

Parshat Breishit – Of Fruits and Vegetables

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In the closing verses of the sixth day of creation, God gives his charge to man as to how he will interact with the creation that preceded him. "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and master it; rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky and all living things that move on earth."¹ God then instructs man as to what menu is available to him in order to sustain himself:

בראשית פרק א

(כט) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נֹתְתִי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת כָּל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ פְּרִי עֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יְהִי לְאֹכְלָהּ: (ל) וּלְכָל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וּלְכָל עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל רֹמֵשׁ עַל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֶת כָּל יֵרֶק עֵשֶׂב לְאֹכְלָהּ וַיְהִי כֵן:

God said, "Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing herbage that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that moves on earth, within which there is a living soul, [I give] all the green herbage for food. And it was so." The Gemara in Sanhedrin commenting on this verse states that it clear from these Pesukim that Adam was not permitted to consume meat² since the Torah describes the animals' feed, but not that the animals will be food.³ Rashi, both in Sanhedrin and in the Torah, comments that man and animal were equated in their foraging for food since both were permitted to consume vegetation and fruits.⁴ He sees the "Vav (וְ) (אֶת)" connecting the two verses as a conjunction (Vav HaChibur) whereby the animals are also granted the same rights as the humans that preceded them. The Ibn Ezra and the Ramban disagree with this contention because Rashi's reading of the verse would require an additional "Vav (and)" before "[I give] all the green herbage for food (אֶת)" at the tail end of the Pasuk to indicate that the green herbage (vegetables) has the same status as the previously mentioned foods, i.e. that it is permitted to both man and animal. Without the addition of that "Vav (and)", it would be a dangling phrase according to Rashi's

explanation. Therefore, the Ramban asserts that a more careful reading of the verse yields a different understanding of the Pasuk whereby the "Vav" between the two Pesukim is actually a divider and distinguisher (Vav HaChiluk) and not a combiner. In this way, man and animal do not share the same trough, but rather man is granted the seed-bearing herbage⁵ and fruits of the tree (אֶת כָּל עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע זֶרַע... וְאֶת כָּל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ פְּרִי עֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע), whereas the animals are granted green herbage⁶ (אֶת כָּל יֵרֶק עֵשֶׂב).⁷

This distinction becomes much more apparent in the second chapter of Breishit when Adam is placed into the Garden of Eden. In that garden, "God caused to sprout from the ground every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the Tree of Life in the middle of the garden and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad."⁸ Adam is instructed to "work and preserve (לעבדה ולשמרה)"⁹ this garden full of trees. That directive which follows the description of the garden is followed by another command that from amongst all the trees of the garden you may partake with the exception of the Etz HaDa'at. From the Pesukim, it seems that the main feature of the Garden were its trees and that Adam's work and sustenance revolved around these trees. All this would corroborate that which is described in the first chapter of Breishit that the fruits of the tree were designated as the exclusive fare of man. Moreover, the Gemara Berachot brings a dispute amongst the Tana'im as to the identity of Etz HaDa'at.¹⁰ Rabbi Meir believes that it was a grape vine since wine is the cause majority of man's woes, Rabbi Nechamia suggests it was the fig tree since after Adam and Chava sin they cover themselves in fig leaves (the sin is the source of their salvation), whereas Rabbi Yehuda proposes that it was wheat since a youngsters speech and discernment (דעת) develops at the threshold when he begins to consume grain products. Without regard to which opinion is correct, Rabbi Yehuda's suggestion that wheat is subsumed under the category of trees¹¹ only serves to reinforce the distinction suggested by the Ramban that the grains and the fruits of the

¹ בראשית א, כח

² עיין תוד"ה אכל תאכל סנהדרין נ: שרק נאסר בשר דרך הריגה אבל מתה מאליה מותר וגם נשמע ככה מרש"י בראשית א, כט ולא הרשה לאדם ולאשתו להמית בריה ולאכול בשר

³ אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: אדם הראשון לא הותר לו בשר לאכילה, דכתיב לכם יהיה לאכלה ולכל חית הארץ - ולא חית הארץ לכם. וכשבאו בני נח הותר להם... (סנהדרין ט:)

⁴ לכם ולחיות נתתי העשבים והאילנות ואת כל ירק עשב לאכלה, אבל לא חית הארץ נתונה לכם (סנה' שם) השהו להם הכתוב בהמות וחיות למאכל, ולא הרשה לאדם ולאשתו להמית בריה ולאכול בשר, אך כל ירק עשב יאכלו יחד כלם (בראשית א, כט)

⁵ ע"פ הרמב"ן והחזקוני זה תבואה וקטניות ועיין במלבי"ם שם לפירוש אחר

⁶ ע"פ החזקוני כגון כרוב ותרדיון

⁷ האבן עזרא מעלה כעין שילוב בין רש"י והרמב"ן שאדם וכל נפש חיה הותר להם כל עשב לאכילה ופירות האילן מיועדים לאדם בלבד והעשב הירק לחיות ולכל רומש אבל קשה לקרא את פירוש זה בפסוק כי פירוש מלת "לכם" משתנה מתחלת הפסוק לסופו

⁸ בראשית ב, ח-ט

⁹ שם טו-יז

¹⁰ דתניא אילן שאכל ממנו אדם הראשון, רבי מאיר אומר: גפן היה, שאין לך דבר שמביא יללה על האדם אלא יין, שנאמר: וישת מן היין וישכר; רבי נחמיה אומר: תאנה היתה, שבדבר שנתקלקלו בו נתקנו, שנאמר ויתפרו עלה תאנה; רבי יהודה אומר: חטה היתה, שאין התינוק יודע לקרות אבא ואמא עד שיטעום טעם דגן (ברכות מ.)

¹¹ אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק: לא נצרכה אלא לרבי יהודה דאמר חטה מין אילן היא (שם)

trees were the purview of man and not the animals.

After Adam and Chava sin by partaking of the Etz HaDa'at, God renders Adam's punishment as follows, "Because you listened to your wife's suggestion and partook of the tree about which I commanded you saying, 'You shall not eat from it,' accursed is the ground because of you; through suffering shall you eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you, and you shall eat the herbage of the fields (עשב השדה). By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread..."¹² Man's punishment is to now consume herbage (עשב), the items that were once the sole province of the animals.¹³ In his failure to utilize his elevated status to do the will of God, Adam in his new diminutive state is relegated to eat the same food and face the same fate (death) as the animals. He trades the fruits of the tree that represent the image of God in man (כי האדם) for the vegetation of the field that denotes the animalistic side of man (ומותר האדם) because he did not fully comprehend his unique exalted status that differentiates him from the animals (אדם ביקר ולא) (יבין נמשל כבהמות נדמו).¹⁶

This distinction is brought to bear later in the Torah in the distinction drawn between Eretz Yisrael and Mitzrayim. "The Land of Israel that you are about to enter and possess is not like the land of Egypt that you left. There you sowed your seed and had to water it by your own labors, like a **vegetable garden** (כגן הירק)." ¹⁷ Egypt is compared to a vegetable garden¹⁸ whereas the mountainous Israel is like an orchard and a vineyard. When the spies want to bring back something that is peculiar and distinctive from the Land of Israel, they come laden with a **cluster of grapes, pomegranates and figs**.¹⁹ Later on in Parshat Chukat when Bnei Yisrael run out of water, they charge Moshe with misrepresenting their destination as being a place of **seeds, figs, grapes and pomegranates** while in reality they

were dehydrating and going to perish in the desolate desert.²⁰ On the other hand, when Bnei Yisrael pine to return to the Land of Egypt, they remember it as a place bountiful with fish, **cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic** (vegetables).²¹ The most striking manifestation of this is in the Torah's description of the unique endowments of Eretz Yisrael in Parshat Eikev (שבעת המינים) as a "land of **wheat, barley, grapes, figs and pomegranates**; a land of **oil-olives and date-honey**."²² This notion is also reinforced by the fact that the Torah has a specific injunction against destroying fruit trees (לא-תשחית את-עצה לנדח עליו גרזן כי ממנו תאכל ואתו לא תכרת)²³ which only serves to heighten one's sensitivity to this idea that fruit trees carry a special status and meaning.

