



October 14, 2023

Bereshit — Shabbat M'vorchim

29 Tishrei, 5784

How Adam and Eve Made Peace With Abel's Murder



Art by Rivka Korf Studio

The first portion of the Torah begins with pristine beauty. The creation of a graceful, peaceful world, culminating with the creation of the day of rest, as the Torah describes:

And G-d saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good, and it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day. Now the heavens and the earth were completed and all their host. And G-d completed on the seventh day His work that He did, and He abstained on the seventh day from all His work that He did. And G-d blessed the seventh day and He hallowed it, for thereon He abstained from all His work that G-d created to do.

Alas, the serenity was short lived.

We turn just a few pages and we read of successive disasters. Adam and Eve taste the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, internalizing both good and evil, thus implanting within themselves an inclination to evil, creating a constant struggle within the human heart between the G-dly soul and the animalistic soul.

We read about Adam and Eve being told of their mortality. At the end of their lives, they would return to the earth. They understood that it would take death for the evil and good within them to separate. The body and the evil inclination would return to the earth, and the soul would return heavenward, to G-d.

We then read of the first murder in history. We read about how Adam and Eve had to face a double tragedy; the murder of their son Abel, as well as coming to face with the fact that their son Cain was capable of murdering his own brother.

The Midrash relates that Adam and Eve wept beside the corpse of Abel, unsure what to do with the body because this was their first encounter with death. The Midrash continues: they saw a bird (araiv in the Hebrew) burying a dead bird in the ground. Adam and Eve decided to do the same and buried Abel in the earth.

On the surface, this Midrash explains how they found a solution to the technical question of how to dispose of the corpse. On a deeper level, however, this Midrash contains profound insight into the human condition.

Adam and Eve were at a loss, not only about what to do with Abel's body, but they had a much deeper question: how to respond to absolute evil? How could they continue to live after witnessing the depravity of which humanity was capable?

True, they too had sinned. They too had been condemned to natural death. They too were not perfect. But they could never have imagined that a human being could act so brutally, that one human being could or would afflict an unnatural death upon another human being. They could not imagine that a person could act in a way that was the polar opposite of what G-d had intended.

(continued on the other side)

G-d therefore sent the bird to teach Adam and Eve how to respond to absolute evil. According to the Sages, the arav is terribly cruel toward its young, abandoning its offspring at birth. Adam and Eve witnessed this same bird engaging in the truest form of kindness. The Sages explain that burial is referred to in the Torah as "loving kindness and truth," because when doing kindness with a living person the doer can always expect a favor in return. Not so with burial. When we are kind to the dead, we do not expect anything in return. Thus, the kindness is absolute. The kindness is true kindness.

Adam and Eve looked at the arav and understood. They received the wisdom on how to react. They now understood that the response to absolute evil is absolute kindness. True, evil must be stopped and contained, but the remedy to absolute depravity within humanity is absolute love and compassion.

They were comforted.

They were comforted, because they now understood that the profundity of evil that the human is capable of is matched only by the profound kindness within the human spirit.

They understood that the same human heart capable of boundless hate is likewise capable of boundless love.

We, too, must take this message to heart. We look around the world and see intense cruelty. We know that we must respond with intense kindness. Like Adam and Eve, we understand that this earth is a complicated place, that humanity is capable of extremes. Like Adam and Eve, we respond to negativity with a greater commitment to absolute kindness. When we face unspeakable cruelty, we take a step toward extreme kindness, bringing us closer and closer to G-d's vision of a perfect world. A peaceful world. A world that experiences the tranquility of the seventh day. The tranquility of Shabbat.

(by Menachem Feldman from www.chabad.org)

Dedication of plaques on the Shul board which is prominently located in the hall at the entrance to the Shul is an appropriate means of Tzedakah and supports the Shul as well. Below is the list of items available. Please contact Howard Kaplon at hkaplon@towson.edu for more information.

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| 1. Top (large) Plaques \$5,400 | 2. Medium Plaques \$3,600 |
| 3. Small Plaques \$1,000 | 4. Simcha Leaf \$250 |

Yahrzeit Plaques on the Shul's Memorial board are available. Each yahrzeit plaque is \$360.

Yahrzeits This Week:

Rebetzin Rochel Kaplan 30 Tishrei - Saturday night / Sunday for mother Chaya Yutta bas Chanoch Henech HaKohen

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DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 10/13 — 28 Tishrei

Shacharit — 7:00 p.m.

Candles — 6:12 p.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:15 p.m.

Shabbat, 10/14 — 29 Tishrei

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.

Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 10:01 a.m.

Minchah — 6:00 p.m.

Ma'ariv — 7:13 p.m.

Sunday — Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, 10/15 — 30 Tishrei

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:10 p.m.

Monday — Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, 10/16 — 1 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 6:40 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:10 p.m.

Tuesday, 10/17 — 2 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:10 p.m.

Wednesday, 10/18 — 3 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:10 p.m.

Thursday, 10/19 — 4 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:10 p.m.

Friday, 10/20 — 5 Cheshvan

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.

Candles — 6:02 p.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 6:05 p.m.