

PARASHAH TWO

Genesis 2:4-3:24; Ezekiel 28:11-26; Romans 5:12-21

notes by Tim Hegg

Dependency

Nothing is more contrary to the sinful nature of mankind than the acceptance of a position of dependency. Deep within our sin nature there exists a hunger for independence, for a self-reliant reality in which the “I” exists for no one else and has no need of others. Willing dependence is a profound testimony of a change in the natural bent of the sinner. The normal course runs along the lines of “I’ll do it my way and I don’t need your help.”

Before we so quickly write off this striving for independence, let us not forget that such an attribute is owned by God Himself. So why should mankind be looked at as wrong if he simply attempts to emulate his Creator? And furthermore, isn’t a sense of independence what we strive to teach our children as they grow up, that they can “do it” without our help? From the first time our kids successfully tie their shoes to when they themselves become parents, we have coached them to be independent and applauded their growth in becoming less and less dependent upon us. So where do we cross over the line of right and wrong in this whole area of dependence/independence?

Our Torah section and accompanying biblical texts suggest answers to this and many other questions. In short, we may conclude that the reason it is sinful to seek a complete independence, i.e., a complete self-reliance, is because this goes contrary to the purpose for which we were created. Clearly, apart from a belief in divine creation, there is no sound argument for anything but a striving for utter independence—each person becoming his or her own demiurge or divine sovereign. Thus, from a faith standpoint, it is true that we train our children to be independent of us as their parents, but we train them wrongly if fail to teach them that in becoming independent from their parents *they must become all the more dependent upon God*. In other words, our attempts to teach our children to “stand on their own two feet” will find their best success in showing them that they cannot stand at all unless they stand by God’s grace and strength.

Our Torah section begins in an interesting fashion: it first describes the situation upon the newly created earth, that there had been no rain and that therefore the plant life had not yet blossomed forth. It then proceeds to describe how God sent a mist springing up from the ground to moisten the surface of the soil. It is from this moist ground that He then fashions mankind. Like a potter who wets the clay before fashioning it, so HaShem moistens the ground before forming Adam.

But the fact that the text makes special mention that there were no “trees of the field” and that the “herb had not yet sprouted” sets the stage for a creative purpose for Adam. Immediately after the brief description of Adam’s creation, the text portrays HaShem as planting a garden and placing mankind there to tend it. Now that the ground was being watered by the mist which God ordained, there was a necessity for someone to take care of the resultant plant growth. Man was created for a purpose: not to exist for himself, but to accomplish a task for His Creator—a task which thus made his very existence one of dependence. His success would be measured not by how he pleased himself, but how he

accomplished his assigned tasks of tending the garden.

A further emphasis in this direction may be seen in the inclusion of the two trees: the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the garden which man was to tend were placed two trees of special importance—two trees which, by their very presence, set up a kind of probation to test the willingness of mankind to accept his created purpose as God’s servants.

The Tree of Life, fully accessible to Adam and Eve, symbolized that fact that their lives were sustained by something (indeed, Someone) outside of themselves. They were not themselves “fountains of eternal life” but were dependent upon the food and nourishment which they received from God’s other creative activity. Proximity to such food, then (of which the Tree of Life was the prime symbol), was a matter of life and death. To be expelled from the garden was to risk not having food. For the dependent creatures called “mankind,” this meant death.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was, on the other hand, a test of whether or not man would accept his creative role. It wasn’t some magical tree that gave instant knowledge! It was, no doubt, an ordinary tree with ordinary fruit. What made it unordinary was the prohibition which God attached to it. In this prohibition God set up the situation in which, if man obeyed, he would experience the reality of Good as having overcome the temptation to do Evil. On the other hand, were mankind to succumb to the temptation to eat of this forbidden fruit, in the eating—in the disobeying act itself—he would come to experience the grief and agony of living outside of the very thing for which he was created, namely, to depend upon God.

Even in the punishments and curses which were meted out to the disobedient couple and to Satan, we see God’s mercy on the one hand, and His decree of damnation on the other. For Adam and Eve would still be sustained by the fruits of the created earth, but they would do so now by much labor and sweat. In their striving for daily bread, they would therefore be constantly reminded of their dependence upon the God who alone could send the rain and who alone could bring forth bread from the earth. Every meal would be a reminder of what mankind had forgotten in the garden, that he had been created for God’s purpose and that he was in every way dependent upon God for the fulfillment of that purpose.

The curse upon Satan the serpent, however, was just the opposite: he would eat dust (appropriate for something which travelled upon its belly). Dust is everywhere—it is abundant. Whereas mankind would be constantly dependent upon the Creator for the rain and sunshine which would make his food grow, Satan could look forward to an existence in which he could arrogantly proclaim his independence from the Creator. After all, he would never have to give anyone credit for dust! Satan was therefore condemned to an existence of arrogantly striving for independence from God, while Adam and Eve were granted a life in which even their toils would drive them to trust in their Creator.

