

## Making Sense of Reward and Punishment Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

When the Jews sinned with *cheit hameraglim* (sin of the spies), they indicated that they did not want to go into the land of Israel. In response, Hashem decreed that they would wander 40 years in the desert and only their children would enter the land. The spies were in Israel for 40 days. Why did Hashem decree a year for a day? It was not a punishment. Chazal say it takes 40 days for a fetus to develop. Hashem gave them this framework of time to create a new reality and prepare themselves.

The *Beis Yisrael* explains how Hashem reacts to our deeds. The Jewish people understood that sending the spies was a crucial mission which would define their future. Therefore, they prayed that it would be successful. Yet it was a complete failure. What happened to all their davening? Many times, the fact that Hashem doesn't respond seems part of the punishment. But in reality, it was a reward. They received an additional 40 years of Gan Eden in the desert. All their physical needs were taken care of by Hashem and they were able to devote all their time to internalizing

and growing in *Torah*. Many times, we interpret something as a punishment when in fact it might be a reward. And sometimes we might think something is good, when in fact it might turn out a punishment. We don't always know how to interpret reality, but we have to know the rules. There's no reward and punishment in this world. What we see as reward is in fact the means Hashem gives us to serve Him, while punishment serves to correct something that went wrong.

Let's look at a few occurrences in the *Torah*. Yaakov and his children went down to Egypt, which began 210 years of difficult exile. All the other exiles were a result of our sins and were a means for us to correct what went wrong and caused the exile. But the Egyptian exile was already prophesized to Avraham. It was part of Hashem's plan to prepare *Klal Yisrael* for the giving of the *Torah*, not a result of our deeds. The *imahot* were barren for many years. Chazal say Hashem desires the prayers of the righteous, so in fact it was a reaction to their good deeds. The *Torah* tells us how Avraham left everything behind and traveled to the land

of Israel at Hashem's command only to be greeted by a famine. We know it was a test. He was specifically chosen because he was supposed to build the foundation of *Klal Yisrael* and because he was capable of overcoming these challenges, not in response to his deeds.

*Sefer Iyov* begins by stating that Iyov was very righteous. And this was Iyov's question- "If I'm righteous, why am I going through all this pain?" After lengthy philosophizing between Iyov and his friends, Hashem asks Iyov, "Where were you when I created the world? Do you understand why I created it and what the role of every being on this world is?" Although there were reasons, Hashem didn't reveal it. He just told him to look at creation, how everything has purpose and is precisely designed.

On this earth, we cannot know why we go through challenges. In the Next World, we will ultimately see why things had to happen the way they did and what it accomplished.

## Suffering

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The Gemara tell us that a person can go through suffering and death, without sin being the cause. If so, what is its purpose? Sometimes suffering comes in order to give a righteous person the opportunity to teach others. *Tzadikim* atone for the sins of their generations. Possibly they could have done more for them, either by their example or by rebuke. They are to some degree at least partially responsible for their generation. So sometimes their suffering is for experiential purposes. For some reason, the *tzaddik* wasn't able to teach the people in words, so he does so by example. It follows that suffering can sometimes be attributed to the *tzaddik* himself or to his generation, as a means to move them forward.

An example of this would be the death of Rav Elchanan Wasserman. Before WWII, he was

in America on a fundraising mission. He had the opportunity to stay, but insisted on going back to Europe to be with his students. He wanted to show them how to die. That decision, which was far reaching, and which actually played itself out, wasn't because he deserved death, but because he understood his position.

Sometimes the suffering isn't a *nisayon* or to be an example, but is a part of Hashem's plan. Everyone starts off at a different point in life and we are each given a mission to accomplish. Some people are born sick and some are born with a silver spoon in their mouth. Everyone is meant to face different challenges and we are given the tools to face it. Sometimes a child who is born sick is meant to be a means through which other people discover themselves. In this sense, the

suffering doesn't have as much to do with the person himself, at least in this worldly sense, although there is the idea of reincarnation, which would explain why he would be the one to come down and not someone else.

It's worth it for a person to suffer in this world, if through their suffering they bring life to people. Everyone has trials and difficulties in order that we might earn the reward of the World to Come without shame. It's sweeter if we know it really belongs to us. A person who suffered in this world will have no shame in receiving reward in the Next World. It is what he deserves. This would apply even if the person who suffered made no choices. He paid his bills through bringing enlightenment to others. This answers a deep question that most people are afraid to ask-Where's justice? In this world its very hard to see it. You have

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to go beyond that.

