



Reader: The Midrash says that originally trees were to have the same taste as the fruit, as the Chumash states "eitz pri." However, the trees deviated from G-d's original intent and the tree bark did not have the taste of the fruit, "eitz oseh pri". How is one to understand this midrash? Clearly, trees are not endowed with intelligence nor with the capacity to 'decide' to act in one particular way. The fact that fruit trees are created in a way that the bark does not taste like the fruit, must be the will of G-D. How then is one to understand this Midrash?

Mesora: Trees have no consciousness. The Rabbis wrote this Medrash to teach that pursuit of perfection in the physical - of any kind - is impossible. God created the physical in a manner that metal rusts, things wear out, and people age. The purpose? That we become frustrated with our initial, instinctual plan to satisfy temporal, physical desires, and redirect our energies to timeless Torah - where man enjoys true life with no frustration.

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SUGGESTED READINGS:

SEE THESE AND OTHER ARTICLES AT OUR SITE

Maimonides' 13 PRINCIPLES

THE BASIC FOUNDATIONS WHICH ALL JEWS MUST KNOW AS TRUE. WE URGE YOU TO READ THEM:
www.mesora.org/13principles.html

God's Existence Belief or Proof?

www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html

God's Land Without God?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html

False Christian Beliefs: God's Procreation & Faith

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: I discovered your website during the Alan Keyes - MSNBC controversy and have read some of your articles from time to time. I am not Jewish, I am a Roman Catholic. I have sometimes wondered at the opinions expressed here regarding the falsity of Christianity in light of the Bible. I do not expect Rabbi Ben-Chaim to endorse Christianity (!) but it would be nice if he could refute what we actually believe rather than what he thinks we believe.

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The Snake's Head

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

What do we learn from the fact that man conquers the snake by crushing its head, and the snake conquering man by bruising his heel? (Gen. 3:15)

The Sforno teaches that there is a lesson derived from this statement: "Man conquers the snake by crushing its head, and the snake conquers man by bruising his heel". Sforno interprets "head" and "heel" to mean "beginning" and "end" respectively. Using these interpretations, Sforno teaches that man conquers the instincts at their very outset - their beginning. When an instinctual urge arises in man, it is at this point that he has the highest probability of conquering such urges, as man is still in control of all his faculties. But if man allows the urge to take hold of him, and he does not fight it, the urge becomes greater, and man loses all chance of subduing the urge. This is how the psyche operates. Stating that man "crushes the head of the snake" means, according to Sforno, that man conquers the instincts at their "head", at their initial onslaught. The snake "biting man's heel" means that the instincts subdue man at the end, at the "heel" of the battle. Man is overcome at the end of the battle.

It makes sense that the Torah informs man of our psychological workings at the very commencement of this great work, the Five Books of Moses. The Torah is an instruction for our perfection. By definition, it must include an explanation of our definitive components; the mind and the instincts. Here, the Sforno understands the "snake's interaction with woman" to parallel our very psychological design.

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TORAH IS YOUR LIFE

RIVKA OLENICK

"For it is not an empty thing for you, for it is your life, and through this matter shall you prolong your days on the Land to which you cross the Jordan, to possess it." Deuteronomy 32:47

"For it is not an empty thing for you." Your efforts to master and obey the Torah are not empty; for it is your life; midrashically, the Torah is not empty, and if you find it to be unsatisfying, then the failure stems "mechem" - from you: you are lacking, not the Torah."

Nothing in the Torah is devoid of meaning; each and every passage if we delve into it, will yield rewards for us." (Rashi) Rashi makes a strong statement when he says our efforts to "master and obey" the Torah are not without benefit. He seems to imply that one has to master and obey, not master or obey. Many people obey yet never master. He says that to do this is not "futile" that it is your existence and your purpose in life. If a person really "delves" into the ideas this effort will yield great rewards.

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