

Rabbi Tamar Elad Appelbaum

Tree of Life and Tree of Knowledge - we didn't choose the Tree Of Life

teshuva from root meaning blowing of the wind -

midrash that there was only one tree - the fruit is da'at but the wood itself is eitz hachayim

When we see the fruit is good for us and exploit it then it's the fruit of knowledge

when we exploit it for our own uses (fruit) it's eitz hada'at but when we can just look at it and admire it for its own beauty it's eitz hachayim

They're commanded to eat from all the trees of the garden - eat a little from each tree....they grasped at the beautiful fruit of the Tree and that's how it becomes the tree of da'at

That's why there's a NO attached to this tree - it's a warning that it's in our da'at that things can go wrong

the NO is about limits/boundaries on what we take/use/acquire

Sefat Emet says we have 2 tubes - 1 to breathe and 1 to eat. One is Tree of Life and one is Tree of Knowledge. One is ahava and the other is yirah

Tree of Life is YES (eat of them all) and Tree of Knowledge is NO - limits. We need both!

LEON KASS:

"The discovery of nakedness is the first fruit of this new knowledge of how far we really are from being God. The serpent had promised that if the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened, they would be as God. The narrator, with wonderful irony, says, 'And their eyes were opened, and they saw that they were naked.' The response to this not-so-lofty condition of nakedness includes culture-the arts and the attempts through self-help to fix the limitations of nature. But the other effect of this discovery, which is wonderfully powerful, is that 'they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the Garden.' That suggests that it's only when we discover our weakness and insufficiency that we're ready to pay attention to something higher in the world. Previously, the narrator tells us, God is present, but there's not much evidence that human beings care terribly much. Now that

they see how far they are from being God, there is a kind of relationship to some thing which, in the long run, might offer redemptive possibility for the ills of human life.” (Moyers, p. 52)

STEPHEN MITCHELL:

The knowledge of good and evil that you get from eating the fruit of the tree is the acquaintance with opposites and judgments, separation and death. A very poor kind of knowledge—precisely what children don't have. Not-knowing allows the kind of spacious, open mind in which any possibility can happen. That's what the mind of God truly is - the mind that looks at the whole of creation, including suffering and death and calls it very good. As Isaiah has God say, 'I form light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil.' “ (Moyers p. 54)

LEON KASS:

“This story shows us that the seeds of our troubles are within us. If we read the story this way, we can see how the subsequent stories show us how to live with a wiser knowledge of good and bad, which comes not autonomously but through God's revelation.” (Moyers p.50)

NAOMI ROSENBLATT:

“I must consciously believe that the road leads us forward to where the lamb and the lion will lie down together, and swords will be beaten into plowshares. That's the Eden we'll recreate at the end of days when humans will have learned to use their God-given free will toward good rather than toward evil.” (Moyers p. 54)

Rabbi Shefa Gold

“Our journey of consciousness/Light leads us through embodiment, the palace of existence, to Enlightenment, where God waits for us, ever present.

From the purity and innocence of Eden we journey forth through Duality (represented by the Tree of Good and Evil), through self-knowledge, suffering, and mistakes, towards the Tree of Life, a tree that is rooted in the Divine Reality, with branches that find their flower in our humanity.

THE BLESSING COMES as we receive a vision of “the palace” (physical reality) and let its praise sing through us. God is here, inside all Creation, radiant and waiting.”