

# BERESHIT



As it is written, ומעץ הדעת טוב ורע לא תאכל ממנו כי ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות, *Ume'etz ha-da'at tov va'rah lo tochal mimenu ki beyom achalcha mimenu mot tamut*, "But of the tree of knowing the good with the evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"<sup>1</sup>.

The "good with the evil" really means the good "through" the evil. The idea that the good can come from an act of evil is truly a false knowledge, responsible for all crimes and sins of humanity since its beginning. Criminals and transgressors of YKVK's spiritual law have the false idea that they can indeed obtain the good through evil. However, evil is completely absent of blessings and does not have the intrinsic power to offer anything of good to man. The idea that the person can obtain the good through evil is a pernicious and malignant belief – an illusion. This is evil's great lure, because it masks its essence through the distortion that there is no evil at all. Hence, the fallacy that, as good comes from good, the same good can come from evil. This is the same as saying that  $1 + 1 = 2$  and at the same time that,  $1 - 1 = 2$ . In other words, any kind of human action – be it in whichever extreme of the moral continuum of good and evil – always has the same "positive balance". Thus, the *Nachash/Serpent* promises *Chava*<sup>2</sup> that upon eating from the *Etz Ha-Da'at Tov Va-Rah*, they will "be great". We can find a *remez/hint* of this from the

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<sup>1</sup> *Bereshit* 2:17.

<sup>2</sup> In *Bereshit* 3:5. In this *pasuk*, the *Nachash* says to *Chava*, "For G-d knows that in the day you eat of it, then your eyes shall be opened, 'and you shall be as gods' [והייתם כאלקים] *Vihyitem k'Elokim*, knowing good and evil". This promise carries a powerful secret code, as we see that its ordinal *gematria* is 118, plus the 12 letters from the 2 words, we then have the numerical value of 130. In one level, this number is significant because it is the *gematria* of the word קל *kal*, "light" as in עליות קלות דעתן ונשים, "Since the minds of women are easily swayed" (*Talmud, Kiddushin* 80b), thus foreshadowing *Chava's* fall into the deception due to her fickle mind. On another deeper level, 130 is also the numerical value of the regressive iteration (the *achoraiyim/back*) of the *Shem MaH* (45-letter Name, the Divine *Shem Havaya* spelled with the *Vav*). Moreover, the withdrawal of the Divine beneficence channeled through one of G-d's Names is indicated by the regressive iteration of that Name. Although the *Nachash's* "promise" is that they would "be as gods", it resulted in the diminishing of the Divine life force originally bestowed upon the first couple, hence their subsequent "fallen state" and need for *tikkunim/rectifications*. In addition, the *Shem MaH* is the Divine Name used to rectify reality (a subject beyond the scope of this *shiur*). Clearly, 130 also foreshadows the number of years *Adam* would separate from his wife *Chava* (see *Talmud, Erwin* 18a), and the ill consequences of that, which only augmented the need for *tikkunim*.

*mispar katan* (reduced *gematria*) of דעת טוב ורע *da'at tov va-rah*, “knowing the good with the evil” being 47, which is the same *gematria* of יגדל *yigdal*, “be great”. Truly, this “tree” had (and continues to) exert a powerful attraction to man. This is because, “In the *sitra achra* [the ‘other side’ or evil proper], there is an admixture or outer ring of light, which surrounds the darkness, as it, is written: ‘A whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud... and a brightness was about it’<sup>3</sup>”<sup>4</sup>. And we find a hint of this attractive “light of darkness” in the *reshei tavot* of דעת טוב ורע (דטו), which has *gematria atbash* of 230 – the same numerical value of אור זיו *ohr ziv*, “brilliant light”.

Now, the aforementioned lure of evil is responsible for the prevailing false ideology in the secular world that, “real” pleasure exists only through transgression of biblical law. Moreover, such ideology – a pillar of the secular mindset – continues its advances by merciless promulgating this distorted concept of pleasure to the world, embodied in people seeking to breach all biblical moral fences, which foster harmony and dignity in society. The moral breach advances through a fundamentalist attitude of a deceitful anti-G’d rhetoric about “modernity”. Its proponents claim an imperative: to intellectually privilege and legally fight for all fanciful human wants and desires, while displaying a derisive disdain towards the individuals seeking lives of natural balance between the physical and the spiritual. As such, any individual that subscribes to biblical evil practices, defined as all oppositions to the natural laws of *YKVK*, in essence chooses at will to mix good and evil, and calling it “good to oneself”. This is so regardless if such practices actually bring evil to the individual or at times, to others. Such fallen existential stance of a “moral toxicology”, where the good is what is good for the one, and the evil is that which is evil for the one, is not unlike our understanding of physical allergies: for what does not provoke an allergic reaction in one’s being is considered good, and if the contrary, it is then evil. This is the distorted moral compass of the majority in the secular world.

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<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 1:4.

