



Maharal Netivot Olam I: G-dly Gifts #13

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The Gemara writes, Rav Shimon said, "There are three gifts which were given to the Jewish people, Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and *olam habah* and they are acquired through suffering." In Tehilim it says, "Fortunate is the man whom Hashem afflicts and His Torah he learns." It says, "And may you know in your hearts that the same way a man afflicts his son thus Hashem afflicts you." It further says, "Hashem will bring you to a good land." The love a man has for his son when he rebukes him is the same love Hashem had for us when he brought us to Eretz Yisrael. Good may mean pleasurable, efficient, or spiritually elevating. Eretz Yisrael is all of this, but in order for us to integrate it, we have to suffer. Likewise it says about *olam habah*, "Eternal life is the rebuke of suffering."

Suffering heals that which was broken as a consequence of sin. It provides new opportunities to make up for the old ones that were missed. It creates a situation where a person identifies more with their soul than their body.

That which makes us Jews, Torah, *olam habah*, and Eretz Yisrael moves us beyond identifying our body as our selves. The suffering we have to go through to get these three gifts is not necessarily the consequence of sin or lost opportunities but rather to take us to a transcendental place where we can receive these gifts out of love.

Each of these gifts take us to a place of being *nivdal* (separate from physicality) in a different way. Maharal refers to Israel as the holy land. We must sanctify ourselves and rise above physicality in order to absorb its essence. To reach this level of spiritual refinement we must sometimes suffer.

The Torah is on a different level of transcendence because it's not physical at all. To acquire Torah one must limit ones bodily desires. Yet many people desire both Torah

and physical pleasure which is only human. The question is which will take priority. Torah has inherent limitation in that it is manifested in the real world. This creates a certain bond to the world of physicality which could one lead one to easily mistake Torah for something that's not *nivdal*.

Olam habah is the highest level. It is completely transcendental. You don't become a new person when you die. The will of a person, the most definitive aspect of who he is, remains with him forever. To acquire *olam habah*, one's essence must be spiritual.

The Gemara lists the three gifts in the order the Jewish people received it, Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and *olam habah*. But the proper order is first Eretz Yisrael because there are successive levels of spiritual clarity. Eretz Yisrael opens the heart to Torah which opens us up fully to *olam habah*.

Rav Yochanan says that the suffering of *negaim* (leprosy) and childlessness are not suffering of love because it doesn't bring a person closer to Hashem. The leper must live in isolation and it is only when we engage with people and look for the good in them that we experience Hashem's image.

Hashem conducts himself with us like a father to a son. A person who is childless can't relate to this because the relationship of a parent to a child is different than any other form of love. A childless person has no continued way of maintaining his love of Hashem. Once he dies, the love is over. Similarly leprosy and being isolated socially distances a person from Hashem because one's avenues of giving are cut off. Therefore these forms of suffering are meant to fix something or to get a person through something that's broken within them.

Suffering that must come because of sin can still be *yissurim shel ahavah* (suffering of love)

because it shows that Hashem loves the person enough to want him to get rid of his sins. Losing a child is *yissurim shel ahavah* because it isn't erasing something but rather forcing a person in a new direction.

The Gemara brings an opinion that leprosy can also be *yissurim shel ahavah*. Deep soul searching brings a person to recognize why he got the plague and that realization brings him closer to Hashem. When a person is physically ill he can't let go of his suffering because of the constancy of it. A leper is compared to an altar that is in a continual state of existence for the sake of atonement.

If a person is trying to achieve something and is unsuccessful, when should he redouble his efforts in prayer and when should he just say, "Why am I pushing, Hashem doesn't want this?" If it's something completely physical, it may be that the person doesn't need it. However oftentimes Hashem will deny a person what they want spiritually in order to create more yearning and a closer connection to Him.

Sometimes Hashem will cause a person, especially in Israel, to suffer *yissurim shel ahavah* in order to force him to let go of his physical desires and become more spiritually aware. If a person can say, "Yes, we don't have all the physical things we want but Hashem I'm here because I want you, so reveal yourself to me," then he has achieved a level of openness he could never have achieved outside Eretz Yisrael.

Yissurim can take us to a place where our souls become our true selves. We should not have to suffer to reach this level, but sometimes it is the only way. May we merit to love Hashem and serve Him with joy in our striving towards Eretz Yisrael, Torah, and *olam habah*.

Yirmiyahu IV-Perek 31: Rachel's Consolation

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Avishai David

The Navi Yirmiyahu writes, "*Kol b'rama nishma nehi bechi samru rim...*" -A voice is heard on high, wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel cries for her children. Radak comments that although the Jewish people continue to suffer

in exile they will never forget the name of Hashem nor will they abrogate their covenant with Him. This was Rachel's reward for giving over the signs to her sister Leah and not shaming her. Rachel became the defender of

klal yisrael. She would not be comforted until she exacted a promise from Hashem that they would be redeemed. And Hashem comforts her, "*V'shavu banim l'gevulam*" -Your children will return to their land.

Parshat Lech Lecha: Singular Signature

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

In parshat Lech Lecha Hashem tells Avraham, "I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing." Rashi says this is a reference to the first blessing in *shemone esrei* which recalls the greatness of our forefathers. It ends with the words, Magen Avraham-the shield of Avraham. What was it about Avraham that he was singled out of all the *avot*?

