

Tehilim 73: The Little Job-The Suffering of the Innocent Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

Let's take an inside look at Tehilim chapter 73 which is called by many *Iyov Hakatan*- The Little Job. This chapter deals primarily with the idea of *Tzadik v'ra lo rasha v'tov lo*, the seeming injustice in the world where evil people seem to be living it up and innocent people suffer. All the mental calisthenics you can possibly do doesn't justify it. To say that it's *hester panim* (concealment of the Divine Presence) or punishment doesn't do it either. You can't explain the death of 2 million children by saying they were guilty.

The problem of *Tzadik v'ra lo* is a problem unique to a people who believe in monotheism. The pagans have their good and bad deities fighting with each other. They manage to explain whatever happens as a battle going on among the forces. But if you have only one Hashem and you also believe He is loving and wants to do only good. And you don't believe that the devil is the equivalent of Hashem and can do what Hashem doesn't want him to do, you have a problem. This struggle of seemingly unjustified suffering is something that has plagued great Jewish thinkers throughout the ages and is discussed all through *Tanach*.

Yirmiyahu asks- Why is it that the way of the evil seems to be so successful? *Malachi* brings the question raised in his generation-

What benefit did we ever get from keeping Hashem's watch, from following glumly in His ways? All we have to show for it is a history of bloodshed. *Kohelet* asks Hashem- How can you stand there and watch an evil person swallowing someone more righteous than him? Of course, there is no such thing as a person who never makes mistakes. But as guilty as we are, we are nearly white compared to the blackness of our persecutors.

So *Kohelet* asks- How can Hashem stand by and not do something? And the entire book of *Iyov* is completely dedicated to this topic. In addition, there are several chapters in *Tehilim* that discuss this topic including psalms 37, 49, 94. But chapter 73 tackles the issue head-on.

The chapter begins with *Mizmor l'Asaf*. Who was *Asaf*? There was an *Asaf* who lived in the days of King David and he is listed in *Divrei Hayamimim* and other places as one of the *meshoririm*, either a poet or a singer. There are a lot of *Asafs* mentioned much later even in the times of *Nechemia*. *Asaf* presents us with chapters of *Tehilim* that are poetic and contemplative. It's not about singing Hashem's praises but about the struggles of the Jew in exile both in our country and without. Even in Israel there's the concept of *galut haShechina* when it seems as if the Divine Presence is no longer there and we feel bereft. *Tehilim* is

replete with *mizmorim* about illness, rage, anger, feelings of betrayal and hurt. In turn, there are also marvelous songs of praise, gorgeous odes to nature, to Hashem, and to Yerushalayim. It includes *mizmorim* that *Chazal* attributed to *Adam*, *Moshe*, *Asaf*, and *Bnei Korach*.

"*Ach tov l'Yisrael Elokim l'varei leivav*." *Radak* says *Ach* means indeed or surely. *Rashi* points out that it comes to limit or diminish. Does this verse mean that Hashem is only good to Israel or that all that Hashem does is good? *Chazal* tells us-"*Kol mah d'avid l'tav avid hu*." The additional phrase limits it more "*L'varei leivav*-To the pure of heart." *Rav Hirsh* points out we would normally write *tahar leivav*. This indicates that *l'varei* might mean naive or innocence. *Bor* is something used to wash out stains. A *bar leivav* is someone who worked on himself to clean out his thoughts through self-education and spiritual development. He was not born innocent. He went through a lot in life. He's struggled with many difficulties and desires and he's worked on himself to clean it out. So the verse tells us- Those of us who have had to work on cleaning out our heart and getting out all those stains, have come to the conclusion that Hashem, in the final analysis, is good.

Introduction to the Book of Mishlei Part IV

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah (Heller) Gottlieb

Rashi tells us that *mishpat* means judging honestly. We judge people all the time, however the *Torah* adjures us, "*B'tzedek tishpot et amisecha*- Judge your friend favorably." This doesn't mean denying what you saw, but rather questioning it. People can be divided in three groups-righteous, evil, and in-between. If a righteous person does something that may seem objectionable, it would be reasonable to judge him charitably. Perhaps what the person did was right and you're wrong. At best you could assume that it was a momentary slip. Your basic view of the person shouldn't change.

There are evil people in this world who may do things that seem positive. You could think

perhaps they changed their mind and now want to do good. But that's tragic and wrong and innocent people could suffer for it. One may not judge evil people well. There is the 80 percent of us who fall in the in-between range. If you see someone in that category doing something wrong, you have to ask one question- Is there more than one reasonable interpretation for this? You have to be honest. It's not being naive. It's having the depth to see what people really are.

