

## The Tree of Knowledge and the Sin of Knowing

### 1. Genesis Chapters 1 - 3

#### Chapter 1

(כט) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל עֵשֶׂב זֶרַע וְזֶרַע אֲשֶׁר עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת כָּל הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ פְּרִי עֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לָכֶם יְהִי לְאֹכְלָהּ. . . (לא) וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי.

God said, "Behold, I have given you every herb which yields seed that is on the face of the earth, and every tree which has fruit and yields seed; these will be yours for eating. . . (31) God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. There was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

#### Chapter 2

אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם בְּיוֹם עֲשׂוֹת ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם. (ה) וְכֹל שִׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם יְהִי בְּאֶרֶץ וְכֹל עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם יִצְמַח כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר ה' אֱלֹקִים עַל הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אִין לַעֲבֹד אֶת הָאֲדָמָה. (ז) וַיִּצְרָר ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הָאָדָם עֲפָר מִן הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפָּיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה. (ח) וַיִּטַּע ה' אֱלֹקִים גֶּן בְּעֵדֶן מִקְדָּם וַיִּשְׂם שָׁם אֶת הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצָר. (ט) וַיִּצְמַח ה' אֱלֹקִים מִן הָאֲדָמָה כָּל עֵץ נְחֻמָּד לְמִרְאֵה וְטוֹב לְמַאֲכָל וְעֵץ הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הַגֶּן וְעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע.

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, on the day that Hashem, God, made the earth and heavens. (5) No shrub of the field was yet on the earth and no herb of the field had as yet sprung up because Hashem, God, had not brought rain onto the earth and there was no man to work the ground. (6) But a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. (7) Hashem, God, formed the man from the dust of the ground and blew in his nostrils a breath of life and the man became a living being. (8) Hashem, God, planted a garden in Eden, to the East, and He placed there the man whom He had formed. (9) Hashem, God, made grow from the ground every tree that is pleasing in appearance and good for food, the Tree of Life in the middle of the garden, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

(כ) וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת לְכָל הַבְּהֵמָה וְלַעֹוף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְלָאָדָם לֹא מָצָא עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ. וַיִּפֹּל ה' אֱלֹקִים תְּרַדְמָה עַל הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצִּלְעֹתָיו וַיִּסְגֶּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָהּ. (כב) וַיִּבֶן ה' אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַצִּלְעַת אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִן הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיְבָאָהּ אֵל הָאָדָם. (כג) וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הִפְעַם עֵצָם מִעֲצָמֵי וּבָשָׂר מִבְּשָׂרִי לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לָקַחָהּ זֹאת. (כד) עַל כֵּן יַעֲזֹב אִישׁ אֶת אָבִיו וְאֶת אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד. (כה) וַיְהִיו שְׁנֵיהֶם עֲרוּמִים הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ.

The man named all the livestock, the birds of the sky, and the beasts of the field, but for man he did not find a helper to be his counterpart. (21) Hashem, God, cast a deep sleep upon the man, and he slept, and He took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. (22) Hashem, God, built the rib that He had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. (23) The man said, "This time, this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. This will be called 'woman' because this was taken from man." (24) Therefore, a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh. (25) The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed.

Chapter 3

והנחש היה ערום מפל חית השדה אשר עשה ה' אלקים ויאמר אל האשה אף כי אמר אלקים לא תאכלו מכל עץ הגן. (ב) ותאמר האשה אל הנחש מפרי עץ הגן נאכל. (ג) ומפרי העץ אשר בתוך הגן אמר אלקים לא תאכלו ממנו ולא תגעו בו פן תמתו. (ד) ויאמר הנחש אל האשה לא מות תמתו. (ה) כי ידע אלקים כי ביום אכלכם ממנו ונפקחו עיניכם והייתם כאלהים ידעי טוב ורע. (ו) ותרא האשה כי טוב העץ למאכל וכי תאוה הוא לעינים ונחמד העץ להשגביל ותקח מפריו ותאכל ותתן גם לאישה עמה ויאכל. (ז) ותפקחנה עיני שניהם וידעו כי עירמם הם ויתפרו עלה תאנה ויעשו להם חגרת. (ח) וישמעו את קול ה' אלקים מתהלך בגן לרוח היום ויתחבא האדם ואשתו מפני ה' אלקים בתוך עץ הגן. (ט) ויקרא ה' אלקים אל האדם ויאמר לו איכה. (י) ויאמר את קלף שמעתי בגן ואירא כי עירם אנכי ואחבא. (יא) ויאמר מי הגיד לך כי עירם אתה המן העץ אשר צויתיד לבלתי אכל ממנו אכלת. (יב) ויאמר האדם: האשה אשר נתתה עמדי הוא נתנה לי מן העץ ואכל. (יג) ויאמר ה' אלקים לאשה מה זאת עשית ותאמר האשה: הנחש השיאני ואכל.

