

Theodicy – Divine Justice in the Torah and Neviim

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

In Parshat Vayera, Avraham Avinu makes a curious demand asking Hashem to save the evil city of Sedom for the sake of a few good people. Rashi notes that after that we find the story of the akeida in which Avraham did not ask for any kind of justice nor question Hashem's ways. He proceeded directly to *Har Hamoriah* and readied himself to offer Yitzchak up as a sacrifice until the voice of Hashem halted him. It seems that we have here a conflict between *din* (strict judgment) and *rachamim* (mercy). It's an argument of the Satan who is not the devil but the adversity, the other side. The other side questions, why wouldn't Avraham or any *tzadik* for that matter, not be good? After all Hashem promised that anyone who obeys Him will get reward. They are choosing to be good not because they are moral but because they are self-serving. If so, then there's no such thing as good or evil. It's expedient or not expedient and that argumentation takes away from why Hashem would choose one person over the other. It follows that the test of Avraham was not for Hashem to determine what was in his heart, but to prove to all humanity that there are people who will do the right thing even if it doesn't seem to be worth their while.

When Avraham went to *Har Hamoriah*, the

future site of the *Beit Hamikdash*, he said, "This is the place in which Hashem will see (*yireh*). Rashe translates *yireh* as, where Hashem will be seen in the future. At the moment, we don't necessarily see that there's justice and reward and punishment. But there will come a day when it will all become clear. Rav Hirsh explains *yireh* as, Hashem sees. Human vision is limited in time, space, and conceptual capacity. Only Hashem is omniscient and omnipotent, and He will appear again and again throughout the generations to those people who chose to follow him.

After the *akeida*, Hashem told Avraham, "Now I know that you fear Hashem..." For if you had done otherwise, I might have thought that you were fearing your logic, your sense of justice, punishment, or the loss of reward. But to to fear Hashem is to do what is right, to remain faithful to Him in spite of the fact that reality seems to say, "There's no judgment and no Judge."

In the first and second of the Ten Commandments, Hashem said, "I am Hashem... You shall not have any other idols..." And what is my nature? "*Kel kaneh v'nokem poked avon avot al banim...v'al rebeihem* -I am vengeful, jealous, who visits the sins of the fathers on

their sons... on their great grandchildren." But there's a qualifier. Hashem will not punish for the sins of the fathers unless the great grandchildren continue in their evil ways. Four generations is an average lifespan. We will live to see that our actions have had an impact on ourselves and our children. "*Notzer chesed l'alafim*-Hashem will save reward for thousands of generations." There's an imbalance. Punishment can only go for four generations, but reward can continue for thousands of years.

Moshe asked Hashem, "Show me your ways." *Chazal* explain that he was really asking, "Why do we see good people suffering and evil people flourishing?" Hashem answered, "No human being can see me and live." In other words, "You can't have the answer to that question, however I will show you a part of me." He put Moshe in the crook of a mountain and He showed him His shadow. Man was created in the *tzelem* (image) of Hashem which is related to *tzel* (shadow). This refers to the human capacity to love and give expecting nothing in return. We ask Hashem not to deal with us with *din* (strict justice) or even with justifiable reward and punishment but with *chesed* (kindness).

Benefitting from Chillul Shabbat

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

The Gemara in *Masechot Beitza* tells us, if a gentile does a *melacha* (prohibited act) for a Jew, for example *ketzira*, he harvested fruit on Shabbat and brought it to the Jew on *Yom Tov* or he took fruit from outside the permitted *techum* and brought it to the Jew inside the *techum* on Shabbat, then the Jew may not benefit from the fruit until the night time. When the Gemara says till the night time, it also adds the amount of time it took for the *melacha* to be performed. This is referred to as *b'kedai sheyaaseh*. For example, if Shabbat ended at 6:00 pm and it took 20 minutes to harvest the fruit, one would have to wait till 6:20 pm to benefit from the *melacha*.

Tosfot understood that the reason for this prohibition was a *kenas*, a fine. Chazal wanted to take away the incentive of *amira*

l'akum so that people wouldn't easily ask a gentile to do *melacha* for them on Shabbat. If there's no time saved anyway, there's no reason to ask a non-Jew to do the work on Shabbat. It follows, that according to *Tosfot*, if there's a two-day *Yom Tov*, one must wait till the end of the second day to benefit from prohibited *melacha*.

Rashi disagrees and says that the reason for *issur hanaah* is not a *kenas* but a new *issur d'Rabanun* that one may not benefit from *chilul Shabbat* whether it was done by a Jew or non-Jew. Rashi understands that during a 2-day *Yom Tov*, one can benefit after the first day, *b'kedai sheyaaseh*, because the second day is only a custom. In principle, the Gemara assumes that only one day is *Yom Tov min Ha'Torah* and that allows us *m'safek dinei d'Rabanun* to play one day off the next. It

follows that according to Rashi you can benefit from *melacha* after the first day because in principle it's not *Yom Tov* anymore. If the second day was really *Yom Tov* that means the first day was *Erev Yom Tov* and the harvesting was done by the gentile on a day that was permitted. Therefore, there's no reason not to permit *hanaah* after the first day. However, this is a disagreement between *Rashi* and *Tosfot*.