This idea that the fruit trees connote an idealistic state of man akin to his sojourn in the Garden of Eden is found in other places in the Tanach as well. When the Tanach wants to express an idyllic time blessed with cornucopia, like in the time of King Solomon, it describes individuals basking under their **grapes vines and fig trees**.²⁴ Similarly, in Sefer Michah, it describes the "end of days" when the mountain of God's temple will stand firm and above all the other mountains and many nations will flock to the Temple in order to gain insight into God's will because "instruction will come forth from Tzion and the word of God from Yerushalayim (כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ה' (מירושלים))."²⁵ There again it chronicles that, "every man will sit under his **grapevine and fig tree** with no one to disturb him, for it was the God of Hosts who spoke."²⁶ Once again here the fruit trees are used to characterize a panacea of man in a spiritual state.

What is the difference between the fruits of the tree and grains that make them the food of Gan Eden rather than the herbage and vegetables? One key difference is in the delayed gratification that is required to reap the benefits of fruits and grains versus vegetation. Animals need their food

¹² ולאדם אמר כי שמעת לקול אשתך ותאכל מן העץ אשר צויתך לאמר לא תאכל ממנו ארורה האדמה בעבורך בעצבון תאכלנה כל ימי חייך וקוץ ודורדר תצמיח לך ואכלת את עשב השדה: בזעת אפיק תאכל לחם עד שובך אל האדמה כי ממנה לקחת כי עפר אתה ואל עפר תשוב: (בראשית ג, יז-יט)
¹³ עיני רמב"ן וחזקוני בראשית א, כט וגם יש הרבה ילדים שסוברים ככה
¹⁴ דברים כ, ט ובאבן עזרא שם כי חיי בני אדם הוא עץ השדה תענית ז.
¹⁵ כי מקרה בני האדם ומקרה הבהמה ומקרה אדם להם כמות זה בן מות זה ורוח אחד לכל ומותר האדם מן הבהמה אין כי הכל הבל: (קהלת ג, יט) עיני גם ברכות ז. סוף אדם למות, וסוף בהמה לשחיטה, והכל למיתה הם עומדים
¹⁶ אדם ביקר ולא יבין נמשל כבהמות נדמו (תהילים מט, כא) האדם ש"ל יקר שהיא נפשו הנצחית שהוא יקר אמתי, והוא לא יבין וחליפנה בעבור הבל רעות רוח, א"כ הוא נמשל כבהמות נדמו, כי חיי גוף האדם דומה כחיי הבהמה כמות זה כן מות זה (מלבי"ם שם)
¹⁷ כי הארץ אשר אתה בא-שמה לרשתה לא כארץ מצרים הוא אשר יצאתם משם אשר תזרע את-זרעך והשקית בגלגל כגן הירק: (דברים יא, י)
¹⁸ למרות שאצל מצרים כתוב וישאלו את-עייני וירא את-כל-כפר הירדן כי כלה משקה לפניו שחת יקוק את-סדום ואת-עמרה כגן: יקוק כארץ מצרים באכה צער: (בראשית
www.swdaf.com

