



## MACHSHAVOT

### Parashat Bereishit

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### Brave New World

**Rabbi Andrew Shaw**  
*Chief Executive, Mizrachi UK*

I remember as a child in Kingsbury shul, the Chazzan, on Shabbat Bereishit would always sing the Kedusha to the beautiful music of the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement of Dvorak New World. (The Hovis music for those who don't know!)

As Shabbat Bereishit 2020 arrives – it certainly is a New World!

All over this blue and white planet, humanity is finding itself fighting a microscopic enemy with no sign of victory in sight. One of the prominent solutions that has and is being used to stop the spread is to separate us, to keep humanity away from each other - to lock us down. The problem is, that by pursuing that strategy is the cure more harmful than the disease?

I have no idea, but I watched something this week that made me realise that we have a bigger problem on our hands.

Someone recommended a documentary to me – 'The Social Dilemma', which explores the dangerous human impact of social networking with the tech experts sounding the alarm on their own creations.

It was very disturbing.

For me the most depressing statistic was the rates of hospital admissions and suicide by girls aged 10 - 14 in America. Up 189% for self-harm and up 151% for suicides since 2009 – when social media became available on mobile phones.

The basis of the documentary was how artificial intelligence is changing the way people think and feel as the algorithm buried into Facebook and twitter keeps finding ways to make sure you are clicking and liking and watching and sharing.

As one review said 'Social Media is not only scarring self-esteem, making people question their self-worth, causing dissatisfaction in life increasing depression and suicides at an alarming rate but now has transcended past to more dangerous territory. It is now altering behaviour and changing the perception of how people perceive this world.'

Bereishit said it best '*loh tov heyot adam levado*' - 'It is not good that man be alone'. Social media and the like, means that more and more people are alone. Who needs to go anywhere when the world is on your phone, where you can play games and even chat to your friends, lockdown is not so bad.....

However, as Hashem tells us – we need each other. We need to be with people who will disagree with us, who will challenge us. The algorithms just massage you, show you either what you want to see or what it thinks you need to see.

Yet, we must realise that in the digital age we also have incredible opportunities for increased connectivity, education, enjoyment etc.

How do we navigate this minefield?

There is an amazing insight in the Parsha brought down by Rav Ari Kahn.

We all know the story. There were two trees in the centre of Gan Eden, *Etz Ha Chayim* – the tree of life and *Etz ha Daat* – the tree of knowledge.

Chazal noted that there was no problem with tree of life. In fact, the original plan was to first eat from the tree of life and then the tree of knowledge. It seems that the sin of Adam was to eat from the trees in the improper sequence.

According to the Midrash, *Etz Ha Chaim* is identified with the Torah. So what is the *Etz Ha Daat*? Surely knowledge should be associated with Torah? However, this knowledge is very specific. In Bereshit (4:1) we read that '*V'Adam Yada et Chava*' and Adam knew Chava' here, it clearly implies experience.

*The plan in Gan Eden was for man to eat from Etz Ha Chaim - Torah and only thereafter, with the onset of the first Shabbat, to eat from the Etz Ha Daat as well. The issue is what should come first – Torah wisdom or experience? The advantage of Torah preceding experience is that Torah, once internalized will serve as a basis from which subsequent experiences will be interpreted. Torah becomes a vantage point from which experiences are viewed and understood. If, however, experiences are acquired first, they will serve as a basis for the interpretation given subsequently to the Torah. This latter sequence can lead to distortion of the Torah. Torah must precede experience. Torah must be the benchmark by which Jews lead their lives and mould their views.*

The 'experiences' of social media, the internet etc. need to be seen through the prism of Torah, to understand what our priorities are and should be. People may say that an algorithm really understands people but nothing understand us better than our ultimate Creator and Designer.

Of course, He placed the ultimate solution to solve online addiction in Parshat Bereishit, '*Vayevarech Elokim et Yom Hashivi, Veyakadesh Oto*' - 'And Hashem blessed the seventh day and sanctified it'.

Shabbat, 25 hours of sanity in a mad world.

Having the weekly break from the 24/6 of the world on our gadgets and devices definitely demonstrates us putting *etz ha hayim* before *etz ha daat* or *etz ha data* in today's parlance!

We don't know where the world is heading or how corona will play out. However, we do know that we have the inspiration and blessing of the Torah for our instructions through the minefield. As Chazal taught 'Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world' - it is the blueprint for creation.

We have that blueprint, we live that blueprint and through living Torah, we should have the strength and the ability to engage with the world around us and find our way back eventually to Gan Eden – by creating a new world for all.

