

## Torah Musing Genesis 2:8

וַיִּטַע יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים, גֶּן-בְּעֵדֶן--מִקְדָּם; וַיִּשֶׂם שָׁם, אֶת-הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצַר

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed

### **Heaven Must Be Like This!**

The stories in Genesis are well-known among Judeo-Christian groups. Many know the stories through popular culture and literature but how many have actually read Genesis in depth? A common and pervasive misconception is that when the man and women were expelled from Eden, their idyllic existence was lost.<sup>1</sup> Was it really one misstep and you are out? What if according to the *פשוט peshat* i.e., the plain meaning of the Torah texts, all of the pleasure and goodness of the garden in Eden are still available to everyone, even now? How can that be? **תא שמע** - Come and understand.

In Exodus 28:8 the Israelites are instructed to build a *מִשְׁכָּן* *miskhan*/tabernacle as a dwelling place for the presence of God. The garden in Eden was originally understood as a sanctuary and the sanctuary/tabernacle in Israel was understood as the new garden in Eden. The similarities in role and function of the garden in Eden and the Tabernacle are striking and are revealed in their many shared motifs and imagery. Ezekiel also considered the Temple as the garden in Eden and the book of Jubilees<sup>2</sup> understood that the Garden was intended to be a Temple. The Talmudic rabbis also understood the same connection.<sup>3</sup> Note some of the similarities:

| <u><b>The Garden in Eden</b></u>  | <u><b>The Tabernacle</b></u>   |
|---|--|
| God's <b>dwelling place</b> Gen 3:8   | God's dwelling place -Exodus 25:8, Deut. 12:4  |
| <b>Eastward orientation</b>   | Orientation - Eastward- Exodus 27:16, Numbers 3:38   |
| <b>Cherubim-</b> Gen. 3:24<br>Guarding the way to God's presence<br>Cherubim appear only in the context of the Garden, Tabernacle and Temple  | Cherubim- Exodus 25:18-22<br>Guarding the way to God's presence. Placed above the ark. The space between them is the meeting place with God  |
| <b>Tree</b> in the middle of the garden and other trees in the garden   | Acacia Wood -The Tabernacle is made of acacia wood. Bronze Altar- Exodus 27:1, the Table for Bread- Exodus 25:23, The Ark of the Covenant Exodus 25:10, Incense Altar, the pole. for hanging of curtains and supports. |
| <b>Fire</b> significant- fiery flame Gen 3:24   | Fires is always present in the Tabernacle Exodus 27:20-21  |
| <b>Adam's role</b> – work and guard the garden לְעֹבְדָהּ וּלְשֹׁמְרָהּ   | Levite's role - care for the Tabernacle – וְשֹׁמְרֵי וְעֹבְדֵי Guard and to work. - Numbers 3:7-8  |
| <b>Expulsion-</b> after their transgression Adam and Eve are thrust out of Eden   | Leviticus 6:16 – sanctuary must be purged of sin and sinners. <i>Thus, he shall purge the Shrine of the uncleanness and transgression of the Israelites</i> (Lev. 16:16).  |
| The <b>two trees in the Garden</b> , the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, call to mind Jachin and Boaz, the tree-like pillars that flanked the entrance to the Temple, decorated with pomegranates and topped with a lily design (I Kgs. 7: 13-22). | Menorah – seven branches adorned with botanical elements   |
| <b>Jewels and Gold</b> in Eden -Gen 2:12  | Tabernacle constructed with gold and jewels. Ex 25:3,7   |

How are all the delights of Eden available to us? Every time we enter into our Tabernacles, Sanctuaries, Synagogues and Temples, we are entering, just as the

ancient Israelites, into Eden and the presence of God. When I go to the Tabernacle, Temple, Beth Knesset, etc., I always try to remember that just as Adam and Eve, I too can enjoy God's presence. If I am in sullen mood, worried or feeling dejected, I think of Eden, then glance around and say "*heaven must be like this*,"<sup>4</sup> and my attitude and demeanor quickly shifts. Any time someone hears me say, "*heaven must be like this*," their disruptive or sullen behavior rapidly changes because they have come to understand what I mean by the phrase. How can anyone be upset, angry, gloomy lonely, worried or fearful with God's presence dwelling in our places of worship, our garden of Eden. Eden is present and available right here and right now; however, we need only rest and allow ourselves to enjoy it. The next time anyone with their words and deeds tries to expel you from your Eden say, "heaven must be like this." Adam and Eve were planted in the Garden in Eden and we are planted in our sanctuaries. Paradise is not lost! In God's infinite mercy and plans the Israelites were given a Tabernacle and a Temple and we too are granted a new Eden. So "come and go with me to my Father's house" and enjoy all of the idyllic wonders of the Garden in Eden.

## **Heaven Must Be Like This!**

שבת שלום מביתנו לביתך

**Shabbat Shalom From Our House to Your House**

**Rabbi Malchah**

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Eden was lost until the consummation of history.

<sup>2</sup> Jubilees is a pseudepigrapha book. It is canonical among the Beta Israel and the יהודי *yahad*, Qumran (DSS) community. Although there is no consensus Jubilees may be dated to approximately 150-160 BCE.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis Rabbah 6:3, 15:1, 34:12, also Midrash Tehillim 92:6, Pseudo Jonathan 3:23.

<sup>4</sup> Song by the Ohio Players.