

WALKING IN THE GARDEN

by Rabbi Aron Tendler

What happens to our Neshama when we sin? There are two instances in the Torah where the aftermath of sinning is clearly stated: When Adam and Chava ate from the Tree of Knowledge and when the Jews worshiped the Golden Calf. In both instances the sinners did Teshuva and in both instances the consequences were irrevocable.

Adam and Chava repented their sin but were not allowed back into Gan Eden. G-d remained distant from them. He could no longer be heard "walking in the garden." (Ber. 3:8) (Why a garden? Think jungle vs. garden)

The Jews repented their sin but did not regain the closeness to G-d they had enjoyed before the Golden Calf.

The consequence for sinning is becoming distant from G-d. Whereas before Adam and Chava sinned G-d was overtly manifest in the workings of the universe, after the sin G-d hid Himself behind the facade of nature. Adam and Chava were forced to leave Gan Eden and had to work in order to reveal G-d.

At the time of Mattan Torah the Jews merited hearing G-d speak. His words manifested His reality in a public venue never before experienced by humanity. G-d, once again could be heard "walking in the garden."

After the sin of the Golden Calf, G-d restricted Himself within the confines of the Mishkan. Once again G-d could only be heard by a select few. Only prophets were able to hear G-d "walking in the garden."

In the beginning, all of humanity (meaning: Adam and Chava) was able to "hear G-d in the garden." After they sinned, G-d altered the souls of humanity and introduced death into the equation. The pure part of the Neshama - soul that is able to connect with G-d on the most intimate level was set-aside for the future. No longer was "hearing G-d" a given. Humanity was left with a void that could only be filled with the greatest discipline and effort. Therefore, only a select few ever attained the level of prophecy and were able to "hear G-d walking in the garden."

With the introduction of Avraham and Sarah, G-d rewarded their belief and devotion by gifting their children with the ability to attain true intimacy with Him. The missing part of their Neshama was returned to them. This special Neshama became known as the Nishmas Yisroel, the soul of the

Jewish people. This returned quality allows us to attain closeness to G-d with greater ease than otherwise possible. It still requires discipline and effort, but far less than it otherwise would have been.

At the time of Mattan Torah, the spiritual potential called Nishmas Yisroel had been perfected. (Look at the power of Chesed = Achdus! As one individual with one intent!) All of us were ready to experience G-d's overt revelation. All of us were on the level of prophecy. Humanity, represented by the Jewish people - the kingdom of priests and the holy nation, were ready to once again hear G-d walking in the garden. Humanity had returned to the status of Adam and Chava before they had sinned.

Once the Jews had sinned with the Golden Calf (The opposite of Chesed is licentiousness. They lost their level of Achdus.) they fell from the level of prophecy that they had experienced at Mattan Torah. They could no longer hear G-d "walking in the garden." (33: 1-12) G-d withdrew His "voice" to within the confines of the Ohel Moed - Meeting Tent and only the chosen few would ever attain the level of prophecy.

However, the Nishmas Yisroel remained intact. It was definitely bruised and battered, but it was not taken away in the manner that it had been taken away after the sin of Adam and Chava. The Bnai Yisroel retained their potential to more easily attain true intimacy (understanding) with G-d.

The Nishmas Yisroel, our potential for understanding G-d, is the necessary ingredient in studying Torah. Although G-d would no longer speak overtly to the whole nation he did leave us His written word. (The Tree of Knowledge! - think about it)

Unlocking the secrets of G-d's word demands attention and devotion to the teachings of His prophets and teachers. Through their instruction we are able to discover, reveal, and understand G-d's intention in having created the universe. That is why our Parsha concludes with a description of how Moshe received G-d's Torah and transmitted it to the rest of the Bnai Yisroel. Through Moshe's teaching we are once again able to hear G-d "walking in the garden."

Copyright © 2001 by [Rabbi Aron Tendler](#) and Project Genesis, Inc.

The author is Rabbi of Shaarey Zedek Congregation, Valley Village, CA.