Rabbi Kirzner notes that each of the *avot* are mentioned separately in the beginning of the blessing because each of them saw Hashem in a different light. Avraham, who served Hashem with *chesed*, discerned loving kindness manifested in the world. This is signified by *hagadol*- Hashem's greatness is his goodness. Yitzchak found Hashem through *gevurah* -discipline and self -control corresponding to *hagibor*. *V'hanora* is associated with Yaakov who integrated both *chesed* and *gevurah*. Just as each of the *avot* forged his own unique relationship to

Hashem, so too must we discover our own personal path to serving Hashem.

Although the *avot* brought Hashem into their life in the most intimate way, Avraham was the source of it all. There's a spark, a *pintele yid*, within each of us that we received from Avraham, that can never be extinguished. Therefore we end the blessing of *Avot* with his name because he is our shield for all generations.

Avraham excelled in the *middot* of *emunah*, *bechirah* and *chesed*. *Emunah* is the prerequisite for all good attributes. When you can link *chesed* to *emunah* and affirm that all you have is from Hashem it's an elevated experience free of resentment and full of joy. Likewise when one's fear of Hashem is coupled with *emunah* it's a different kind of *yirah*. Rav Belsky teaches that Avraham is singled out in the first blessing because the *emunah* he achieved was implanted within us.

The Kesav Sofer explains that a true *eved*

Hashem is one who serves Hashem consciously. Only someone whose Judaism is passionate can give it over effectively to his children. All the *avot* lived the Torah with *bechirah* but Avraham was the quintessential model of the *bocher b'tov* (one who chooses good). Therefore we end the *bracha* of *Avot* with his name.

Rav Leff writes that in the era before Mashiach comes all that will be left will be the attribute of *chesed*. "*Zion b'mishpat tipadeh v'shaveh b'tzedkah*." - We will be redeemed in the merit of kindness. When we do *chesed* we give credence to the world's existence. Magen Avraham-our greatest shield are our acts of *chesed*.

In the merit of emulating the *middot* of Avraham, may Hashem bless us with His kindness and protection.

The Meaning of Trust: Joyful Trust #1

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

For most people trust is illusive. It's hard for us to trust ourselves, harder to trust other people, and hardest to trust Hashem. Yet we must learn to trust. None of us can survive alone.

The Orchos Tzaddikim discusses trust in his chapter on *simcha* (joy). He writes that *simcha* is a *middah*, not a response to external events. It is possible to cultivate a state of continual happiness. We mistakenly tend to think that *simcha* is a consequence of fun or pleasure but in truth that is not reality. *Simcha* is a state of always feeling tranquil regardless of what is happening. A happy person doesn't feel that his desires are being fulfilled. Rather whatever is happening becomes his will.

Greater fear always eclipses smaller fears. We are afraid of people and events because we believe in Hashem's mastery in our minds but not in our hearts. A person who trusts in Hashem with a full heart will not be afraid. He won't enslave himself to any person in order to appease him and he won't invest his hopes in anyone except Hashem.

Not only is Hashem the source of everything but he has more compassion than any human can have. Compassion in Hebrew is related to the word *rechem*-womb. The same way a

baby in utero receives exactly what he needs, Hashem's compassion gives people exactly what they need. If something difficult happens in your life realize that it's all from Hashem. It may have come through other people but He is the cause. Likewise all the good a person gets from their family and friends is really from Hashem. No one can give what they haven't been given by the Creator.

Hashem is not caught up in reactions or limitations nor is he bound by fears or rejections. He is involved with you whether you can see it or not. If you should've guarded yourself better Hashem will still guard you as it says, '*Shomer pesaim Hashem*'-Hashem guards those who act unwise.

Everything Hashem does for us is because of His generosity and kindness. Hashem doesn't benefit us because he needs us. The *mitzvot* we do give us what we can never acquire on our own-eternity, constancy, depth, and joy. Sometimes a person may think, "I believe this challenge is for my good but I can't handle it." We assume that the way we feel this minute is how we will feel in the future. Every experience we have in life has intrinsic purpose. We must think, evil doesn't endure, this is a test and I will make it. No person can add or subtract from what Hashem wants for him. Whatever is destined to come later cannot be made to

come earlier. Everything is Hashem's decree and will.

You could go through the motions of trusting Hashem and not trust him and then ask where is my *simcha* when in truth it was never in you. Hashem knows that which is higher-what we would like to be, and that which is lower-what we really are, the part that believes and the part that denies. If we are unhappy because our trust is incomplete we have to try to change that.

Desperation is the greatest factor that causes people to lie and steal. It's when a person is unwilling to trust Hashem to decide what course he should take. People may go against Hashem's will to get what they want. Yet at the same time they also want closeness to Him. A person has to be wise enough to realize that this is hypocritical and wrong.

The acid proof of trust is if we want to do Hashem's will. We must negate our will before His will. Rav Wolbe says that the way to move a concept from mind to heart is through imagery. The Amishnover Rebbe suggests that we say one blessing every day on some food with joy to increase our awareness of the Creator. The more we can affirm that Hashem is there with us the more trust we will have.