Meisharim is the compromise within a compromise, says Rashi. Why would people not compromise? When sincere people find what they believe is right, they won't let go. They will fight for the truth. Therefore, making

a compromise will be very difficult because they will feel that they are compromising their truth. The only way for them to give in, is for them be able to assimilate the new truth with their own. This is not an easy and not everyone is capable of it. Other reasons people may be unwilling to compromise may be their desire for esteem, their insecurities, and their financial fears. Regarding ideals, as long as it aligns with *Torah*, you can be strong enough to say- He's right under his circumstances, in his community, in these times, but not here. But with other things you have to be willing to sacrifice your ego and money to stay straight with Hashem who wants peace between people.

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You've discovered what *chochma* is, you're willing to hear mussar, you're willing to live with binah, and you've used *haskil* to make it a part of you. Your generous financially, you judge people favorably, and you're the kind of person who can compromise. What affect will all this have? It will give a naïve person cleverness and a young person understanding and the ability to plot the future.

Mishlei speaks about three kinds of fools, the *peti*, the *letz*, and the *kesil*. The *peti* is somebody who is very naïve. People are

naïve because they have what they want to think and what they want to believe in and they are unwilling to let go of that. If someone really wants to get married, they don't want to see the faults of the person they are being introduced to. So, they'll let themselves be convinced into something they shouldn't be doing. But if you have a *chochma*, you'll say- But what is it? What am I really looking at? If you have *binah*, you're going to say- Where does it begin and end? What are all of the components? Do I see things accurately? If you have *haskil*, you've integrated this. You're

a seeker. The more generous you are and the more you judge favorably and the more you can compromise, the deeper your perception of reality will be. It's not that you'll become naïve. Quite the opposite. You'll become sophisticated enough to recognize foolishness.

The verse then tells us - You'll be able to teach how to plot the future. To do something *b'mesina* means its purposeful. You had it mapped out. Why do people act impulsively? They want what they want now. It's not a terrible thing. *Zerizut* is the refined part of

Leah- A Role Model for Us Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

When Eisav and Yaakov were very young there was an agreement made between the families of Yitzchak and Lavan that the older son Eisav would marry the older girl Leah and the younger son Yaakov would marry the younger girl Rachel. *Chazal* tell us that forty days before a person is born, it's already announced in heaven who will marry whom. It was not just a simple agreement but a heavenly decree. Rachel and Yaakov were in fact a match as both were righteousness. However, while Leah was very righteous, Eisav was wicked.

The Torah tells us, "*V'einei Leah rakot*- The eyes of Leah were soft." This is not meant in a negative manner but in fact to show her greatness. When she heard that her destined one, Eisav, was evil, she cried and prayed until her were very red. As a result of her desire and intense prayer, she merited to marry Yaakov.

In reality, Rachel was the intended one. She fully deserved Yaakov. She was so righteous to the point that she was ready to give up her

place in the marriage to her sister. Leah married Yaakov first. Rachel went through the pain of not knowing if she would ever marry. She thought she had lost it all. Leah had six tribes while Rachel only had two. Leah merited to be buried in *Mearat Hamachpeila* near Yaakov while Rachel was buried alone on the way to *Beit Lechem*. This was not an indication of who was greater. It was the way Hashem led creation in order to build the Jewish nation. Both Leah and Rachel in their particular way were supposed to bequeath something to the Jewish nation. And in order for that to be, circumstances had to transpire in the particular way it did. Rachel and Leah were supposed to marry Yaakov because Eisav was not fit to be part of the Jewish nation and didn't deserve Leah. But couldn't Hashem make Lavan give Rachel to Yaakov first and then offer him Leah? Couldn't Hashem have given each of the wives an equal number of tribes? What was this all meant to accomplish for the Jewish people?

The commentators explain that Yaakov and Eisav corresponded to the two trees that were in *Gan Eden*, *Eitz Hachaim*- the Tree of Life

and *Eitz Hadaat* -the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. These two trees represent the two ways of serving Hashem. The Tree of Life symbolizes *Torah*, the source of all good. Yaakov was born with the desire to excel in serving Hashem. He represents *asei tov*-doing good and is compared to *Eitz Hachaim*. Another way of serving Hashem is by fighting evil which is compared to *Eitz Hadaat Tov V'ra*. It's seeing two choices, good and evil, and overcoming evil do the will of Hashem. This was the mission of Eisav. Both are necessary ways to connect to Hashem.

Originally Rachel was described in the *Torah* as, "*Yifat toar yifat mareh*-beautiful in appearance. She was like Yaakov. She only wanted to do good. The *Torah* describes her as *reia irah* which is the same letters as *yirah*- fear of Hashem. She recognized the greatness of Hashem and wanted to follow Him. Her mission like her intended one Yaakov, was *asei tov*. This is the meaning of "*Vayehav Yaakov et Rachel*-Yaakov loved Rachel." He saw in her his soulmate, his partner in achieving his mission in life.