

# AN IMPERFECT WORLD

*by Rabbi Berel Wein*

The Garden of Eden is portrayed for us as being the perfect place. Mortality had not yet entered the way of the world and our aged father and mother lived in an environment where everything was provided; food, shelter and freedom from external dangers. Yet, in this most idyllic of situations – one that we cannot begin to contemplate or imagine – temptation lurked even in this setting.

Humans are the union of the body and soul, and as such, perfection cannot be achieved. Humans are destined to always be unsatisfied. We desire foods and pleasures that we do not need, and in fact are not beneficial to us, but we want them just because we haven't acquired them yet. Once having achieved our goal and desire, so to speak, we are always disappointed and look to find another area of seeming pleasure, in order to satisfy our unquenchable thirst to attain more..

There was a famous comedic skit that was popular in the United States many decades ago about a very wealthy man who built an enormous mansion with many more rooms that he could ever populate or use. Nevertheless, he invited all his friends to the housewarming dedication of his mansion and gave them all a tour of this enormous building. As everyone was showering compliments upon him for having created this monstrosity, he was heard to remark: "This is nothing! Wait to you see the next house that I am going to build for myself." His Garden of Eden was certainly still not enough.

The rabbis of the Mishnah accurately observed that the more one has, the more worries one acquires. Though Judaism does not preach poverty or asceticism, it does emphasize moderation and for satisfaction not to be found in material items and pleasures alone. When Adam and Eve were driven from the perfect world that they had originally inhabited and were sent out into the dangerous and less-than-perfect world that we now inhabit, they never lost the original human drive that brought about their expulsion from that perfect world.

Wise men and women throughout the ages have always defined the struggles of society, its wars and decisions, its lack of fairness and the presence of so much evil, as being the futile attempt of humans to try and batter down the gates of that garden and reenter and create a perfect world. The obvious inability of human beings to do so only adds frustration and disappointment. It destroys societies and political systems and destabilizes seemingly great and powerful countries and nations.

But there is an inner voice that reminds us that we do have within us a piece of that perfect world, a system of morality and human goodness, kindness and obedience to the moral code that our

Creator has fashioned for us. This enables us to survive and thrive in the imperfect world in which we now live.

Shabbat shalom  
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