¹⁹ (ג, י) הדמיון שם הוא לגבי הריבוי המים מהנילוס שדומה לנהרות שיוצאות מעדן וריבוי העושר ולא דרגת החיים הרוחניים (שמערים הניגוד המוחלט לזה)
²⁰ ויבאו עד-נחל אשכל ויכרתו משם זמורה ואשכול ענבים אחד וישארו במוט בשנים וימרו המינים וימרו התאנים: (במדבר יג, כג)
²¹ ולמה העלינו ממצרים להביא אתנו אל-המקום הרע הזה לאו מקום זרע ותאנה וגפן ורמון ומים אין לשתות: (שם כ, ה)
²² זכרנו את-הדגה אשר-נאכל במצרים חנם את הקשאים ואת האבטחים ואת-החציר ואת-הבצלים ואת-השומים: (שם יא, ה)
²³ ארץ חשה וישערה וגפן ותאנה ורמון ארץ-צית שמן ודבש: (דברים ח, ח)
²⁴ כי-תצור אל-עיר ימים רבים להלחם עליה לתפשה לא-תשחית את-עצה לנדח עליו גרזן כי ממנו תאכל ואתו לא תכרת כי האדם עץ השדה לבא מפניו במצור: רק עץ אשר-תדע כי-לא-עץ מאכל הוא אתו תשחית וכרת ובנית מצור על-העיר אשר-הוא עשה עמך מלחמה עד רדתה: (דברים כ, ט-כ)
²⁵ וישב יהודה לבטח איש תחת תחת גפנו ותחת תאנתו מדן ועד-באר שבע כל ימי מלכותו: (מלכים א ה, ה)
²⁶ מיכה ד, א-ה
 וישבו איש תחת גפנו ותחת תאנתו ואין מחריד כפי-י יקוק צבאות דבר (שם ד)

to be available in a form whereby its benefits can be realized immediately. They eat by instinct to satisfy their subsistence needs and they consume whatever they see or desire without concern for the broader repercussions of their actions. God provides what they need in the wild from that which grew of its own accord or that which does not require any processing. On the other hand, trees are a long term investment. One has to devote the energy to nurture the seed and then the sapling for years before there is any produce.²⁷ Once the tree begins to yield fruit, it can continue for years to produce with significantly less input than those initial investment years. Similarly, grains are not edible in their harvested state, but after much toil and processing they can yield flour, bread, cakes and etc., items with significantly more nutritional value than the grain in its raw state. The common denominator is that one must delay their fulfillment and indulgence in order to enjoy the benefits of these items, but if they do so, the results are significant.

The Torah connects between the abundance of natural water resources and the raising of vegetables which is represented by the Land of Egypt. The Egyptians are steeped in materialism and lack spirituality because they can detach themselves from God. They do not need rain because the Nile provides them with a constant source of water and they plant vegetables (כגן (הירק), living a life of instant gratification, that makes it difficult for them to forgo their animalistic side in favor of the possible longer term spiritual benefit. The Land of Israel is reliant on rain for its water supply which as the Torah in Sefer Devarim indicates is dependent on one's adherence to the word of God. In addition, the favored crop of fruits is an exercise in delayed gratification. Both of these factors are conducive to helping one live a life of spirituality that is more akin to the idyllic state of Gan Eden. This difference is also highlighted in the impact of the Shemitta on these items. Vegetables are annuals and therefore the restrictions of Shemitta will prevent one from engaging in raising those items during the Sabbatical year.²⁸ It in a sense shuts down the avenue of instant gratification. On the other hand, fruit trees, which are perennials, will continue to produce, even if in a curtailed fashion, during the Shemitta year despite the lack of direct human care. The result is that generally there is a lack of vegetables during the Shemitta year whereas

there are plenty of fruits with the sanctity of Shevi'it (קדושת שביעית).

Adam was charged with simply maintaining the Garden of Eden, living a life connected to God, but he could not resist the temptation and the desire associated with the Etz Hada'at. That miscalculation landed him expelled from the incubator of spirituality and thrown out into a world where it was easy to be indistinguishable from the animals. A place where the shared trough of instant gratification looms large and spirituality and connection to God is far murkier. Our job is to reverse that mistake and grasp for the Tree of Life, rather than the Etz Hada'at, despite there being a fiery ever-turning sword of materialism and pleasure (להט החרב המתהפכת) that continuously tries to derail us.

Shabbat Shalom

²⁷ ובמיוחד לפי דיני ערלה שהפירות של שלשת השנים הראשונות הם אסורים

²⁸ וגם מה שנזרע לפני השמיטה לא נועד לאוצר אלא ללקיטה ואכילה מיידית ומפני זה ירקות עם קדושת שביעית נעלמים מהר מאד