

From the Rabbi's Desk  
Rabbi Manes Kogan

Hillcrest Jewish Center  
183-02 Union Turnpike, Flushing, NY 11366  
[rabbikogan@hillcrestjc.org](mailto:rabbikogan@hillcrestjc.org)

**Insights into the Bible**  
**[11]**

**"Where are you?" – "Am I my brother's keeper?"**  
(Insights into Genesis - Chapters 3 & 4)



**Chapter 2:15-18**

The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden, to till it and tend it. <sup>16</sup> And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; <sup>17</sup> but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die."

<sup>18</sup> The Lord God said, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him."

**?** ***"Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat..."*** God seems to have given Adam a pretty good deal. Why do you think Adam disobeyed God?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 4 \_\_\_\_\_

**?** **Why do you think it isn't good for man to be alone?**

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 3:1-24**

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild beasts that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say: You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" <sup>2</sup> The woman replied to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden. <sup>3</sup> It is only about fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said: 'You shall not eat of it or touch it, lest you die.'" <sup>4</sup> And the serpent said to the woman, "You are not going to die, <sup>5</sup> but God knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like divine beings who know good and bad." <sup>6</sup> When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they perceived that they were naked; and they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves loincloths.

<sup>8</sup> They heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of day; and the man and his wife hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> The Lord God called out to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" <sup>10</sup> He replied, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." <sup>11</sup> Then He asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat?" <sup>12</sup> The man said, "The woman You put at my side — she gave me of the tree, and I ate." <sup>13</sup> And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done!" The woman replied, "The serpent duped me, and I ate." <sup>14</sup> Then the Lord God said to the serpent,

"Because you did this,  
More cursed shall you be  
Than all cattle  
And all the wild beasts:  
On your belly shall you crawl  
And dirt shall you eat  
All the days of your life.  
<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your offspring and hers;  
They shall strike at your head,  
And you shall strike at their heel."  
<sup>16</sup> And to the woman He said,  
"I will make most severe  
Your pangs in childbearing;  
In pain shall you bear children.  
Yet your urge shall be for your husband,  
And he shall rule over you."

<sup>17</sup> To Adam He said, "Because you did as your wife said and ate of the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,'

Cursed be the ground because of you;  
By toil shall you eat of it  
All the days of your life:  
<sup>18</sup> Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you.  
But your food shall be the grasses of the field;  
<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your brow  
Shall you get bread to eat,  
Until you return to the ground —  
For from it you were taken.  
For dust you are,  
And to dust you shall return."

<sup>20</sup> The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

<sup>21</sup> And the Lord God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

<sup>22</sup> And the Lord God said, "Now that the man has become like one of us, knowing good and bad, what if he should stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever!" <sup>23</sup> So the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup> He drove the man out, and stationed east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.

## **Chapter 4:1-16**

<sup>1</sup> Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gained a male child with the help of the Lord." <sup>2</sup> She then bore his brother Abel. Abel became a keeper of sheep, and Cain became a tiller of the soil. <sup>3</sup> In the course of time, Cain brought an offering to the Lord from the fruit of the soil; <sup>4</sup> and Abel, for his part, brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock. The Lord paid heed to Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup> but to Cain and his offering He paid no heed. Cain was much distressed and his face fell. <sup>6</sup> And the Lord said to Cain,

"Why are you distressed,  
And why is your face fallen?"

<sup>7</sup> Surely, if you do right,  
There is uplift.  
But if you do not do right  
Sin couches at the door;  
Its urge is toward you,  
Yet you can be its master."

<sup>8</sup> Cain said to his brother Abel ... and when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him. <sup>9</sup> The Lord said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" <sup>10</sup> Then He said, "What have you done? Hark, your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground! <sup>11</sup> Therefore, you shall be more cursed than the ground,

which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. <sup>12</sup> If you till the soil, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. You shall become a ceaseless wanderer on earth."

<sup>13</sup> Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is too great to bear! <sup>14</sup> Since You have banished me this day from the soil, and I must avoid Your presence and become a restless wanderer on earth — anyone who meets me may kill me!" <sup>15</sup> The Lord said to him, "I promise, if anyone kills Cain, sevenfold vengeance shall be taken on him." And the Lord put a mark on Cain, lest anyone who met him should kill him. <sup>16</sup> Cain left the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

**? What do both stories (Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden and Cain's murder of Abel) have in common? How can the story of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden shed light on Cain's murder of Abel?**

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 4 \_\_\_\_\_

**? At the beginning of his book "The Way of Man," Martin Buber brings a beautiful story (see below) about Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of Chabad Hassidism. What additional layer of interpretation is Buber's story adding to the Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden's biblical narrative?**

Rabbi Shneur Zalman, The Rav<sup>1</sup> of Northern White Russia (died 1813), was put in jail in Petersburg, because the mitnagdim<sup>2</sup> had denounced his principles and his way of living to the government. He was awaiting trial when the chief of the gendarmes entered his cell. The majestic and quiet face of the rav, who was so deep in meditation that he did not at first notice his visitor, suggested to the chief, a thoughtful person, what manner of man he had before him. He began to converse with his prisoner and brought up a number of questions which had occurred to him in reading the Scriptures. Finally he asked: 'How are we to understand that God, the all-knowing, said to Adam: "Where art thou?"'

'Do you believe,' answered the rav, 'that the Scriptures are eternal and that every era, every generation and every man is included in them?'

'I believe this,' said the other.

'Well then,' said the zaddik,<sup>1</sup> 'in every era, God calls to every man: "Where are you in your world? So many years and days of those allotted to you have passed, and how far have you gotten in your world?" God says something like this: "You have lived forty-six years. How far along are you?"'

When the chief of the gendarmes heard his age mentioned, he pulled himself together, laid his hand on the rav's shoulder, and cried: 'Bravo!' But his heart trembled.

**! "Where are you?" - A question as old as the world.**