<sup>4</sup> *Zohar* 69a, *Yitro*. The fact that both good and evil are surrounded by light, albeit good has light “within”, creates for the very possibility of *Bechirah Chofshit* (“Free Will”). If the person focuses only on the surrounding light, evil seems as good. After all, both are lights and can be confused one for another (although evil’s light is of a “darker hue”). If, however, the person learns to see through this darker light, then the void of darkness is revealed. It is due to the focus on the exclusive external aspect of something, its “husk” (*klipah*), that often one is morally misled. *Chava* did just that. By merely “looking” at the tree, which made her desire it as the good regardless of other considerations, she was “tricked”. Her understanding of the situation was superficial.

Continuing, to transgress the laws of YKVK means to eat allegorically from the *Etz Ha-Da'at*, that is, the *Torah* unsanctioned act of mixing (and thus tasting<sup>5</sup>) the flavors of good and evil. This very act subjectifies one's perception of these two moral opposites, ultimately confusing them. Now, the metaphor of the "tree" implies that, as with a physical tree, it also produces "fruits". However, these from the *Etz Ha-Da'at*, which have a luring "sweet aroma and shiny appearance", are poisonous. Hence the warning: ביום אכלך ממנו מות תמות "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die". We see that confusing good and evil leads to death. Whether or not this death is physical or spiritual is irrelevant, for in any case, "He who descends from his level is called 'dying'"<sup>6</sup>. Hence, any fall of consciousness is a death. Moreover, as a further *remez* of this warning regarding the nature of the *Etz Ha-Da'at*, the ordinal *gematria* of this expression is 216, the same value for the absolute *gematria* of the word *Gevurah* – the Divine attribute of severity and justice<sup>7</sup> – the judgmentally that guards the "Garden" from intrusion by forces antithetical to G'd consciousness. This is a *sod/secret* of the *pasuk*, כי אם-עונתיכם היו מבדלים בינכם לבין אלקיכם "But [only] your iniquities have separated between you and your G-d"<sup>8</sup>. As such, transgression of YKVK's natural law – the error of eating the fruit from the *Etz Ha-Da'at* – means forfeiting the right to enter and dwell in His Garden, to be close to Him; וחטאותיכם הסתירו פנים מכם משמוע "And your sins have caused Him to hide His face from you that He not hear"<sup>9</sup>, thus losing His *hasghacha/supervision*.

In essence, the original sin (and every time it is repeated) caused the distancing from a higher level of consciousness, the G'd orientation, resulting in a lower level, self-orientation of the "inflated" ego. This is the reverse of the cosmic purpose of man: to be an agent of Divinity in the world. This error occurred when "*Chava* squeezed grapes and gave him the juice to drink together with its dregs"<sup>10</sup>, and the *Ari"zal* explains that, "The

<sup>5</sup> See *Bereshit Rabbah* 19:5.

<sup>6</sup> *Zohar Naso, Idra Raba*.

<sup>7</sup> This warning came from YKVK, so it is ultimately a gesture of *chesed*, "benevolence". The *mispar katan* of this *pasuk* is 72, the same numerical value of the word *chesed*. In fact, the *Ari"zal* explains that "The [states of] *chesed* constitute the main aspect of the *Etz Ha-Da'at*, from which the forces of evil derive sustenance" (*Sefer HaLikutim, Tazria*).

<sup>8</sup> *Isaiah* 59:2. The *gematria atbash* of the *sofei tavot* is 169, the same numerical value as the expression ויפגע *Vayifga*, "And he lighted upon" or "to fall/descend". Man degrades himself with sin, and then falls from his higher stature.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid. Isaiah*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid. Bereshit Rabbah*.

juice and its dregs were the fruit of the *Etz Ha-Da'at Tov Va-Rah*<sup>11</sup>. The dregs, the “evil” knowledge, represent the tainted reality of the ego, which “poisoned” the originally pure experience, the “good” knowledge, making it ego-bound. Hence, the *Etz Ha-Da'at* symbolizes the imminent experience of mixture of selflessness and self-gratification. The “eating” then provokes the withdrawal of the direct, pure, and altruistic Divine light, darkening it, so to speak. By choosing the pure and egoless experience of the עץ חיים *Etz Ha-Chayim*/Tree of Life, man makes reality more “transparent” (less tainted by evil/ego), thus revealing more of its innate Divinity and meriting the blessings. In fact, the *gematria* absolute of ברכה *brachah* plus the *kollel* is 228, the same as for *Etz Ha-Chayim*.

Finally, even though the thrill and excitement of sin creates an illusion of self-fulfillment, the “end experience” is debasing and ultimately, as in the original sin, making *Adam* and *Chava* feel ashamed for their wrong choice. A hint to that, the *gematria atbash* of the *sofei tavot* of הדעת טוב ורע (תבע), to wit, at the “end of things” (a metaphor for a *sofei tavot*), is *gematria* 308, the same as for בוש *boosh*, “ashamed”<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> *Sefer HaLikutum, Acharei Mot.*

<sup>12</sup> *Adam* and *Chava* were ashamed from realizing their nakedness. *Rashi* on *Bereshit* 3:11 says, מה בשת יש בעומד *Mah boshet yesh be-omed arom*, "What shame there is in standing naked?".