



Why Did Eve Listen to the Snake?

Eve (Chavah in Hebrew) had just one commandment to keep: not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Yet she listened to the serpent, who told her to eat the forbidden fruit, and she then invited her husband, Adam, to do the same. It's a tragic tale that has left many wondering, why did she even listen to the snake?

Before answering this question, it's interesting to note that the Torah informs us that "the serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild beasts that G-d had made ..." indicating that the snake used his cunning to entice Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. Commentators explain that the arguments of the snake parallel the tactics our own evil inclination uses to entice us to sin. Through exploring the serpent's subterfuge, we'll also gain a better understanding of the workings of the evil inclination.



Art by Sefira Lightstone

Adding to G-d's Word

The Talmud points out that G-d commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. Yet, Eve told the serpent that G-d had commanded them not to eat and not to touch the tree.

Although G-d commanded Adam not to eat from the tree, Adam rationalized that by not touching the tree, they would be prevented from eating from it. So when he repeated the command to Eve, he added that G-d said not to touch it.

Hearing Eve's words, the serpent cunningly pushed her into the tree, showing her that nothing would happen if she touched the tree—ergo, nothing would happen if she ate from it.

This, the Talmud explains, teaches us that whoever adds to the Torah ends up subtracting from it. By erroneously attributing an added prohibition to G-d, Eve ended up sinning and eating from the forbidden fruit.

The Snake Ate First

Eve was told that when she would eat from the Tree of Knowledge, she would die. Rabbi Don Isaac Abarbanel says that the snake challenged this by demonstrating that he could eat from the tree without any repercussions, which led Eve to speculate that the "real" reason behind the commandment was, as the snake claimed, that "G-d knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like divine beings ..."

(Interestingly, according to this explanation, the snake didn't actually talk. Rather, it was through actions that intimated the message that is attributed to him in Scripture.)

The Appeal of Forbidden Pleasure

Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar, known as the Ohr Hachaim, explains that from the opening words of the serpent, we can glimpse some of the tactics he (and the evil inclination) used.

The snake opened by asking, "Did G-d indeed say, 'You shall not eat of any of the trees of the garden?'"

Now, what did he mean to say here? Surely, the serpent knew that all other trees were permitted. Rather, he was insinuating that all the fruit paled in comparison to the fruit of this tree, and as long as she did not taste its fruit it would be as if she never ate fruit of any tree at all.

Thus, the evil inclination works to simultaneously decrease one's desire for the permitted while increasing one's desire for the forbidden.

"All Is Forbidden"

Alternatively, the snake was suggesting that all the other trees in the Garden were planted from branches of the Tree of Knowledge. As such, he reasoned, they should really be forbidden to eat as well.

This is another way the evil inclination entices people. It attempts to magnify and intensify the challenge of doing mitzvahs, and it then turns around and convinces the person that due to the "insurmountable obstacles," it is impossible to properly observe the mitzvahs.

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A Matter of Focus

The Rebbe explains that the intent of the evil inclination is to cause a person to do the opposite of what G-d wants. When the observance of a specific mitzvah takes on particular importance, the evil inclination makes an extra effort to prevent the person from doing that mitzvah. Thus, when Adam and Eve had but one mitzvah, the snake trained all of its power of enticement and seduction to get them to sin. In our own lives, when a specific mitzvah feels particularly difficult, that may be the very mitzvah we are meant to focus on.

Knowing Better Than G-d

The Chassidic masters explain that Adam and Eve knew that their life in the Garden was meant to be an ongoing expansion of divine consciousness brought about by "cultivating and guarding."

By suggesting to Eve that perhaps all the fruits were forbidden, the snake was trying to subtly plant in Eve's mind the idea that perhaps G-d meant to deprive them of the fullness of His creation and limit their ability to accomplish His ends. He was not letting them use every available means to make this world His home, in effect sabotaging their efforts. "If He has denied you this fruit, He may as well have denied you all fruit!" Thus, the snake convinced Eve that he knew better than G-d Himself how to accomplish G-d's ends.

This is another way the evil inclination usually works. It does not (initially, at least) attempt to convince us to sin, for we as humans are logical thinkers and would refuse. It instead convinces us that transgressing G-d's express will is a shortcut to accomplishing G-d's true purpose, and the supposedly sinful act is in fact meritorious.

Now that we know why Eve listened to the snake, we can better understand and be aware of the wily tricks of our own cunning snake, the evil inclination, and conquer it.

(by Rabbi Yehuda Shurpin from www.chabad.org)

Rabbi Shmuel Kaplan and Aaron Yirmiyahu Rosenbloom

are co-sponsoring Kiddush this Shabbat
in honor of their respective

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Weekly Ladies Shabbat Afternoon Parsha Shiur

given by Rebbitzin Leah Kaplan.

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 10/9 — 28 Tishrei

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.

Candles — 6:18 p.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:20 p.m.

Shabbat, 10/10 — 29 Tishrei

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.

Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 10:00 a.m.

Minchah — 6:05 p.m.

Shiur — after Minchah

Shkiah — 6:35 p.m.

Ma'ariv — 7:17 p.m.

Sunday — Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, 10/11 — 30 Tishrei

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:15 p.m.

Monday — Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, 10/12 — 1 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 6:40 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:15 p.m.

Tuesday, 10/13 — 2 Chshvan

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:15 p.m.

Wednesday, 10/14 — 3 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:15 p.m.

Thursday, 10/15 — 4 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:15 p.m.

Friday, 10/16 — 5 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.

Candles — 6:08 p.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:10 p.m.