

TWO HALVES OF A WHOLE

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

Does divine punishment always fit the crime? Should punishment be rehabilitative or punitive, and how should we classify divine punishment? Do opposites attract or is that just a cliché? A careful study of the story of Adam and Chava in Gan Eden provides answers to these questions.

The Torah began the story of humanity with a brief overview of creation. Although the account of creation leaves us with far more questions than answers, it does serve as an introduction to the creation of the human creature and G-d's expectations for having a relationship with this free-willed creation. The introduction clearly identifies G-d as the Creator Who created heaven and earth with intent and purpose. The free-willed human, as the last of G-d's creations, was mandated to study G-d's world and use it for the purposes He intended. (2:15 - "to work it and to guard it.")

In order for the human to use G-d's world as He intended, he must listen to G-d's instructions as how to use His world. Therefore, from the first moment of the Adam creature's creation G-d spoke to him and instructed him how to use the world. Simply put, G-d gave commandments and we were supposed to listen. To not listen is to sin.

In verse 2:17 G-d granted Adam permission to eat from the trees of the garden and prohibited him from eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. This prohibition was Adam's one and only Mitzvah.

The Torah then detailed the splitting of Adam into two components, Adam and Chava. The key verse is, (2:18) "It is not good that Adam should be alone" This Pasuk seems to establish the Adam half as the lonely, needy, dependent half and the Chava half as the independent alleviator of Adam's aloneness.

However, at the same time it established the Adam half as the arbitrator of G-d's word because it was incumbent upon the Adam half to share G-d's single commandment with the Chava half.

Therefore, the Chava half accomplishes her purpose by being a helpmate for the needs of the Adam half, and the Adam half accomplishes his purpose by sharing the word of G-d with his companion, the Chava half.

In order for the independent Chava half to succeed as a helpmate, she must often initiate the help. This is based on how she perceives and understands the needs of the Adam half through both intelligent analysis as well as intuition. This usually requires finesse and diplomacy on the part of the

Chava half because the half does not readily recognize or admit to his needs. Furthermore, the Adam half finds it very difficult to accept direction from anyone else, except G-d Himself. As such, the dependent Adam half must be trained to follow the innovative lead of the Chava half in attaining completion and happiness.

The dependent Adam half should accept help from his Chava half with humility, respect, and appreciation; however, that often is not the case making the job of the independent Chava half that much more difficult. At the same time, it is incumbent upon the independent Chava half to accept the rulings of the dependent Adam half as it regards the word of G-d.

The Adam half was created to be inherently more conservative, dependent, and disciplined in following the commandments of G-d than the Chava half. It is the Adam half that is responsible to model, express, and teach servitude and subjugation to the word of G-d.

In many ways, it is the eternal battle between emotion and intellect. Emotion is often in conflict with intellectual restrictions and demands. The dependent Adam half feels less empowered to voice his emotional needs and feelings and is naturally inclined to set them aside in favor of the stated word of G-d. The independent Chava half, on the other hand, feels empowered to express her emotions and does not set them aside easily. Her natural tendency is to empower her emotions over the intellectualized command of G-d.

Both the Adam half and the Chava half are challenged regarding adherence to the word of G-d. G-d commands the Adam half who in turn commands the Chava half. The Adam half wants to listen to G-d because that is his natural and dependent inclination. At the same time, the Adam half is dependent upon the Chava half to be his helpmate. The Chava half's inclination is to question and challenge the word of G-d because of her independence. The Adam half should exert leadership and authority in demanding compliance to the word of G-d, but is naturally dependent upon his Chava half and her independent intellect, emotion, and inventiveness. If the Chava half is in agreement with G-d, the Adam half will easily comply. His compliance will be on the level of being subject to the word of G-d and "having been commanded", while the Chava half's compliance will be on the level of "I agree, therefore I do." Often, the Chava half is far more passionate and motivated in her service of G-d.

