

Zera Shimshon

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Chapter I: Bereisheet (Gen. 1:1-6:8)

Essay 22. Punishment for Eve and the serpent

"אֵל-הָאִשָּׁה אָמַר הַרְבֵּה אֲרֵבָה עֲצָבוֹנָהּ" וכו'. קִשָּׁה לָמָּה הוֹסִיף לָהּ הַקָּב"ה עוֹנֵשׁ חוּץ מִהַסְדֵּר שֶׁל מִדָּה כְּנֶגֶד מִדָּה, וְהָרִי אָדָם וְהִנְחֵשׁ שִׁחְטָאוֹ בְּדָבָר אֲכִילָה וְעִנְשָׁם הָיָה בְּדָבָר אֲכִילָה "וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל" וכו' "בְּזַעַת אַפְיָהּ תֹּאכַל לֶחֶם", וּבִפְרֹט שֶׁהִיא גִּתְקַלְלָה קוֹדֵם הָאָדָם.

“And to the woman, [G-d] said, ‘I will greatly expand Your hard labor—and your pregnancies; In hardship shall you bear children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.’ To Adam, [God] said, ‘Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate of the tree about which I commanded you, “You shall not eat of it,” cursed be the ground because of you; by hard labor shall you eat of it all the days of your life.’ ”¹

A question is why did the Holy One, Blessed be He, increase the punishment for [Eve] beyond the order of measure-for-measure,² for Adam and the serpent sinned in a matter of eating, and their punishment was related to eating. Thus, the serpent was cursed, “On your belly shall you crawl, and dirt shall you eat, all the days of your life,”³ and Adam was cursed, **“By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat,”**⁴ while Eve was cursed with a painful childbirth. **Also, there is a question about the detail that she was cursed before the man.**

וְנִשׁ לֹאמַר שֶׁלְפִי שִׁחְטָשׁ בָּא עַל סוּנָה וְהִטִּיל בָּהּ זוהמָא, זֶה גֵרַם שֶׁאֲכָלָה מִן הָעֵץ עַל דְּרָף עֲבִירָה גוֹרְרָת עֲבִירָה, נִמְצָא שֶׁהָאִשָּׁה חֲטָאָה בְּשִׁתֵּי עֲבִירוֹת. וְלִזֶּה "אָמַר הַרְבֵּה אֲרֵבָה עֲצָבוֹנָהּ וְהִרְבֵּה" וכו' מִפְּנֵי שֶׁיֵּשׁ לָהּ זוהמָת הִנְחֵשׁ בְּבִטְנָהּ שֶׁמִּתְרַבֵּה וְהוֹלֶכֶת וּמִמִּילָא נִגְרָרָתָּ נְמִי אַסֵּר קִלְלַת הָאָדָם "בְּעֲצָבוֹן תֹּאכְלֶנָּה" מִשְׁעַם שֶׁגֵרְמָה קִלְקוּל לָאָדָם.

It can be said that because the serpent came upon Eve, i.e., having sexual relations with her, he infused her with moral impurity.⁵ This led her to eat from the tree, in the way that one transgression leads to another transgression. Thus, it's found that the woman sinned with two transgressions, being unfaithful to her husband, and eating from the Tree of Knowledge.

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¹ Gen. 3:16–17.

² Mishnah Sota 1:7; Sota 8b; Megillah 12b; Sanhedrin 100a. The Talmud's wording, לוֹ בְּמִדָּה שֶׁאָדָם מוֹדֵד בָּהּ מוֹדְדִים לוֹ, is equivalent to the well-known saying of מִדָּה כְּנֶגֶד מִדָּה (*middah k'neged middah*) (*measure against measure*),” that G-d punishes a person measure-for-measure.

³ Gen. 3:14.

⁴ Gen. 3:19.

⁵ Shabbat 146a; Yevamot 103b.

To this, “[G-d] said, ‘I will greatly expand Your hard labor—and your pregnancies,’ ” because you have the filth of the serpent in your stomach that multiplies and grows stronger. Thus, she suffered painful childbirth as a result of her relations with the serpent. In any case, you are also dragged along after the curse of the man, “by hard labor shall you eat,” because she caused damage to the man. Thus, she too suffered in the way of eating, as she also transgressed through eating from the tree. Because she led the man to eat from the tree, her curse was presented first.

וכן הַנְּחֹשׁ לְפִי שָׁגַם הוּא חֲטָא שָׂבָא עָלֶיהָ, נִתְקַלֵּל שִׁיחֵיו יְמֵי עֵיבוּרוֹ שְׁבַע שָׁנִים כְּדֹאמְרֵינוּ בְּפֶרֶק קמ"א דְּבְכוּרוֹת עַל פְּסוּק "אָרוּר אַתָּה מִכָּל־הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה", וְעוֹד נִתְקַלֵּל "וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל".

Likewise, the serpent, according to the fact that he also sinned when he came upon her, was cursed that the days of [the snake’s] pregnancy would last seven years. This is as it is said in the first chapter of tractate Bechorot (8a), on the verse, “More cursed shall you be than all cattle and all the wild beasts,” and was also cursed “on your belly shall you crawl and dirt shall you eat all the days of your life.”⁶

וְלֹא אָמַר בְּאִשָּׁה כִּי־שָׁמְעָתָ לְקוֹל הַנְּחֹשׁ, לְפִי מָה שִׁפְרַשׁ רַשִׁ"י ו"ל שֶׁהַנְּחֹשׁ לֹא נִתְפַּנּוֹן שֶׁתְּהִי אֹכֶלֶת הִיא מִן הָעֵץ בִּלְבַד שֶׁיֵּאָכֵל אָדָם וְיִשָּׂא הוּא אֶת חוֹה. וְאִם הִיא אֹכֶלֶת, אֹכֶלֶת מִצַּד עֲצָמָה וְרִצּוֹנָה לֹא מִתְחַמֵּת פִּיתוּי הַנְּחֹשׁ, וְכִיּוֹן שֶׁכָּבָר עֲבָרָה וְאֹכֶלֶת, שֶׁלְטָה בָּהּ זִוְהָמַת הַחֲטָא, וְעֲבִירָה גוֹרְרָת עֲבִירָה וְנִתְדַבְּקָה בְּנְחֹשׁ.

In contrast to what G-d told Adam, He did not say to the woman, “Because you listened to the voice of the serpent.”⁷ This is because of what Rashi of blessed memory explained,⁸ that the serpent did not intend that she would eat from the tree, only that Adam would eat from it and die, and then [the serpent] would marry Eve. As the serpent only intended for Adam to eat, G-d only reprimanded Adam, “Because you listened to the voice of the serpent.” But as the serpent hadn’t intended for Eve to eat, G-d did not reprimand her in that way.

If she ate, she ate on her own, and her will was not because of the temptation of the serpent, and since she had already transgressed and eaten, the contamination of sin ruled her, and transgression led to transgression and attached to the serpent.

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⁶ Gen. 3:14.

⁷ As observed by Abarbanel on Torah, Gen. 2:4:38.

⁸ Rashi on Gen. 3:16.