

Parshas Behar - Bechukosai 5772

FULL CIRCLE: GAN EDEN AND THE FUTURE REDEMPTION

At the mention of “Gan (the Garden of) Eden”, most of us react wistfully, musing on the pristine and paradisiacal conditions of that blissful era and location. The “good news”, so to speak, is that Chazal assure us of the eventual restoration of many of these conditions in the future Messianic Era (may it come soon!). One stark example, of course, is the abolishment of death. This particular institution was only introduced to the world as a result of Adam’s original sin (“For on the day that you eat from it, you shall surely die,” [Bereishis 2:17]). In the days of Mashiach, this sin will be expiated. Consequently, “After Mashiach will come, death will be eliminated from all of us” (*Viku’ach HaRamban 39*).

BREAD, GRAPE JUICE, AND MASHIACH

Another manifestation of this state of affairs can be found, most interestingly, in some of the particulars of the laws of *berachos* (blessings). The required blessing for fruits or vegetables is *Ha’eitz* or *Ha’adamah*, respectively. Upon drinking their juice, however, the blessing becomes “downgraded”, in a sense, to *shehakol*. This adjustment is a reflection of the fact that when fruits or vegetables are changed from their pristine form, the change itself represents a depreciation of sorts. There are two exceptions, however, as the Mishnah tells us (*Berachos 6:1*):

על פרות האילן אומר, בורא פרי העץ, חוץ מן היין, שעל היין אומר בורא פרי הגפן. ועל פרות הארץ אומר בורא פרי האדמה, חוץ מן הפת, שעל הפת הוא אומר המוציא לחם מן הארץ.

לזכר נשמת ציפא רבקה בת ברוך ע"ה

“On fruits of the tree, one recites *Borei p’ri ha’eitz* (‘Who creates the fruit of the tree’), except for wine, for which *Borei p’ri hagafen* (‘Who creates the fruit of the vine’) is said. On vegetables, one recites *Borei p’ri ha’adamah* (‘Who creates the fruit of the ground’), except for bread, for which *Hamotzi lechem min ha’aretz* (‘Who brings forth bread from the earth’) is said.”

Grapes are a type of fruit; one who dines on them recites the requisite *Ha’eitz* blessing, as with all fruits. However, upon drinking wine — the juice product of this fruit — the blessing is not downgraded to *shehakol*; on the contrary, wine receives a special blessing of its own — *Borei p’ri hagafen*. Likewise, wheat is fruit of the ground, and one who snacks on straight wheat grains would recite the regular *ha’adamah* blessing. But when converted into the superior bread product, its blessing status is enhanced, and one recites a *hamotzi* on it.

The great Sephardic sage the Ben Ish Chai sees these laws as reflective of the situation described above — the “Gan Eden” revival of the future. Adam’s eating of the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge is one of the most universally recognized of Biblical episodes. Somewhere along the line, however, some misinformation regarding this event became popularized. What type of fruit, exactly, grew from this botanical wonder? This is the subject of a debate in the Gemara (*Berachos 40a*); however, there is no record that it had anything to do with an apple.

According to one opinion (R’ Yehudah), the “fruit” in question was actually wheat; and as the Ben Ish Chai explains, wheat’s association with the “Tree” of Knowledge helps to account for its blessing-change,

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as well. Adam's sin carried with it some far-reaching, corrosive effects, to the extent that the tree itself was degraded. Mashiach's arrival, and the atonement it shall bring, will serve to reverse these harmful effects, and the Tree will be restored to and even surpass its former strength and glory.

The aforementioned *halachah* concerning the blessing for wheat alludes to this situation. Just as wheat will one day receive an "upgrade," so, too, its blessing status changes from standard to more enhanced, a unique characteristic amongst produce (*Ben Yehoyada, Berachos, ibid.*).

The only other type of fruit to enjoy a blessing-upgrade upon change of form is the grape (as recorded in the Mishnah). Quite fittingly, one of the other recorded opinions concerning the species of the Tree of Knowledge is the view of R' Meir, who maintains it was a grape vine. The Ben Ish Chai thus explains that the enhanced blessing over wine likewise reflects the salutary effects of the Final Redemption. Grapes brought about the world's downfall and significantly altered the power and status of man himself. Through the atonement and rectification achieved in Mashiach's time, the downward trend brought about through the grape will be forever reversed, and humankind itself will be propelled to a much loftier form of existence (*Ben Yehoyada, Sanhedrin 70a*).

TWO-FACED GENDER EQUALITY

This happy situation may very well be manifest in our *parshah*, as well, in a most interesting way. Referring to the Redemption, the verse states (*Vayikra 26:13*): "And I have led you קוממיית." The term *komemi'us* is usually understood as "upright," stemming from the word קומה (height, upright stance). But an obvious aberrancy in our verse is the apparently double form of this word — thus, קוממיית.

From a glance at the somewhat cryptic comments of R' Yehonasan Eibschitz (*Tiferes Yehonasan, end of parshas Bechukosai*), it appears he interpreted the verse along

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the lines of our subject. Another aspect of the early Creation Era mentioned by Chazal was the curious gender arrangement; namely, that male and female were originally created together, sharing two sides of a single body (*Eruvin 18a*). At a later point, they were separated into two individual entities (*cf. Rashi to Bereishis 1:27 and 2:21*).

What our verse may be telling us is that this situation, too, will be restored in the future. Currently, each person is issued his or her own body. However, this state of affairs may be subject to some change. In the Messianic Era, we may once again revert to a situation of קוממיית — where people will attain a "double posture," so to speak.