

The Process of Belief

We start the annual cycle of reading the Torah from Creation and the slow and painful process of humanity learning how to find the right way to live. We are going to start with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden learning that if only they can adhere to some simple, basic rules, they can have a life of ease. Disobedience, which seems to be a natural human characteristic brings consequences.

The relationship with God is a very simple one. Like with children. And like children, when they are caught they run and hide, deny. It is Cain who is the first to try to establish a relationship with God, by bringing a sacrifice. Unfortunately, he fails to find the right modality. Abel who follows him seems to understand better how to approach God. Cain is told to try again. A relationship takes time and effort and does not always come instantaneously. Rejection is too much for him. Cain kills Abel and God sees the need for more specific instructions.

Humanity staggers on. Cain's line comes to an end. It is the line of Seth (Shet) that goes forward. His son Enosh " Begins to call in the name of God." Another step forward. Although some say this was the beginning of idolatry, I see it as the attempt to communicate with God, verbally. To take the relationship beyond the simple act of giving, sacrificing.

The Chanoch (Enoch) walks with God but is taken away. I see this as Enoch thinking that to relate to God you need to withdraw, up the mountain, into a monastery. So God takes him away because that is not the model the Almighty wants. He wants a relationship d to improve the human condition. For people to be part of society so that a relationship with God will impact on others. As we will see even Noah has no impact either beyond his family. It is not until Avraham that the ideal is reached.

Of course, God could have got it right first time. One message is that it takes time and even trial and error to develop a relationship with God. It does not come easily or naturally. The other narrative is an important lesson in education and parenting. God is the parent trying to teach his children how to grow up and make the right decisions. The lesson for us as parents is that we have to be patient, sometimes our efforts will not succeed but we must persevere. Eventually we will find the right way.