

ALSHICH

INSIGHTS FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

ספר בראשית

פרשת בראשית

26 OCTOBER 2024

HOW THE SNAKE CONVINCED CHAVAH TO SIN

Chapter 3

1) And the snake was more cunning than any other animal that God had made. It said to the woman, "Even if God said, 'Do not eat from any of the trees in the Garden.'"

2) The woman replied to the snake, "We can eat fruit from the trees of the Garden."

3) "But from the tree that is in the middle of the Garden God said, 'Do not eat from it and do not touch it lest you die.'"

4) The snake said to the woman, "You will surely not die (lit., You will not die, die)."

5) "Since God knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

א) והנחש היה ערום מכל חית השדה אשר עשה ה' אלקים ויאמר אל האשה אף כי אמר אלקים לא תאכלו מכל עץ הגן.

ב) ותאמר האשה אל הנחש מפרי עץ הגן נאכל.

ג) ומפרי העץ אשר בתוך הגן אמר אלקים לא תאכלו ממנו ולא תגעו בו פן תמתו.

ד) ויאמר הנחש אל האשה לא מות תמתו.

ה) כי ידע אלקים כי ביום אכלכם ממנו ונפקחו עיניכם והייתם כאלקים ידעי טוב ורע.

Consider the following questions:

1. What drove the snake to entice Chava to sin? And why didn't it also try to convince Adam?
2. The word *אף*, *Even*, in the snake's opening phrase to Chava, "Even if God said," does not seem to make sense. And why say that God said they were not to eat from **any** of the trees?
3. Why did Chava add to God's command by saying that it was forbidden even to touch the Tree of Knowledge?
4. God had originally said (2:17), "On the day that you eat from it you will surely die (מות תמות, lit., you will die, die)," which means that He would surely put them to death. Why did Chava claim instead that God had said, "lest you die," which implies that their death was in doubt?
5. Why did the snake use the double expression "You will not die, die (לא מות תמתו)"?
6. How can the snake suggest such an absurd idea in verse 5 that God does not want Adam and Chavah to eat from the tree because then they would become His rivals, and how could Chavah take it seriously?

We know that the *Satan* is identified with a person's *yetzer hara* and with the Angel of Death. He understood that if Adam avoided sin and lived forever (as Hashem had originally planned), he would be eliminated. Consequently, he was determined to use all his cunning to cause Adam's downfall. But since Adam was so holy and close to his Creator, he thought it more possible to seduce Chavah into sinning, knowing that if she succumbed she would help him bring about Adam's downfall too. This would still be no easy task, so he attached himself to the snake to communicate directly with her and not just try to plant a sinful thought in her mind, as the *yetzer hara* usually does. [\[This answers Question 1.\]](#)

He began as the *yetzer hara* always does, by disguising itself as God's ally, and only afterwards reversing direction. He started with the idea that "When Hashem commanded (verse 2:17) that if you eat from the Tree of Knowledge *you will surely die*," it could mean that either the fruit itself is harmless but you (His servant) would be put to death for disobeying the King, or that the fruit is poisonous and will cause your death when you eat it. In the manner of an extremely pious person he then said, "**Even** if God said, 'Do not eat from any of the trees in the Garden,'" i.e., even if God just **said** not to eat – without any threat of death, and without the fruit being harmful – and even if He forbade you to eat from any of the trees (and not just the Tree of Knowledge), you should listen to Him." [\[This answers Question 2.\]](#)

To this Chava replied, "On both counts you are wrong. First, *we can eat fruit from the trees of the Garden*; God only prohibited eating from one tree. Second, the fruit of that tree is potentially deadly, as God told us not to eat it '*lest you die*,'" (thus showing she had misunderstood Hashem, who had meant that disobeying Him would lead to their becoming mortal and dying). [\[This answers Question 4.\]](#)

She added that God had also said not to even touch it lest you die because He had used the unusual double expression *מות תמות*, (lit., *you will die, die*). She concluded that God had warned Adam about two actions that would cause death – touching the tree, as an action that would lead to the sin, **or** eating its fruit. [\[This answers Question 3.\]](#)

The snake at once answered, "*You will surely **not** die* (*לא מות תמתון*)," using the inverse of the same double expression to convey that "You will not die by doing **either** one – touching the tree or eating the fruit." He was also telling her that the fruit and the tree were not dangerous in and of themselves. Rather, the threat of death was only for violating God's command (thus contradicting Chava's understanding of God's warning, not what God had told Adam). [\[This answers Question 5.\]](#)

He then continued, "Do not be concerned even if you believe that eating from the Tree of Knowledge will **ultimately** cause your death because now you are only attached to *kedushah* but afterwards the *yetzer hara* will be able to cause you to sin, leading to your ultimate downfall. For now there is no great challenge in choosing good, but once your eyes will be open to both good and evil, when you choose to act righteously and conquer your *yetzer hara*, "*you will be like God*," i.e., similar to Him in the impact you will have on the world (not rivals), and in deserving to live because of your great merit." [\[This answers Question 6.\]](#)

THE ALSHICH AND HIS COMMENTARY

The Alshich (1508–1600), was one of only five famous rabbis in Jewish history universally known by the title "HaKadosh" (the holy one). He served on the same Beis Din as Rabbi Yosef Caro, author of the Shulchan Aruch. The Alshich is most noted for his monumental Tanach commentary.

The Alshich uses his creative insight and encyclopaedic knowledge of Tanach, Talmud, and Midrash to weave together his profound interpretations. He simultaneously focuses on the text as well as the context of a series of verses by listing a range of questions and then answering them all with one or two concepts.

These sheets, distributed in memory of Yental *bas* Yitzchok, have been drawn from either the Alshich on Avos or Alshich on the Torah, published by Feldheim. They seek to expand the spectrum of readers who can appreciate the Alshich's true greatness.

For sponsorship opportunities and to subscribe, please call David Rose at +44 7833 938 734.