Shabbat Shalom

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# BRINGING MY CHILD'S KILLER TO JUSTICE

WITH ARNOLD ROTH

**MALKI ROTH**  
1985 - 2001

MURDERED IN THE HAMAS ATTACK ON A JERUSALEM PIZZERIA  
(SBARRO RESTAURANT), MASTERMINDED BY JORDANIAN  
AHLAM TAMIMI, A FUGITIVE FROM US JUSTICE.

**26/10/2020**

**20:00**

**ZOOM MEETING ID: 813 9376 6622 PASSWORD: 26102020**



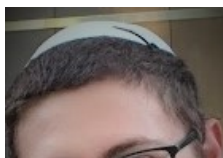
SINCE 2012, ARNOLD AND HIS WIFE FRIMET HAVE BEEN PURSUING THE HAMAS TERRORIST  
WHO SPEARHEADED THE BOMBING OF THE SBARRO PIZZERIA IN DOWNTOWN JERUSALEM.  
THEIR 15 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER, MALKI WAS ONE OF THE EIGHT CHILDREN MURDERED THAT  
DAY. IN ADDITION TO THE CHILDREN, A FURTHER EIGHT LIVES WERE TAKEN IN THE ATTACK.  
SOME 130 ADDITIONAL INNOCENTS WERE INJURED, MANY OF THEM VERY SERIOUSLY.

ARNOLD ROTH WILL BE SHARING HIS FAMILY'S EXPERIENCES, DESCRIBING THE CHALLENGES  
AHEAD AND WILL OFFER SOME INSIGHTS INTO THE FRUSTRATIONS OF THEIR CAMPAIGN.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS WILL FOLLOW



FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT [UK@MIZRACHI.ORG](mailto:UK@MIZRACHI.ORG)



## Paradise: What Went Wrong?

**Yossi Hambling**

*Participant of the Mizrachi UK Fellowship Programme*





Life was, quite literally, perfect. Adam had no bills to pay, no errands to run, and not a single social media account to monitor. It was just him, Chava, Gan Eden and the animals. And yet what appeared to be a simple command proved too difficult for mankind to withstand; after a brief conversation with the snake, Chava and later Adam both eat from the Eitz HaDaas, the Tree of Knowledge. How did everything go wrong so fast?

On the most basic level, there is a profound truth to be noted here: Having less to do does not necessarily make us more effective at the things we have to do. How many times have we heard from our spouse: “I only asked you to do ONE thing, and it was *still* too much for you?!” We often fool ourselves into thinking that we would be much better people, if only we have more time and fewer commitments. The episode of Adam’s sin should remind us that this is never a good answer. One can still neglect their responsibilities when they have nothing more pressing to do, just as one can always find time for the important things in life.

However, Adam’s sin seems to have been something more fundamental than this. The Meshech Chochma (R’ Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, 1843-1926) suggests that Adam actually misunderstood what Hashem was asking of him, and hence he didn’t relay Hashem’s instructions to Chava properly:

“And Hashem, God, commanded Adam, saying: From every tree of the Garden *you shall eat*. But from the Tree of Knowledge [...] you shall not eat...” [Bereishit 2:16-17]

R’ Meir Simcha suggests that Adam essentially missed the positive command to eat from the rest of the Garden and simply told Chava not to eat from the Eitz HaDaas. Indeed, this is reflected in how Chava reports Hashem’s command to the snake:

“[...] We may eat from every tree of the Garden. *But from the tree in the middle of the Garden, God said we may not eat...*” [Bereishit 3:2-3]

If we view life as a series of permissible choices, infrequently punctuated by religious obligations, there will always be something drawing us away from those obligations, however few and simple they may be. After all, they are just an inconvenience in a life that is otherwise pleasurable and self-centred. However, if we view everything that is permitted in life as a way to perceive Hashem in the world and to serve Him, we stand a real chance of succeeding in our mission to create a dwelling place for God in this world.

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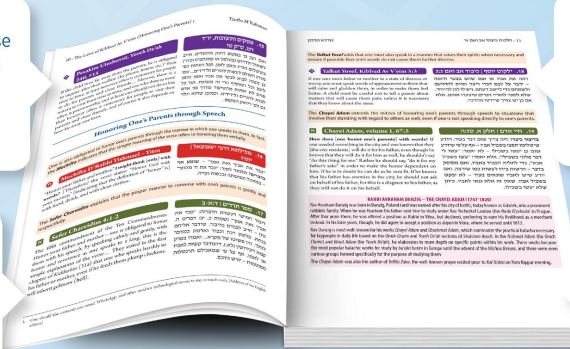
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