The serpent was more cunning than all the beasts of the field which Hashem, God, had made. He said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You may not eat from any of the trees of the garden?'" (2) The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat. (3) But from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You may not eat from it and you may not touch it, lest you die.'" (4) The serpent said to the woman, "You will certainly not die. (5) Rather, God knows that on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (6) The woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to grant wisdom. She took of its fruit and ate, and she gave some to her husband with her and he ate. (7) The eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked. They sewed together fig leaves and made themselves loin cloths. (8) They heard the voice of Hashem, God, walking in the garden in the breeze of the day and the man and his wife hid from before Hashem, God, among the trees of the garden. (9) Hashem, God, called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" (10) He said, "I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I am naked, so I hid." (11) He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (12) The man said, "The woman whom You placed with me, she gave me from the tree and I ate".

(כב) ויאמר ה' אלקים הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו לדעת טוב ורע ועתה פן ישלח ידו וילקח גם מעץ החיים ואכל וחי לעולם. (כג) וישלחוהו ה' אלקים מגן עדן לעבד את האדמה אשר לקח משם. (כד) ויגרש את האדם וישכן מקדם לגן עדן את הכרבים ואת להט החרב המתהפכת לשמר את דרך עץ החיים. (22) Hashem, God, said, "Behold, man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Now, lest he send forth his hand and take also from the Tree of Life and eat, and live forever—" (23) So, Hashem cast him out of the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. (24) He banished the man, and he placed the cherubs and the blade of the swirling sword to the east of the Garden of Eden to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

## 2. Four Rabbinic Teachings

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### 1. Rashi on 2:4 quoting Menahot 29b

דבר אחר: בה"י בראם, שנאמר: בי"ה י"י צור עולמים (ישעיהו כ"ו:ד') – בשתי אותיות הללו של שם צר שני עולמים, ולימדך כאן שהעולם הזה נברא בה"י.

By means of the letter “ה” He created them. Quoting from Isaiah (26:4): Through “ה – י” [a name of God spelled with the two letters Hey and Yod] God formed worlds. With these two letters of God’s name, God created two worlds [a supernal world and a terrestrial world]. This teaches that our present world was created through the letter Hey.

### 2. Yevamot 63a brought in Rashi on 2:23

וא"ר אלעזר מאי דכתיב {בראשית ב':כ"ג} זאת הפעם עצם מעצמי ובשר מבשרי מלמד שבא אדם על כל בהמה וחיה ולא נתקררה דעתו עד שבא על חוה.

And Rabbi Elazar said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23)? This teaches that Adam had intercourse with each animal and beast in his search for his mate, and his mind was not at ease, in accordance with the verse: “And for Adam, there was not found a helpmate for him” (Genesis 2:20), until he had intercourse with Eve.

### 3. Hullin 139b

המן מן התורה מנין {בראשית ג':י"א} המן העץ.

They also asked Rav Mattana: From where in the Torah can one find an allusion to Haman? He replied: The verse states after Adam ate from the tree of knowledge: “Have you eaten of [hamin] the tree, about which I commanded you that you should not eat?” (Genesis 3:11). Hamin is spelled in the same manner as Haman: Heh, mem, nun.

### 4. Nedarim 20b

{במדבר ט"ו:ל"ט} ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם מכאן אמר רבי אל ישתה אדם בכוס זה ויתן עיניו בכוס אחר אמר רבינא לא נצרכא אלא דאפילו ב' נשיו.

