

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

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

*Assaf* is reluctant to find fault in his people. In his prayer he tries to make a case, almost as if Hashem should have pity on those who are misled by the reality of *Tzadik v'ra lo*. Their lives have become so miserable that they ask- Why bother to be a Jew, why be good?" This question was already asked by the prophets. If there is a Creator who created the world, could He not have seen the evil being perpetrated and could He not have stopped it? Or does He not know? If He knows, perhaps He can't do anything about it because he's not strong enough. So we either have to say Hashem is not omniscient or He's not omnipotent. Otherwise how could He have allowed this? One could even argue that Hashem created this world and abandoned it and therefore even if He's omniscient, He no longer cares.

"All day long I am beset with illness and wounds and every morning I am rebuked." We assume the suffering is rebuke from heaven, Hashem taking it out on the *tzadikim* whom He judges very strictly. *Assaf* is a Rebbe and his students ask him these questions. He himself can't sleep facing a reality that is very baffling. He says, "If I tell it like it is, I will have betrayed the next generation." Other commentators explain that we read the verse in *Tehilim* this way, "If I said it the way it is I would have to say - You have betrayed a generation of *Klal Yisrael*. Hashem, where is your covenant with *Klal Yisrael*?" Finally, I realized, "*Amal b'einei*," trying to find an answer was just a futile effort.

"Until I came to the sanctuaries of Hashem..." Some commentators say this means *Assaf* went to the *Beit Hamikdash* where he began studying *Torah* which helped him to finally understand. "I will understand what will happen at their end." This means the end of the *tzaddikim* and *reshaim*. The sanctuaries of Hashem may also mean shuls or *batei midrash*. Rashi explains that it means- I kept searching for Rebbes. I looked for someone to guide me and I finally discovered him. Others say the sanctuaries of Hashem are not in this world. It can be in one's dreams or visions. Everyone has some level of divine inspiration where they can get a glimpse of what will happen at the other end.

"With a snap of a finger...they are wiped out in horrific terror... they've destroyed their souls... I found myself as somebody waking up from a dream..." *Assaf* refers to *Hashem b'aer*. This can mean either in the city where the *reshaim* once reveled and terrorized innocent people, there Hashem will put them to shame. Others say *b'aer* comes from the root word *l'hitorerur*, as in- I awakened and I saw their image being mocked. When we awaken in the next world it will look like a nightmare just passed and it will scare us for a moment. But then we'll realize it was just a dream and we'll laugh at the monsters we saw.

"I was no different than an animal..." who does not know where he came from, where he will go, or what he was in a previous life. There is an afterlife. *Assaf* tells Hashem, I've always remained with you although it was hard to do

so. As he confessed, he almost fell and went off the straight path.

"You held my right hand..." The *Bluzhever Rebbe* relates a story in *Chassidic Tales of the Holocaust*. One day, the German commandant ordered the prisoners to jump over a broad pit. Anyone who didn't make it across was shot. A freethinker standing behind the Rebbe said, "Let's just end our misery." The Rebbe told him, "You'll see, will get to the other side, just hold my hand." Together they jumped and made it. The freethinker asked the Rebbe, "Who were you holding on to?" He answered, "I envisioned my Rebbes and held on to their coat tails." *Assaf* seems to indicate, "Hashem you must have held on to my hand if I could still be a good Jew after all we've gone through."

"*Vacher kavod tikacheini*-And afterwards you took me for honor." The *Malbim* teaches that *kavod* means your soul. If you lose that you are not much more than an animal. "Hashem will take into account that I maintained my honor. Although it wasn't easy, I remained honorable and true and I did what I did because this is who I am, this is my essence. I placed my portion with Hashem, my refuge." To regain his faith or to give people faith, *Assaf* will tell of people who remained faithful, who survived the worst of tests and stayed loyal to Hashem, not because they were afraid or because it was easy, but because to do otherwise would be committing spiritual suicide.

## Leah- A Role Model for Us Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

"*Vayar Hashem ki senuah Leah*-And Hashem saw that Leah was hated." Halachically one may not live with a wife one hates. How do we understand this? One interpretation is that she did what those who are hated are meant to do. She was supposed to be married to Eisav who was meant to overcome evil. He failed. She succeeded although she had tendencies towards hateful deeds. This was her challenge in life and she overcame it and thereby reached very high levels.