The Gemara asks about a sickness called *askara* (akin to pertussis) which is supposed to be the hardest of all deaths. The Gemara asks, what is it for? Rav Shimon answers, it's because of *bitul Torah* as the main purpose of a man is to speak out Hashem's wisdom. A young child is a vessel for which their parent's

free choice is expressed. If the child needs his father, then of course he should take care him. However when the child doesn't need him, and the father chooses the fulfillment of his own emotional needs, like playing with his child, when he should be learning *Torah*, then the father may have failed the test and might need the awakening of seeing his child's life hanging by a thread, stricken with *askara*. From the

child's point of view, his suffering in this world is worthwhile because he brought enlightenment to others. The same way a person can get his portion in *olam habah* through *Torah*, a person can get their portion in *olam habah* through suffering. When that suffering is the cause of other people coming to grips with themselves, it's even greater.

## The Causes of Churban Habayit: Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Moshe Reichman

In the Gra's commentary on the *Aggadata* in *Bechorot*, he explains that there are two signs of a kosher animal – split hooves and chewing the cud. Chazal say Eisav is compared to a pig who sticks out his split hooves to show he's kosher, when in reality he is missing the internal sign of *kashrut*– chewing the cud. Whatever a person consumes, becomes a part of his nature. Therefore, the *Torah* forbade the consumption of creatures that possess bad *middot*. A creature of prey is *to'ref*–always looking to take. All sins in the *Torah* are rooted in desire, jealousy, and not being satisfied. *Lo sachmod*, the last of the Ten Commandments, encompasses all the commandments which encompasses all of *Torah*. A creature of prey lacks *histapkut*–being satisfied with what Hashem gives him. The prophet Chavakuk said, "The righteous person lives with faith." Being able to control one's desires and being satisfied with one's lot are one of the most important *middot* and is based on *emunah*, proper trust in Hashem. If a person has a healthy sense of *emunah* he will not desire more. He will understand that what he has is what is best for him.

The Gra says if an animal has split hooves it's a sign that it doesn't grab and trap with its nails. There are 4 animals that have one of the kosher signs and therefore are not kosher, the camel, the hare, the rabbit and the pig. The first three only chew their cud while the

pig only has split hooves. The Midrash tells us that the camel refers to the exile of Bavel, the rabbit corresponds to Yaven, the hare is the Persian exile and the pig is the exile of Edom as the verse says, "*V'charsimena chazir m'yaar*–The pig devours everything." The first three exiles are compared to those creatures who only chew their cud while the last exile is compared to the pig who only has split hooves. The Gra points out that during the first *Beit Hamikdash*, their good deeds were hidden while their sins were revealed. Internally they were *tzadikim*, they had *emunah* and *bitachon*. Although they sinned, their inner core remained pure. During the second *Beit Hamikdash*, externally they appeared righteous, studying *Torah* and doing *mitzvot*, but internally their hearts were consumed with baseless hatred.

Hashem looks at what is within a person's heart. The fact that the earlier generations had *bitachon*, outweighed their severe sins. However, the later generations had *sinat chinam* which is rooted in a lack of faith. A person with perfect trust in Hashem would have no reason to be upset that his friend has more than him. All we have is from Hashem. When *Klal Yisrael's* sins were external and they had the right internal framework, measure for measure, they were placed in exile with external challenges. The exile of Edom appears beautiful on the outside. There's social justice, proper behavior, generosity, but

internally there's lack of belief in oneself and Hashem and that is much worse. That is why the Gemara tells us that during the first *Beit Hamikdash* their sin was revealed and therefore their punishment was fixed, whereas during the second *Beit Hamikdash* their sins were internal and therefore the end of the exile remained hidden.

The Meshech Chochma quotes the Gemara in Shabbat that tells us, "If your sins are like a red string, they will turn as white as snow, but if they are red like the blood of a worm, then they will turn as white as wool. A worm's blood is red from within. That represents the internal corruption of the later generations. However, the string is red from without, the color is only absorbed on the surface and can be washed off. So too the earlier generations, where their sins were external could be purified quicker. That is the difference between the destruction of the first and second *Beit Hamikdash*. During the first *Beit Hamikdash* the inner core of *Klal Yisrael* was still proper. They had the right perspective and the middah of *bitachon*. However, during *Bayit Sheni* they were missing *bitachon* and the proper mindset which was the cause of baseless hatred and our subsequent long and difficult exile. Let us take these lessons to heart and work on strengthening our *bitachon* so that we will merit the rebuilding of the *Beit Hamikdash* speedily in our days.