This same lesson of dependence/independence is taught by the creation of Chavah (חַוָּה, *Eve*). If we were to look more closely into the psyche of mankind, we would have to agree that between the male and female, while both have a sinful bent toward independence, it is the male that shows this tendency most. Such tongue in cheek messages on shirts and hats such as “real men don’t ask for directions” or “real men don’t read instructions” have some basis in reality or else they wouldn’t be so readily accepted with giggles

and chuckles. The male ego is notorious for its rugged independence and its inability to admit failures.

In the text before us, immediately after we are notified that God placed the man in the garden He had planted (2:17), we find the divine edict that “it is not good for man to be alone” (2:18). Much to the chagrin of the male on his first shift at God’s botanical enterprise, he is called in by the “boss” and given a firm “thumbs down.” It was not that he hadn’t tried—done his best. It was simply (gasp) that he didn’t have in himself what the job required! He showed up deficient, unable, the first glitch of the creative program which needed fast debugging—the first time God uttered “it is not good.” The program stopped—something had to be done. And what was it? To give to the male a partner without whom he could never realize his created purpose, i.e., to display the image of God in which he was created, and to do God’s bidding—to serve God by working in and guarding His creation. In other words, He gave to Adam someone who was his equal, upon whom he would constantly be dependent. God knew that it was within the very nature of the male to strive for independence. Thus, a living, breathing co-partner would be the only solution to a man who was less than what he needed to be to do God’s work.

Do you notice how easily and quickly Adam accepts the arrangement? When Eve is brought to him he responds with the Bible’s first, clear poetry! He is overwhelmed with joy at the sight of this one in all her beauty, corresponding to him in equality—someone with whom he could express oneness. How different after disobedience enters the picture! When sin entered the picture, instead of a willing, mutual submission to each other, there would be, on the part of both of them, a striving for independence each from the other and from God.

Adam and Eve’s Sin

The story of sin begins in this second *parashah* of Genesis. Into the perfect world of God’s Eden comes rebellion and selfishness, the heart of idolatry. Desiring to worship (the Hebrew word עֲבֹדָה, ‘*avodah*, which is often translated “worship,” means “to serve” and thus “to obey”) the creature rather than the Creator (cf. Rom 1:25), Adam willfully rebelled against God’s authority and set himself up as someone who could attain equality with God. He believed the Deceiver’s lie: “has God said...?” He accepted the possibility that God was deceitful, and that he could be God’s equal if he would go his own way – “do his own thing.” So he disobeyed and transgressed the direct commandment of God.

Our Apostolic section (Rom 5:12-21) expounds on this very issue, and teaches us that God had placed Adam in a representatives position. That is to say, Adam acted as the representative for mankind. Like David and Goliath, each who fought as representatives for their respective armies, so Adam stood as the representative for mankind. His sin, and the subsequent penalty, were accredited to him and to all who would descend from him. It is noteworthy that God considers Adam, not Eve, the representative of mankind. Sin, according to Paul, came through one man, not through the woman. Yet Eve was the first one to take of the forbidden tree, and she was the one who gave it to Adam. Why is she not taken as mankind’s representative?

The answer may lie in the fact that God, in His sovereign wisdom, decreed that the order of the universe should find the men (males) bearing the responsibilities of leader-

ship. This is not to imply whatsoever that women are less capable or in any way inferior in intellectual or moral ability. Quite the contrary: women often excel intellectually and have often led the way in societal moral reform. But God had determined to send Yeshua as His Son, not His daughter. Since, of course, the Father is neither male nor female (since He is pure spirit without body), it is within the realm of theoretical possibility that God could have sent His Messiah as “daughter” rather than “son.” That is to say, there is nothing whatsoever within the make-up of “woman” that would preclude the possibility of messianic character or qualities. Of course, had God done this, the whole universe would have been given a different order.

But we do not live in the realm of the theoretical: God sent His Son, Yeshua, who came as a man, not a woman. As such, the whole universe is oriented toward emphasizing His role as the head. Thus the male, not the female, is given both the privilege and the responsibility of bearing the burden of leadership. Adam is cast as the representative of mankind, and it is his actions, not Eve’s, which are passed on to his descendants. It is through “one man” that sin enters the world, and likewise it is through “one Man” that redemption comes.

If we look at the Torah portion carefully, and ask where Adam was when the Deceiver was tempting Eve, we discover an important truth. Note that Eve is approached by Satan as she was apparently in the garden, and one might presume, in the near proximity of the forbidden tree. The lie is sown in her mind that God is actually keeping a secret from them. His reason for not allowing them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is because in reality, if they were to eat of it, they would become as powerful as He. Believing this lie, Eve takes the fruit on the basis that it was 1) good for food (lust of the flesh), 2) a delight to the eyes (lust of the eyes), 3) and she thought it would make her wise (the pride of life, cf. 1John 2:16). But note carefully the emphasis of the text: (Gen 3:6): “...she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.” The Hebrew is emphatic: Adam is “with her” (עִמָּהּ, *imah*). While the meaning could be that Adam simply dwelt with her, the more obvious meaning would be that Adam was with her during the whole conversation with Satan. But remarkably, Adam remains silent! In the place where he should have exerted leadership and protection for his wife, he remained silent and allowed her to be overcome by the enemy. This refusal humbly to take leadership responsibilities resulted in giving Satan an open door for his deceit. And the fact that Adam refused to exercise his God given role as head would play out in the subsequent punishments for sin.