About Leah it is said, "*Aim habanim semei-cha*- The mother of children is happy. Each of the four wives of Yaakov were supposed to have three children. Leah who was a prophetess knew this and therefore named her fourth son Yehuda to express her gratitude. She was the paradigm of a *baal teshuva* whose wrongdoings are transformed into merits. Leah received more than what was intended for her. She teaches us that teshuva can turn negativity into something that will give you even more. She demon-

strates for us the power of overcoming evil and repenting and she bequeathed this ability to us.

"*Vayar Hashem ki senua leah vayiftach et rachma*." Leah was in the category of those who might do things that would be hated by Hashem. And because she overcame it, she merited to gain more children than was intended for her. *Teshuva* was created before the world was created. In a world of logic, teshuva does not fit. You can't undo damage that was done. In his mercy, Hashem allowed it to come into existence, Leah perfected it, and bequeathed its power to us.

Chazal say that Leah taught us the art of *hodaya* and her children followed in her footsteps. The word *hodaya* means gratitude and admittance. The classic example was Leah's son, Yehuda, who publicly admitted to his guilt in the incident with Tamar, thereby saving her from death. Leah personifies these two aspects of gratitude and admittance as

admitting to a wrong is the first step of teshuva. When Chazal depict Yaakov's household during the episode of selling Yosef, they describe Reuven, Leah's firstborn son as immersed in *teshuva* for the sin of switching the bed of Yaakov. Yet Chazal say that whoever says Reuven committed a sin is making a mistake. This is reminiscent of Leah, the quintessential *baalat teshuva* who didn't do anything wrong. So too Yehuda did not do anything wrong, although the story with Tamar appeared strange. Similarly, the story of David and Batsheva appeared perplexing, yet Chazal never reckoned it as a sin. Still King David spent a lot of time doing *teshuva* and in fact we learn the process of repentance from chapter 51 in *Tehilim*, composed by him. In truth, he was perfect in the eyes of Hashem. However, since people thought differently, he did teshuva for seemingly causing the misconception. Through this he served as an example of how to repent and created the DNA we would need in order to do *teshuva* for misdeeds that are truly sins.

## Mishlei: The Levels of Wisdom Part II

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

The *mashal* is the story and the *nishmal* is what lies underneath. Hashem allowed King Shlomo to develop the wisdom whereby he could reduce what he saw in the world to a *mashal* so that we could relate to it. The goal is to be able to relate to your life, to the world, and to other people. Everything in this world has 4 aspects, *chomer* (material), *poal* (action), *tzura* (form) and *tachlit* (goal). For example, if we look at a book, the *chomer* would be what it's made out of. In the case of a book it would be wood and petroleum from which the plastic cover is constructed. In the case of a person it would be oxygen, plasma...

*Poal* is what does it do? A book opens your mind to see things you wouldn't see had it not been printed. In the case of a person it would be: What do you do? Where do your days go? *Tzura* is asking- What is its form, how does it look? The *tzura* tells you what it's for. *Tachlit* is asking-What is it here for? If you'll look at a

kitchen, you'll see that it has a stove, sink, and counterspace. You'll automatically understand then that it's a place where food can be prepared and stored.

The *chomer* of *Mishlei* is that it's all in a *mashal*. It brings you back to real life. King Shlomo who had the credibility, wrote it. "*Lahavin imrei bina*- To understand words of comprehension. *L'daat chachma u'mussar*-initially one must know *chochma* and *mussar* and that will take a person to "*L'havin imrei bina*." As humans, we have abilities that animals don't have. Hashem gave us instinctive capacities which are related to our *chomer* to make ourselves and the world into something greater. The first capacity is *chochma*, the ability to form ideas and to take potential to action. *Binah* is the ability to draw conclusions based on the pictures formed in your mind. The Gra says this is meant to make us see one thing as being different and unique, compared to everything else we see. Every

picture is unique in what it portrays. *Binah* is *l'havin davar*, to differentiate one thing from another based on what we see, forming a picture, and drawing a conclusion. The Gra compares this to the process of birth, the potential for life inherent which is *chachma*, the development of the fetus which is *binah*, and then the fully formed baby emerging which is *daat*.

The purpose of *Mishlei* is to give us the ability to look at life and see what our potentials are, what stories we're telling ourselves, what conclusions we're drawing, and where it's taking us.

Here's an exercise: Think about one period in your life, it doesn't matter when. What were your potentials? What stories did you draw in your mind? When it was actually happening, what was the purpose of it? And where is it taking you now in your life?