The Adam half and the Chava half are part of each one of us. The Adam half is more dominant in the male half of humanity while the Chava half is more dominant in the female half of humanity. However, both components were intended in the completion of the human, and it is the institution of marriage and family that allows for each of us to find our missing half.

G-d desires that we innovate within the limits of nature and the structure of Jewish law. Such independent thought and expression within the established rules of Torah is the wished-for balance between the disciplined, dependent Adam half and the spirited, independent Chava half.

The same is true psychologically in human relationships. The independent, invulnerable, care-taking

male will seek out a seemingly vulnerable and dependent female. At first, the dynamics seem to work perfectly. However, soon enough, the aggressive, independent "know it all" male is perceived as arrogant and insensitive, while the demure, dependent "I just don't know what to wear" female is perceived as oppressive neediness and the inability to take responsibility or made a decision.

In a healthy relationship, each half, the independent and the dependent seek out personal growth and development. As their awareness and understanding of themselves and each other grows, each partner becomes stronger and more responsive in understanding and appreciating the other's uniqueness. In many ways, the male will become more expressive and vulnerable while the female becomes stronger and more independent. So yes, opposites are intended to attract.

The story of Adam, Chava, the Serpent and the Tree of Knowledge is a perfect presentation of the Adam half and the Chava half and their struggle for integration and wholeness. G-d commanded Adam to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Adam shares the word of G-d with Chava. At first, there is no reason for Chava to challenge G-d's will. She willingly complies with the teachings of Adam.

The Serpent suggested to Chava that there were ulterior motives to G-d's command and awoke Chava's independent nature. To be "like G-d" (3:5) is the ultimate spiritual aspiration, and to emulate G-d is to proclaim His majesty and greatness. Therefore, the Serpent (or Chava herself) reasoned that G-d really wanted us to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil so that we would better "know" Him and "be like Him." G-d's saying, "No - Do not eat!" was really a test! Would His free willed human creatures desire to know Him better and thereby emulate Him more completely be strong enough for them to go against His own command? Chava ate from the forbidden fruit.

However, what Chava should have done was express her natural independence by denying the Serpent's seduction and passionately listening to the word of G-d. Instead, Chava approached Adam and offered him a taste of the forbidden fruit. Dependent Adam failed in his job as the teacher of G-d's word. He gave in to his own tendency toward dependency and listened to Chava's advances and ate of the Tree of Knowledge.

What Adam should have done was become the true teacher of G-d's word and express his outrage at Chava having transgressed the command of G-d. He should have directed his tendency for being dependent by depending on G-d and listening to His command and not depend on Chava his helpmate. He showed a greater dependency on Chava than upon G-d. Simply put, Adam and Chava, two apparent opposites, went against the word of G-d and therefore sinned.

Did the punishments fit the crime and were they punitive or rehabilitative? Independent Chava who expressed independence from G-d's wishes by listening to her own rationale and feelings would now be forced to become more dependent upon G-d and upon Adam. Whereas, before the sin, birth and child rearing was to be done like the animals of the wild - with ease and independence - after the sin, the birthing process would incapacitate the mother forcing her to be even more

dependent upon the miracle of birth and ministrations of Adam. It was as if G-d said to Chava, "You wanted to be independent, go and be independent. Let us see how far you get on your own!"

Dependent Adam who showed independence from G-d and a greater dependency upon Chava, would now have to depend more on himself than before. What should have been and outright gift from G-d, Adam's livelihood, would now be obtained through the sweat of his brow. The natural tendency toward following and relying upon Chava would now be challenged by her increased dependency upon Adam as her caretaker and provider. He would have to either become more dependent upon himself or trusting of G-d. It is as if G-d said to Adam, "You wanted to be independent, go and be independent. Let us see how far you get on your own! Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you"

In the end, each half of humanity, the Adam half and the Chava half, were challenged to develop their individual relationships with G-d and become whole. In contrast and harmony with each other, Adam and Chava helped each other to understand themselves and each other. Together, they independently developed into the intended free willed creature forged in the image of G-d and endowed with the knowledge of good and evil.

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