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Introduction

The root of all sins began with the sin of Adam HaRishon, when he ate from the *Eitz HaDaas* (Tree of Knowledge), which Hashem had commanded him explicitly not to eat. We are taught a general principle from our previous sages, the luminaries of the generations, that the Torah doesn't just tell us stories about the past, for the sake of recording history. Rather, the words of the Torah are relevant to every generation, and every person. It is upon us to understand, then, what the "*Eitz HaChaim*" (Tree of Life) is within a person, what the "*Eitz HaDaas*" is within a person, so that we can be careful not to eat from the forbidden "*Eitz HaDaas*" and avoid repeating the sin of Adam.

The Inner 'Eitz HaDaas' and Inner 'Eitz HaChaim'

First let us explain the idea briefly, and then we will elaborate.

The *Eitz HaChaim*, on an inner level, is the *neshamah* (Divine soul) of a person, which is revealed in the heart, after one purifies his heart from the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) which resides in the "left chamber" of the heart. The *Eitz HaDaas*, on an inner level, is the *seichel* (intellect) and *daas* (human understanding) which resides in one's brain.

There is a "Torah of the *Eitz HaChaim*", of the *neshamah*, a Torah of the heart, of which Shlomo HaMelech says, "*My heart has seen much wisdom.*" The emphasis here on the "heart" is specific; it refers to the Torah of the *neshamah*, which is revealed in the heart of a person. In contrast to this, there is a Torah of the *seichel* \intellect, of one's *daas*, which is the Torah of the *Eitz HaDaas*, which contains a mixture of good and evil *da'as* (knowledge).

The Sages say that "if one merits it, his Torah learning becomes like an elixir of life to him; and if he does not merit, the Torah becomes like deadly poison to him". The intention of these words is that if one merits to draw forth the Torah of the *Eitz HaChaim*, his Torah learning becomes an "elixir of life" to him, for it is of the *Eitz HaChaim* [which provides eternal life]. But if a person does not merit it, his Torah learning becomes 'deadly poison' to him, because it is a Torah of the *Eitz HaDaas*; and just as Adam ate from *Eitz HaDaas* and was cursed with death from it, so is the case with who eats from his own 'personal' *Eitz HaDaas*.

The Proper Way To Acquire Comprehension In Torah

The commentaries explained that Adam's prohibition not to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas* was only if he wouldn't first eat from the *Eitz HaChaim*. Once he would eat from the *Eitz HaChaim*, he would be

allowed to then eat from the *Eitz HaDaas*. The understanding of this matter is as follows.

“Eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*” represents one’s intellectual comprehension in his Torah learning, where one learns Torah through his *seichel* and *daas*. This was originally forbidden to Adam. The ideal way to understand Torah was to first eat from the *Eitz HaChaim* – in other words, to completely purify oneself, until one reaches his *neshamah* – and after reaching the *neshamah*, one’s *neshamah* could then comprehend the Torah, in the heart. After that, one’s Torah learning could then be processed by his mind; by his *seichel*\intellect and *daas*\understanding, which is the *Eitz HaDaas*. However, at that point, one’s comprehension in Torah would not be an intellectual understanding of it, but a comprehension from his *neshamah*, which is the *Eitz HaChaim*.

The Torah of the ‘Eitz HaChaim’

Anything that a person comprehends through *Eitz HaDaas* – through his own *seichel*\intellect – is always tainted. This is because the *Eitz HaDaas* contained a mixture of good and evil. Only after a person has greatly purified himself, and his *neshamah* becomes revealed, is his Torah learning become totally clean and pure.

Thus the *avodah* of a person is to purify himself, totally, so that he shouldn’t be among those of whom it is written, “And to the wicked one, says G-d, ‘Of what use to you are My laws?’”^[1] Only after this [self-purification] does one merit a Torah of truth.

The *avodah* of a person to learn Torah is to study Torah solely because it is Hashem’s will that he study it, and not out of an intellectual curiosity. This is how one merits a Torah that comes from the *Eitz HaChaim*.

As long as a person is only learning Torah out of intellectual curiosity alone, from a yearning for more knowledge, all of his Torah learning is of the *Eitz HaDaas*. The more a person learns Torah only so that he can give a *nachas ruach* (satisfaction) to his Creator and no more, the closer he is to a Torah that comes from the *Eitz HaChaim*. (This is referring to learning Torah *lishmah*. However, it is not referring to a desire of the *seichel*\intellect to learn Torah *lishmah*, but a desire of the *neshamah* to learn *lishmah*; let us suffice with those words).

Surely there is great pleasure when learning Torah, when one is pursuing more knowledge and understanding in Torah. But this should not be the sole desire of the person who is learning Torah; rather, a person needs to learn Torah mainly because he understands that it is the will of Hashem that he learn it.

^[1] Tehillim 50:16