



In the Beginning...

In Genesis, we learn that man is created in the image of G-d.

If you have followed my previous articles, you know that I view each of us as living in two worlds, the outside world, and our own inner world. Thus, each time a child is born, an entire new world is created. As I observe the birth and development of babies, I am struck by the similarities between the development of each child's world and G-d's description of creation. Early on we see that G-d divides the heavens from the earth, the waters from dry land, and night and day. At birth, baby's environment shifts from liquid to dry, and a main first task for each baby is to learn to differentiate between day and night. As each baby transitions into toddlerhood, he learns to name all the items surrounding him, one word at a time, much like Adam was entrusted with naming all the animals and vegetation surrounding him.

At first, all of Adam and Eve's needs were provided for by G-d in the Garden of Eden, just as all babies' needs are fulfilled by their parents. G-d imposed one restriction: Don't eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge. It didn't take a long time for Eve, and then Adam to succumb to the temptation of the forbidden fruit. It doesn't take a long time for babies' innocence to begin to shift, either. They explore everything and defy all limits imposed by parents. These days, the forbidden fruit seem to be electrical outlets, switches and buttons.

As babies enter those adorable toddler and pre-school years, we see them employ similar psychological defenses that were used by Adam and Eve. When G-d confronted them about their loss of innocence due to eating the apple, Adam and Eve tried to shift blame: Adam said: "Eve made me do it," while Eve blamed the serpent. All parents can relate amusing stories of how their

young ones tried to hide when they realized they'd done something wrong. Or, they proceeded to blame another sibling for making them do something they shouldn't have.

We move onto the story of Cain and Able, the first two brothers. Both brought an offering to G-d. G-d preferred Able's offering, to that of Cain's. Cain was distraught and enraged, and killed his brother. All parents of multiple children can relate a story whereby the older sibling is prevented from mortally wounding their new infant sibling. I still recall my older son's clever solution to the birth of his younger brother: "Let's put the baby in the microwave!" The feelings of having to share parental attention, love and approval are enraging, so difficult to deal with, and are a struggle that follow us all through the course of our lives.

Throughout childhood, we see young children re-enacting themes that originate in Genesis. We also see parents employing G-d's guidance in teaching children to overcome the primal raw emotions that children face. Thus, parents teach children that they love each child, who is unique and special to them. When children fail to please parents, as Cain's offering was displeasing, hopefully, they use G-d's guidance to encourage the children to try and improve themselves. With patient guidance and continual repetition, children gain mastery over their raw emotions, and employ more sophisticated psychological defenses, which will be exemplified by the future Biblical stories and parables.

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