Another question arises, if the *melacha* itself-the harvesting took 20 minutes, but to go and come back from the orchard took another hour, do we count the travel time or not in the *issur* of *kedai sheyaaseh*? According to Rashi, the prohibition applies to the *melacha* itself and travel time is not relevant. But if one assumes like *Tosfot* that the *issur* is to take

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away the incentive of *amira l'akum* then if you can benefit earlier, it still might be worth it to ask a non-Jew to do *melacha*. But if one must also wait the travel time, the incentive for *amira l'akum* is completely taken away. Therefore, according to *Tosfot*, the *kenas* must be in place to limit *hanaah* for both the *melacha* and travel time.

Based on this idea, *Tosfot* raises another *nafka minah*. Does the *din* of *b'kedai sheyaasa* apply to a Jew who did *melacha* on *Shabbat*? *Rashi* says, of course, after all the whole nature of the *issur* is that you can't benefit from *melacha* done on *Shabbat*. How much more so does this apply to a Jew. However, *Tosfot* disagrees. If the *issur* was instituted to take away the incentive of *amira*

l'akum then maybe one can argue that *Chazal* saw fit to make a *kenas* only when it involved a gentile so that it wouldn't be taken lightly. *Chazal* had to bolster it with the additional *issur* of *b'kedai sheyaasa*. However, when it comes to a Jew doing *melacha* on *Shabbat*, it's a rare phenomenon and therefore *Chazal* didn't have to extend the *kenas* of *b'kedai sheyaasa* in that case.

Travelling through Life Accompanied by Tehillim Part 2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

"*Ashrei hai'sh*...-Praiseworthy is the man who walked not in the counsel of the wicked and stood not in the path of the sinful and sat not in the session of scorners." The standard translation for *ashrei* is praiseworthy. We also see that the root word is *osher* - approval. *David Hamelech* describes the one that everyone approves of. Such a person keeps away from negativity.

"His desire is in the *Torah* of Hashem ... His leaves never wither and everything he does will succeed. Not so the wicked, rather they are like the chaff that is driven away by the wind..." Do the righteous really have a perfect life while the wicked suffer? Don't we see quite the opposite?

In order, to understand what *David Hamelech* meant we will study this chapter in-depth. The *Redak* says the word *ashrei* is always written in plural form because defining someone as happy means he's achieved success in multiple areas. He is rich, healthy, enjoys good social status, and perfect children. *Ashrei* is related to the word *ashur* which means a step. This signifies progressing towards something. One of the biggest human motivational factors is happiness and if a person is healthy and capable, he'll take steps to reach contentment.

David Hamelech tells us three paths that people will take to achieve happiness. There are three groups mentioned, *reshaim*-the wicked, *chataim* -the sinners, and *leitzim* -the scorners. They all want happiness but they pursue it in ways that *David Hamelech* defines as negative.

Rasha comes from the root word *reshut* which means permissive. The *rasha* wants to be happy so he permits himself anything and everything that he desires. He believes that the key to happiness is to do whatever comes to mind, not to follow any rules, nor put down any boundaries. The kind of person *David Hamelech* praises is someone diametrically opposite.

Chataim comes from the root letters *chet, tes, aleph*, which indicates a lack. *Chataim* don't take their obligations and mission in life seriously. They might transgress many sins unintentionally just because they don't think too much. They don't necessarily rebel, but they don't invest enough in what is worthwhile because they find it too difficult. *Chataim* want the easy way out.

Leitzim are dangerous people. They know it all but mock and scorn the truth so that their conscious will not lead them to do the right

thing. They're not ready to do the work required, so they'll make fun of it so that it doesn't obligate them. At times, almost everyone finds themselves in one of these three categories. For a moment we might think- I'll just do it and I'll be happy. We ignore the fact that it's forbidden.

David Hamelech says the person that is praiseworthy will have no contact with these groups. He won't stand or sit near them. When a person knows what's right and doesn't want to follow that path, there's no point in discussing it. He has to come to it on his own. The righteous person doesn't even engage in conversation with these groups. He's afraid he'll be pulled in, so he stays away from evil fully and completely. But not only that, he also does positive acts. He has a desire to learn *Torah* and follow it. He thinks about it day and night and is totally immersed in it.

Rashi points out, in the beginning of the chapter it says, "*Ki im b'Torahat Hashem cheftzo*. And then it says, "*U'veTorahato yehege yomom v'lalya*. *Rashi* explains, in the beginning when a person starts to learn it's still *Torahat Hashem*. But as the person engages and invests himself in it, it becomes his *Torah*. He becomes one with it to the extent that whatever he says reflects *Torah*.