

Choosing Paradise

Long ago, there was a garden paradise called *Gan Eden*, the fertile source of life on Earth. It was beautiful. There was no fear. Both animals and humans could speak, and they were friends. There was plenty to eat. They could pick plants from the ground and fruits from the trees. There was no suffering, no poverty, no drugs, no pollution, no hatred, no killing, no wars. Each day was a blessing.

In the middle of the Garden there were two trees - the Tree of Life, and the Tree of Knowledge. Between the two trees was a sacred spring of *Mayim Hayim*, Living Waters, and there the humans and animals would come to drink, to bathe, or to gaze at their reflections. Sometimes when the creatures looked into the water and saw their faces, *Ru-ah Elohim*, the Wind-Spirit of God, which hovered there, would speak to them through a breeze that rippled across the water.

The first people who lived in the Garden were named *Adam* and *Hava*. *Hava* was out taking a jog with a panther one day when a great wind began to blow. She had never felt anything like it before in the Garden. "Perhaps it is *Ru-ah Elohim*," she said to the panther. "I must go to the sacred spring to see if there is a message. "

When *Hava* arrived at the pool, the wind had calmed. She looked into the water and saw her long, dark hair and soft, smiling eyes shining back at her. Then she heard these words.

"*Hava*, the wind of change has called you here. It blows from the west, when you least expect it. It is one of the great forces in creation. You and *Adam* were made in my image, to bring Heaven to Earth and delight in the beauty of the Garden. But there is much you have not seen or experienced in this world. Just as the sun sets and the moon rises, or the blossoms on a tree become sweet fruits, so the tides of life bring change. The time has come to give you a choice. You may eat from the Tree of Life and dwell in the innocence of Now, forever. You will live in the Garden with Adam and everything will remain the same, in harmony, simplicity, and beauty. Or, you may eat from the Tree of Knowledge and see life in a new

way. You will feel free to create, to experiment, to forget and remember, to get caught in the darkness and discover the light again. But to do this, you must leave the Garden."

Hava had never had to make a choice before and she wasn't sure how to do it. She hated to leave the Garden. It was so beautiful. But to grow and change and create sounded wonderful. At that moment, a fruit from each of the trees fell beside her. She picked them up, one in each hand, and looked from side to side. "Eternal Now or Transformation?" she thought to herself.

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Her hands, each holding a fruit, slowly began to move towards each other until they were touching. They rose up to her mouth and she took a big bite - from both of the fruits at the same time!

Suddenly, everything within her changed. She felt like the sun was in her heart, a mountain was in her belly, and she was about to fly to the sky like a great bird. What had she done? She was afraid. She was also excited. She looked into the water again and heard the Voice, but this time it was coming from inside of her!

"*Hava*, Mother of Life, you are very wise. You ate the fruit from both trees and so you will have both Innocence and Knowledge, but having them together will be different than having only one or the other. You and *Adam* must leave the Garden to grow and change, but you will be able to come back whenever you want, for paradise has now moved from outside, to within you. The *Ru-ah Elohim*, which hovers over the water, has now merged with the very breath of life that sustains you. With each soulbreath of awareness, the beauty of the present moment will be revealed to you. And though you seek perfection on the outside, you will only truly understand harmony and bliss through the wisdom of your heart. Look, *Hava*."

Hava looked into the water and saw herself giving birth to children. She felt the power and joy of being partners with the Creator in creation, and her eyes filled with a strange warm water which streamed down her cheeks. Then she saw one child hit the other and he lay very still on the ground. She knew that something

terrible had happened and she felt sad for the first time. Water again began to flow from her eyes. She saw the story of life unfold - the beauty and the sorrow. And she saw that much of the sadness on Earth came from the choices that her children would make.

"Stop!" she screamed. "What have I done? Please help me! I want to go back."

"Hava, you cannot turn back, but neither have you truly left the Garden. With every choice there is both doubt and discovery. Although each choice seems to take you farther away from what you know, each experience of love brings you back again. The waters that flow from your eyes arise with your deepest feelings of joy and despair. They are called tears and are a sign that you now carry the Waters of Life within you. As you leave the Garden, I offer you the gift of prayer. Call to Me with the song and yearning in your heart and you will always find your way home.

And so it was, from that day on, that human beings entered the world of choice and creativity, while carrying within their hearts the Garden of Eternal Now.