adam – Exile – home elsewhere  
Cain – a wanderer – Bereishit 4.12 – can’t find a home anywhere.

To Be Cursed from the Ground

Bereishit 4.11-12  
Bereishit 3.17-19

A Growing Intensity

- Both Adam and Cain hear the Divine question: “Ayeh?”
- Both Adam and Cain express fear and hide from G-d.
- Both Adam and Cain suffer Exile.
- Both Adam and Cain are condemned to experience difficulty farming.

- “Ayeh.” In the Garden of Eden, G-d seeks the whereabouts of a temporarily missing person (Adam). In the story of Cain and Abel, the person He seeks (Abel) is gone for good.

- Hiding. In the immediate aftermath of sin, Adam hides from G-d momentarily. Cain on the other hand, intuits that he will spend his life hiding from G-d; that he will do so perpetually in the indefinite future.

- Difficulty Farming. Adam will have to wrest bread out of the ground “by the sweat of his brow.” He will have to work to till the land; he will have to fight weeds and thorns – but at the end of the day, he will have his bread. Cain, on the other hand, is told that even if he works the land with mighty
toil, “it will not continue to give its strength to you. “Cain will experience a fundamental loss of agricultural potential. The land simply won’t produce anymore what it once did.

- **Exile.** Before eating from the tree, Adam and Eve called Paradise their home, Now, they will have to leave these idyllic environs to build a new home elsewhere. Cain, too, suffers exile, but of a different magnitude altogether: No matter where he seeks to build his home, the land will not graciously offer him shelter. Not only must he leave home, but he will never be able to call any place his home.

Intensifies
The pairs in the scripture

**A Working Hypothesis**

A progression.

Successive steps of a ladder.

Somehow, the questions Cain faces – what kind of offering to bring to G-d, whether to invite Abel for a menacing stroll in the field – are born of Adam’s decision to eat the Forbidden Fruit.

**Chapter Four**
**Blood on the Ground**

Bereishit 4.11-12

The earth has “opened its mouth to accept” Abel’s blood.

**A Focus on the Ground**
The earth is the essential core of Cain’s punishment.

Cursed from the land
When he works the land, the land will no longer give its strength to him;
A wanderer throughout the land.

Have you cast me away from the face of the earth...

Cain’s Name and His Profession

Bereishit 4.1
Kayin – Kanah – Acquire.

Gone with the Wind

Why Real Estate Is So Real

Abel – Hevel – Breath – the steam that escapes one’s mouth on a cold winter’s day.

Kohelet 1.1
It all ends with death.

Kohelet 1.4

Hevel – Abel/breath – dies.

Triangular Consequence

Cain’s Consequences form a kind of triangle. The top of the triangle states a principle, and the two “side” express how the principle plays out.

Top of the Triangle – Cursed from the land.
One side – a wanderer
Other side – experiences difficulty farming.

First – the ground gives us a place to be
Second- the ground nourishes us.

The land of Nod – the land of Wandering

Present tense

Always building – never accomplishing

A Divorce from the Earth

Gerashati – divorce

Cain the Farmer
Cain the Acquirer

Why would Cain, a man bold enough to bring the first recorded offering to G-d in the history of mankind, choose to give merely average produce as his gift?

Why is the story of Cain so eerily reminiscent of the story of Eden?

Chapter Five
Living the Dream of Eve

Why would Cain, The first person ever recorded to present an offering to G-d, choose to bring merely average produce in that offering?

A farmer, a worker of the land.

Cain and Eve
Bereishit 4.1

“….Vateled et kayin, vatomar: ‘kanati ish et HaShem.’”

Kayin is actually an anagram formed from the first three letters of kanati. Kuf, Nun, Yod sis transposed to become Kuf, Yod, Nun.

The Wonder of it All

“I have acquired a man with G-d.”

She was herself a partner in a new bold, visceral act of creation.

The womb

In her own creativity, she experiences the nearness of the Creator of All.

Moshe and the Tomato Plant

To share in creation.

Living the Dream of Eve

Instead of exclaiming, as we might have expected, that she has “created’ [Hebrew: barati] a little man with G-d, or that she has “formed” [yatzarti] a little man with G-d, she says something else entirely. She says kaniti...that she has acquired a man with G-d. Kayin is named for her word “kaniti”, I have acquired.

Chapter Six
What Kind of “With”?

If you were a Hebrew speaker, and you wanted to say that you had done something “with” someone else, how would you say it? Which Hebrew word
would you choose for “with”? The word you would immediately, instinctively reach for would be “im”.

Eve uses the word “et”. “Et” can mean “with”, but only occasionally.

**From Creator to Owner**

Acquiring not creating.

The act of creating sets up a choice.

Why would a creator choose to make this journey to ownership?

**When It’s Not About Money Anymore**

Economic

*Chava*, is short for *em kol chai*, “Mother of all life”.

**From *im* to *Et**

**Getting at *Et***

It is a grammatical utility tool unique to the Hebrew language. It provides a bridge, a link, between a verb and a direct object.

I hit the ball.

*Hikeiti “et” hakadur* – or “I hit ‘et’ the ball”.

Co-Subject of Tool?

English – with two meanings.
To do something with someone.
To do something with a tool.

- One kind of “with” denotes full companionship; the other denotes subservience.
- One kind of “with” indicates an equal partnership; the other, an unequal partnership.
- One kind of “with” is denoted by “im”, the other by “et.”

The “im” type of “with” points to a co-subject – another author, for example, who along with me, plans, plots, and writes the chapter. The “et” kind of “with”, though, doesn’t point to another subject at all. It points to an object – a tool that I make use of to achieve my goal.

Eve perceives herself a partner with the Almighty in the sacred and miraculous act of creation. The fruit of this partnership matters to her, means everything to her; she has acquired, not merely created, and the product of this creativity expresses the essence of who she is. And yet this is not a partnership of equals. One partner is subject; the other is object. One is innovator; the other, a tool.

But which partner is which?