Do not wander after your heart (Numbers 15:39). From this verse Rebbe taught that a man should not drink from this cup and have his eye upon another cup. Ravina said, this teaching is so obvious that it goes without saying except for the case of a man with two wives.

## 3. Thou Shall Not Covet

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### Exodus 20:13

לא תחמד בית רעך לא תחמד אשת רעך ועבדו ועבדו וְאִמְתּוֹ וְשׁוֹרוֹ וְחֲמֹרוֹ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ

Do not covet your fellow's house. Do not covet your fellow's wife, or his servant or his maidservant, or his ox or donkey, or all that belongs to your fellow."

### Deuteronomy 5:17

וְלֹא תִחְמַד אִשְׁתִּי רֵעֶךָ וְלֹא תִחְמַד בַּיִת רֵעֶךָ שְׂדֵהוּ וְעַבְדּוֹ וְאִמְתּוֹ שׁוֹרוֹ וְחֲמֹרוֹ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר לְרֵעֶךָ

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."

## 4. Genesis Chapter 29 – Yakov and Raḥel’s Romance

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הֲיִדְעֶתֶם אֶת לָבָן בֶּן נָחוֹר וַיֹּאמְרוּ יָדַעְנוּ. (ו) וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם הַשְּׁלוֹם לוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ שְׁלוֹם וְהִנֵּה רַחֵל בְּתוּלָה בָּאָה עִם הַצֹּאֵן . . . עוֹדְנוּ מְדַבְּרִים עִמָּם וְרַחֵל בָּאָה עִם הַצֹּאֵן אֲשֶׁר לְאֵבִיָּהּ כִּי רָעָה הוּא. (ז) וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאָה יַעֲקֹב אֶת רַחֵל בַּת לָבָן אַחֵי אִמּוֹ וְאֶת צֹאֵן לָבָן אַחֵי אִמּוֹ וַיִּגַּשׁ יַעֲקֹב וַיִּגַּל אֶת הָאָבָן מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּעָר וַיִּשְׁק אֶת צֹאֵן לָבָן אַחֵי אִמּוֹ. (ח) וַיִּשְׁק יַעֲקֹב לְרַחֵל וַיִּשָּׂא אֶת קְלוֹ וַיִּבְרַךְ.

(י) וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ לָבָן אַךְ עֲצָמִי וּבְשָׂרִי אֶתָּה וַיִּשָּׁב עִמּוֹ חֲדָשׁ יָמִים.

(טז) וּלְלָבָן שְׁתֵּי בָנוֹת שֵׁם הַגְּדֹלָה לְאֵה וְשֵׁם הַקְּטָנָה רַחֵל. (יז) וַעֲיָנִי לְאֵה רַפּוֹת וְרַחֵל הִיָּתָה יָפֶת תֹּאֵר וַיִּפֶת מְרָאָהּ. (יח) וַיִּאָּהֵב יַעֲקֹב אֶת רַחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֶעֱבְדָךְ שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים בְּרַחֵל בְּתוּלָה הַקְּטָנָה. (יט) וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן טוֹב תַּתִּי אֶתָּה לְךָ מִתַּתִּי אֶתָּה לְאִישׁ אַחֵר שְׁבַע עֲמָדִי. (כ) וַיַּעֲבֹד יַעֲקֹב בְּרַחֵל שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים וַיְהִי כַּעֲיָנָיו כִּימִים אֲחֵדִים בְּאֶהְבְּתוֹ אֶתָּה. (כא) וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֵל לָבָן הֲבָה אֶת אִשְׁתִּי כִּי מָלְאוּ יָמֵי וְאֲבוֹאָהָ אֵלַיָּהּ. (כב) וַיִּצְאֹף לָבָן אֶת כָּל אֲנָשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם וַיַּעַשׂ מִשְׁתָּהּ. (כג) וַיְהִי כַּעֲרֹב וַיִּשְׁחַח אֶת לְאֵה בְּתוּלָה וַיִּבָּא אֶתָּה אֵלָיו וַיִּבָּא אֵלָיָהּ. (כד) וַיִּתֵּן לָבָן לָהּ אֶת זֶלְפָּה שִׁפְחָתוֹ לְלְאֵה בְּתוּלָה שִׁפְחָהּ. (כה) וַיְהִי בַּבֶּקֶר וְהִנֵּה הוּא לְאֵה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל לָבָן מַה זֹאת עָשִׂיתְ לִי הֲלֹא בְרַחֵל עָבַדְתִּי עֲמָדָה וְלָמָּה רָמִיתָנִי. (כו) וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה כֵן בְּמִקוֹמִנִי לְמַת הַצְּעִירָה לְפָנַי הַבְּכִירָה. (כז) מִלֵּא שְׁבַע זֹאת וְנִתְּנָה לְךָ גַּם אֶת זֹאת בְּעַבְדָּךְ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲבֹד עֲמָדִי עוֹד שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים אַחֲרֹתָי. (כח) וַיַּעַשׂ יַעֲקֹב כִּן וַיִּמְלֵא שְׁבַע זֹאת וַיִּתֵּן לוֹ אֶת רַחֵל בְּתוּלָה לֹא לְאִשָּׁהּ. (כט) וַיִּתֵּן לָבָן לְרַחֵל בְּתוּלָה אֶת בִּלְהָה שִׁפְחָתוֹ לָהּ לְשִׁפְחָהּ. (ל) וַיִּבָּא גַּם אֵל רַחֵל וַיִּאָּהֵב גַּם אֶת רַחֵל מִלְּאֵה וַיַּעֲבֹד עִמּוֹ עוֹד שְׁבַע שָׁנִים אַחֲרֹתָי.