Having realized that their rebellion against God (evidenced by their disobedience to His direct commandment) had severed the sweet fellowship they formerly enjoyed, Adam and Eve hide from His presence. Yet He comes, seeking them: God in search of man. He comes to express His desire for fellowship in spite of the fact that He knows full well what they have done. He comes to demonstrate redemption. Taking an innocent, living creature, He slays it and makes coverings for Adam and Eve. Here, at the very beginning, the picture of atonement (כַּפָּר, *kafar*, from which we get the term Yom Kippur) — a washing clean, is dramatically given. Sin comes through one man’s disobedience; redemption comes through one Man’s obedience. The promise is given (3:15): the seed of the woman would effect victory over the Deceiver and his plot to ruin God’s creative purposes. The Redeemer would come as a man, like Adam, but with pure obedience and

thus the ability to bring atonement.

The rebellion into which Adam and Eve entered disrupted their own relationship as well. Here we learn a most important principle: our relationship with God inevitably affects our relationship with one another. The text of 3:16 has been the basis of much discussion among commentators, but its basic message is clear. The sinful actions of Adam and Eve would bring sure consequences for each. Their relationship together as equals, helping to make up what each one lacked, would now be disrupted. Chaos would enter and the beauty of their relationship would move toward “formless and void” if left to itself. Only God’s intervention could overcome the chaos that sin had brought.

The text of 3:16 is divided along poetic lines, the first two lines are similar and the second two antithetical: (these are my own literal translations)

I will increase your pain in child bearing
In pain you will bear children

> **Similar**

To your husband will your desire be
But he shall lord it over you.

> **Antithetical**

That childbearing would involve pain would remind each generation that the sin of Adam was being passed along. Birth, with all of its joy, was to be attended by the marks of death (pain). Sin’s inevitable fruit is death.

But not only would sin affect each generation, it would also affect the relationship between husband and wife—between male and female. To Chavah the statement is given: “To your husband will your desire be.” The Hebrew word for “desire” used here is תְּשׁוּקָה, *teshukah*, found only two other times in the Tanach: Gen 4:7 and Song of Songs 7:11. Its appearance in Song of Songs has led many commentators to presume that the meaning here is of sexual desire: even though Chavah was warned about the pain of childbirth, she would still desire sexual relations with her husband. But the term in Song of Song 7:11, while surely having marital relations in mind, may carry the sense of “overshadow” or “dominate.” And this is surely the meaning of the word in the only other time it is used, Gen 4:7. Warning Cain that Satan was attempting to snare him, God says: “If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

To have the same, rare word used twice in such close proximity should signal to us that Moses intends a connection between the two. In fact the final phrase of Gen 4:7 is remarkably similar to the wording of 3:16. Sin is personified as a lion, crouching at the door, waiting to devour Cain. Sin “desires” to rule over him. But he must “master” it, overcome its power and rule over sin.

I would suggest that the same nuance of meaning should be found in 3:16. When the text says that “your desire will be for your husband,” we should understand the meaning to be “your desire will be to rule over your husband”—to put your agenda upon him and control him in order to bring a sense of security to your insecure position. The following line, then, spoken of the husband’s reaction: “but he will lord it over you” parallels the exhortation to Cain that he should master the sin. In the husband/wife relationship, the natural inclination of the flesh will be for the woman to attempt to control her husband

for her own benefits, but the physical and economic strength of the husband would allow him to prevail. Here, in the consequences of sin, the war of the sexes has begun! What began as a cooperation between two of God's creations, made for each other, turns into a hostility complete with intrigue, deceit, selfishness, and pain.

And this, I believe, is the natural inclination of us all, male and female. Rather than serving each other, we selfishly strive to protect our own interests at the expense of the other. Whenever we allow the flesh (the evil inclination) to be the deciding factor in our life, we will experience this downgrade toward selfishness in our relationships, and particularly in our marriages.

By God's mercy, however, He has made a way of redemption, and in that redemption a way to be restored to God and to one another. In the Messiah we become new creations, and in that newness are enabled to once again serve each other as God intends. It is interesting that the commands of the Apostles to husband and wives are directed specifically to the very areas of weakness brought about by the sinful nature. If the woman has a natural tendency to attempt to control (desire in the sense of rule over) her husband, the Apostolic exhortation to the wife is "to submit" (Eph 5:22; 1Pet 3:1) to her husband. Likewise, to the husband who would rule harshly over his wife, or who would apathetically remain aloof, the Apostolic exhortations are that husbands are to lead in gentleness and to love through self sacrifice (Eph 5:25f; 1Pet 3:7).

In Yeshua, through the redemption He has won, we are able to return to the purpose for which we were created—glorifying God and sanctifying His Name upon the earth. The place where this begins is in our homes—our marriages. By His mercy and grace, we are enabled to recover the beauty of husband / wife relationship which the fall had destroyed.