

### ***Man IS Like a Tree in the Field***

This week's Torah-portion states (-Deuteronomy 20:19), "*For man is a tree of the field.*"

Note: The simple meaning of the verse is that this is to be read in question form: "*When you besiege a city for many days to wage war against it to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them, for you may eat from them, but you shall not cut them down. Is the tree of the field a man, to go into the siege before you?*" However, the Sages read it as a statement as well, and hence...

The Talmud asks (-Ta'anis 7a), "*What is the meaning of that which is written, 'For man is a tree of the field?' And is man (actually) a tree of the field? Rather, (it is) because it is written (earlier in the same verse), 'You may eat of them but you may not cut them down,' and it is written (in the next verse) (-ibid 20:20), 'Them you may destroy and cut down.'*" (This indicates that there are certain trees which may be cut down, while others may not be destroyed.) *How so? If a Torah scholar is worthy, 'You may eat of them but you may not cut them down,' but if (he is) not (worthy), 'He you may destroy and cut down.'"*

Thus, we see that the Sages are not seeing the verse to speak just of a likeness between details of the *man* to the *tree*, but rather, that the very essence of man is that of a *tree*.

Note: So too, concerning the 15<sup>th</sup> of *Shevat*, the *New Year for Trees*, the law (-Shulchan Oruch, Oruch Chaim 131:6) is that we do not recite the *viduy* (confession prayer), and so too, it is the custom (-Magen Avrohom, ibid, sk 16) to eat of the fruits of a tree on this day. Hence, man's comparison to a tree is not just in some *metaphorical* way, but rather, man's celebration of the tree's *New Year* is because, "*For man IS a tree of the field.*"

**Questions:** (i) What is the Talmud's answer, if not for viewing it all as but a *metaphor*, and in but one *detail*? (ii) What logic is there to define the virtue of the *Human Being*, the highest of the *Four Categories* (inanimate, plant, animal, and human) by establishing this virtue to be the tree of a field? True, within the human there are all *Four Categories*, including the *Plant*, however, greater than this is the *Animal* category, and most importantly, higher than all must be the *Human* category within the human?!

**Explanation:** The unique virtue of only the *Plant Kingdom* is its being always connected to its source of life, the potency of producing of the earth. While, the *Animal Kingdom*, while consistently nourishing from the ground (through eating plants, and/or through eating other animals, who eat plants), are not rooted within the ground.

Note: Fish too, must remain within its source of life, the water. However, (i) the novelty of the *Plant Kingdom* is that it grows outside of the ground, and nevertheless, must always remain connected to the ground. (ii) The fish does not need to stay in its very place, and can easily travel 1000's of miles within the water, while the plant is primarily rooted within its spot, and it is a great work to uproot and then re-root a tree elsewhere.

Additionally, within the *Botanic Kingdom itself*, this virtue of always being directly connected to its source is greater in the *tree* than in the plant or grain. Plants, grain, etc., themselves are seasonal, while the tree remains, always connected to the ground, throughout the entire year, thus showing its immense connection to the ground, its source of life.

Spiritual speaking, the *Botanic Kingdom* represents *Emotions*, which grow from small to big, with the individual from childish emotions to adult emotions, and so on. And while *Intellect* grows as well, nevertheless, *Intellect*, the *Animal Kingdom* spiritual manifestation within the *Human*, is mobile. Meaning, that *Intellect* can change, in which, while at one time it can drive one to *Kindness* and *Compassion*, it can at another time drive the person to *Strictness* and *Justice*. Not so, with the *Emotional Character* of a person, in which the *Kind Person* will remain with being a *Kind Personality*, and the *Strict Person* will remain with being a *Strict Personality*. Albeit, as mentioned earlier, with *hard work* a *tree* can be uprooted from one place, and re-rooted in another. So too, a person, with *hard work* can use his *Intellect* to change the disposition of his innate born *Emotional* personality.

The reason for is that a person's *Intellect* is not limited by his innate personality. A person can use his mind to understand that which is absolutely contrary to his own personality, because the *Intellect*, the *Animal Kingdom* within a person, is mobile, and not rooted within one place within its source, his natural innate personality.

**Answer:** Thus, we now understand why the verse defines the essence of a person as being his Emotions, the Tree. It is within the *Emotions*, which are always rooted within the Essence of the person, that the one's source and roots are revealed!

This then, is the meaning of the Talmudic answer, "*If a Torah scholar is worthy.*" Meaning that only if the sage is not only in his realm of *Intellect*, but rather, he works on having his *Intellect* effect his *Emotions* to be *worthy*, and thus, his behavior is worthy. Only from such a Torah-scholar should one *eat*. For being that, "*A Man IS a Tree in the field,*" thus, primary is to see the Torah Scholar's Emotions, and not (only) his *Intellect*!

Just as it is for the *individual*, so it is for the *nation* as a whole. Every Jew is an offspring of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, in a fashion that every Jew is always connected to our *Forefathers*. As we find that when Balaam tried to curse the Jewish People, he was forced to say (-Numbers 23: 9), "*For from their beginning, I see them as mountain peaks,*" explained by Rashi to mean, "*I look at their origins and the beginning of their roots, and I see them established and powerful, like these mountains and hills, because of their patriarchs and matriarchs.*"

Now, in what is a Jew's connection with our patriarchs and matriarchs expressed? Not so much by our *Intellect Paradigm*, as by our *Emotional Sentiments*. As we find in *Kabbalah* and *Chassidus* that our patriarchs are the manifestation of *Emotions*, *Abraham* being the embodiment of a Love to G-d, *Isaac* being the embodiment of Fear to G-d, and *Jacob* being the embodiment of Compassion to G-d, the "*Three Father-head Emotions*" to all emotions. And as our *Fathers*, *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* thus inherited these *Emotions* to each and every Jew, their offspring. Hence, each and every Jew is always rooted within our patriarchs, in which our patriarchs always exist within us!

The reason for our patriarchs always existing within us, is because (unlike with a reward, acquisition or gift) inheritance is about the essence connection between the *inherited* and the *inheritor*. Hence, that which is transmitted from the patriarchs to their offspring is not connected with *Intellect*, as much it is primarily with *Emotions*, the revelation of one's Essence.

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*Lesson:* The life source of a Jew is the Torah. However, Torah dictates that while the *minority* get to remain within the world of Torah-study, *as fish in the water*, the *majority* sprout out into the world, *as trees from the ground*. However, the Jew must remember that, "*Man is the tree of the field,*" and must always be connected to its life-source. Meaning, that era in which he or she received in their youth, when they were in the walls of the study-hall of Torah, this must always be within them, not as a *memory* of their past, but *alive* in the now.

Likewise, those who live their entire life within the study-halls of Torah must know, that its is not their mobility as fish within the water, in a non-committal relationship for their *Academic Torah-study* to influence their *Emotions*, but rather, specifically, when they use their Torah-study to be *worthy*, and live a *worthy* life, are they assured that their Torah-study will always be connected to the *Eternal Wellspring of Life*.