

Shalom Chaverim,

Many of us feel cooped up because of the COVID-19 crisis. Yet, as May rolls around, we are yearning to head outdoors and to places of tranquility such as gardens. So, even though we may still be stuck inside, let's take a trip to the world's first garden, at least in our minds:

Why were Adam and Eve expelled from the world's first garden, *Gan Eden* (the Garden of Eden)? Conventional wisdom holds that G-d kicked them out for eating the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. But something happened after they ate but before they were expelled: Upon realizing that G-d was approaching to confront them for their disobedience, the couple hid from G-d like children hiding from a parent.

As Rabbi Simcha Weinberg teaches, the couple was not kicked out for eating the forbidden fruit but rather for hiding from G-d, instead of taking responsibility for their actions. Just as a good parent deals differently with a child that admits his mistake and performs *teshuvah* (repentance), G-d deals differently with his children who perform *teshuvah*. One of the lessons of *Sefer Yonah* (The Book of Jonah), which we read on Yom Kippur afternoon, is that G-d would prefer that we correct our behavior and repair relationships with him through the performance of *teshuvah* rather than to punish us for our wrongdoing.

The Talmud teaches that, before the world's first couple sinned, Adam reached from the earth to heaven. The point is not that Adam would have made a good NBA center. Rather, it is to teach that the couple's failure to perform *teshuvah* damaged humanity's relationship with its maker.

However, G-d did not give up on humanity. According to *Bereshit Rabbah*, though the couple sinned on Friday, G-d let them spend their first Shabbat in *Gan Eden*, postponing their banishment until *Motzei Shabbat* (Saturday night). But G-d did not just say good riddance to the pair; he prepared them for life outside of *Gan Eden*, i.e., the real world, by teaching them how to care for themselves. He taught them to make fire by rubbing two sticks together. To remember that G-d taught us how to survive in the real world on *Motzei Shabbat*, to this day we use a multi-wick candle for *Havdallah*, symbolizing the two sticks that Adam and Eve used to make fire.

Yes, G-d taught us how to survive outside of the garden, i.e., in the real world, but can we ever reenter Eden? We actually have that opportunity every week. Eden means time: The Garden of Eden was a garden in time, an eternal Shabbat in which humanity's relationship with G-d was perfect and therefore the world was perfect. Shabbat is referred to as *Ta'am HaOlam Habah* (a taste of the World to Come), i.e., heaven. We also refer to heaven as *Gan Eden*. In other words, once a week we get to reenter the Garden as we celebrate Shabbat.

Stay Safe, Kol Tuv,

Rabbi Steven Saks