He said to them, "Do you know Lavan, the son of Nachor?" They said, "We know him." (6) He said to them, "Is it well with him?" They said, "It is well, and here is his daughter Rachel coming with the sheep." . . . (9) While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with the sheep, as she was a shepherdess. (10) When Yaakov saw Rachel, the daughter of Lavan, his mother's brother, and the sheep of Lavan, his mother's brother, Yaakov approached and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered the sheep of Lavan, his mother's brother. (11) Yaakov kissed Rachel and raised his voice and wept.

(12) Yaakov told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rivka's son, and she ran and told her father. (13) When Lavan heard the news regarding Yaakov, his sister's son, he ran towards him, embraced him, kissed him, and brought him to his house. He recounted all these things to Lavan. (14) Lavan said to him, "Indeed, you are my bone and flesh." He stayed by him a month's time. (15) Lavan said to Yaakov, "Because you are my relative, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be." (16) And Lavan had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah and the name of the younger was Rachel. (17) Leah's eyes were soft, while Rachel was shapely and beautiful. (18) Yaakov loved Rachel and he said, "I will work for you for seven years for your younger daughter, Rachel." (19) Lavan said, "Better that I give her to you than I give her to another man. Stay with me." (20) Yaakov worked for Rachel for seven years and they seemed to him like just a few days in his love of her. (21) Yaakov said to Lavan, "Give me my wife because my time is complete, and let me come to her." (22) Lavan gathered all the people of the place and made a feast. (23) In the evening, he took his daughter, Leah, and brought her to him, and he came to her. (24) Lavan gave his maidservant, Zilpah, to his daughter Leah as a maidservant. (25) In the morning, behold, she was Leah! He said to Lavan, "What is this that you have done to me! Was it not for Rachel that I worked with you? Why have you tricked me?" (26) Lavan said, "Such is not done in our place, to give the younger before the older. (27) Complete the week of this one, and this one, too, will be given to you for the work that you will do for me for yet another seven years. (28) Yaakov did so; he completed the week of the one, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife. (29) Lavan gave his maidservant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant. (30) He came to Rachel as well, and he loved Rachel, too, more than Leah. He worked with him for yet another seven years. (31) Hashem saw that Leah was hated and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. (32) Leah conceived and bore a son. She named him Reuven, for she said "Because Hashem has seen my affliction. Surely, now, my husband will love me." (33) She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because Hashem has heard that I am hated and gave me this one, too", and she named him Shimon. (34) She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now, this time, my husband will attach himself to me for I have born him three sons"; therefore, he named him Levi. (35) She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will thank Hashem"; therefore, she named him Yehuda. And she stopped giving birth.