

## Theodicy – Divine Justice in the Torah and Neviim

### Part II

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

“Hashem, Hashem, *kel racham v'chanun erech apayim v'rav chesed v'emet...*” Hashem is slow to anger and loves unconditionally. Unconditional love means loving the good people and giving the bad people a chance to repent. *Emet* (truth) is punishing evil and rewarding the good. How do we understand this?

“*Notzer chesed l'alafim.*” *Notzer* means to save up. One might not see the reward for good deeds in one's lifetime, but it will be saved for thousands of generations. “*Noso ovon v'pesha.*” Hashem bears sin. He is patient. The sinners may not see the consequences of their actions in their lifetime, but their evil deeds are not erased. They are simply saved for the future. And as a result, “*Poked avon avot al banim-* The sins of the fathers might be visited on the sons.” These consequences continue for four generations. Yirmiyahu was born on Tisha B'av. He was chosen to give a message of destruction to his people and lived long enough to see it unfold. He witnessed the pillaging, the dying by starvation, and the exiles led away in chains. His horrible message made him despised not only by evildoers but by his own kinsfolk. They tortured him and imprisoned him. When his own family betrayed him, he came and demanded Hashem's justice. Why was Hashem letting evil flourish? The Rambam tells us in *Hilchot Taniyot* that to accept the suffering of the righteous and the flourishing of evil as if Hashem had

abandoned this earth, is a sin. Not to seek the causes for why this world seems unjust is the denial of one's own moral sensibility. It's cruel to believe that its merely a world of survival of the fittest.

Yirmiyahu begged Hashem, “Cut them off like sheep to the slaughter...” Kill the evildoers. Hashem answered him in the 17th chapter of Yirmiyahu. “He will be like tumbleweed... he will not live to see good coming...”

The prophet Yechezkel lived during and after the churban. The people came to him in Bavel and complained, “Our fathers sinned and they are gone and we are now suffering the consequences of their sins.” Yechezkel posits a theology of justice, “The sinning soul he will die.” The question begs, don't good people also die? Therefore, Targum Yonaton explains that this refers to the Next World not this world. But Redak argues against this and says that it refers to the here and now. No son will bear the sin of his father nor will a father be held responsible for what his son does. If the evil person repents he will live in this world and the next world. Not that he will become immortal, but that his soul will survive as opposed to the evil doer whose soul is eradicated.

How can we understand *teshuva*? If you murdered and you repented, how does that rectify the act? Isn't it a lack of justice to seemingly erase the act? This is exactly the difference between the first and second *luchot*.

*Rachamim* (mercy) makes no rational sense but it ensures the survival of people and the opportunity for a second chance. Hashem doesn't want to be punitive. It seems then than in invoking *midat harachamim* and the possibility of *teshuva* we have created an absurd world in which no thunder bolt comes down from heaven to wipe out evil doers and no hand comes down from heaven to rescue the righteous from the persecution of evil.

*Malachi* was the last prophet. He came back to Israel after 70 years and lived to see the Second Temple built. The Jews asked him, “What's the point of following the *Torah*? We see evil doers prospering.” Hashem responds, “There will come a day when you will be able to see the difference between a *tzadik* and a *rasha*.” All the reshaim will become nothing, like straw consumed by fire. There will not remain a branch or a root of them in the future. Redak says, the non- Jews will one day realize that were the Jews not willing to invoke *midat rachamim* and instead they would have demanded only *midat hadin* (strict justice), Hashem would have no choice as it were but to destroy the world. We accept the injustice knowing that the world is on Hashem's shoulders. The Jew at Har Sinai recognized the reality of *rachamim*. If we want Hashem to forgive us then we must be willing to forgive everyone else. If Hashem will be long suffering and forbearing and willing to give us a second chance, justice demands that he give a second chance to all of humanity.

## Benefitting from Chillul Shabbat

### Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

If a Jew violated *shehiya* and on *Erev Shabbat* put food on a fire without a blech so that it cooked on *Shabbat*, one may not benefit from that food on *Shabbat*. *Shehiya* is different because it's one of those *melachot* that even a Jew would take lightly. After all, there is no performance of actual *melacha* on *Shabbat*. Therefore, even Tosfot would concede that one would have to wait till *Motzai Shabbat bekedai sheyaaseh* to eat the food.

The Gemara in Chullin quotes a Beraisai that brings three opinions from the *Tenaim*.

According to Rabbi Meir, if someone cooks food *b'shogeg* (unintentionally) on *Shabbat*, it may be eaten on *Shabbat*. If he cooked *b'meizid* (intentionally), he may not eat it until after *Shabbat*. Rabbi Yehuda says the food may be eaten only on *Motzai Shabbat* if it was cooked *b'shogeg*. But if it was *b'meizid*, the food may never be eaten. Rabbi Yochanon rules that if it was cooked *b'shogeg*, it can only be eaten by others on *Motzai Shabbat*. The one who cooked it can never eat it. If it was cooked *b'meizid*, no one can ever eat it. This is the most stringent opinion which was not accepted *l'halacha*. What emerges is that the

Gemara makes a distinction between the one who cooked the food and others and between an unintentional and intentional act. The Gemara then says, when students of Rav asked him, “How do we rule, like Rabbi Meir or Rabbi Yehuda?” He answered, “Like Rabbi Meir.” However, to the public he would say that the *halacha* is like Rabbi Yehuda. The Gemara explains that there was a lot of ignorance among the common folk, so he felt compelled to teach them the more stringent view. There arose a major disagreement among the halachic decisors. Are we like the students with sophistication in learning or are we ignorant

Continued on Page 2

## Benefitting from Chillul Shabbat Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson  
Continued from Page 1

like the common folk? Many Chachmei Ashkenaz rule stringently like Rabbi Yehuda. This is also the view of the Rosh. However, the Baalei HaTosofot and the Sefer HaTeruma rule leniently like Rabbi Meir. The dominant view of the *Rishonim* is that there's more ignorance today and we must follow Rabbi Yehuda. However there's a significant minority view that are lenient like Rabbi Meir.

The Shulchan Aruch writes, one who cooks on *Shabbat* (The Rema adds that this is relevant to all *melachot*) intentionally may never get benefit from it. Others can benefit

*Motzai Shabbat* right away. This follows the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda and Tosfot that there's no *kenas* of *b'kedai sheyaaseh* when it comes to a Jew who did *melacha*.

In *Hilchot Yom Tov*, the Shulchan Aruch rules like Rashi that if a gentile brings a gift to a Jew on *Yom Tov*, the Jew can benefit after waiting *b'kedai sheyaaseh* of the first day of *Yom Tov*. He doesn't have to wait till *Motzai Yom Tov* of the second day. Why does the *Shulchan Aruch* rule here like Rashi and previously like Tosfot? The Magen Avraham suggests, perhaps he rules like Rashi here because it's uncommon

for a Jew to do *melacha* for another Jew.

Although the *Shulchan Aruch* rules like Rabbi Yehuda, the Gra follows the opinion of Rabbi Meir. The *Mishna Berura* noting this, offers a striking leniency that in a time of need one can rely on Rabbi Meir if one cooked on *Shabbat* unintentionally. For example, someone violated an *issur d'orayta* and put a pot of liquid on a blech which cooked on *Shabbat*. The *Mishna Berura*, quoting the Gra, rules that if it was done unintentionally and there's a real need for the food, there would be room to rule leniently and permit it on *Shabbat*.

## Travelling through Life Accompanied by Tehillim Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

"He will be like a tree planted on brooks of water which gives forth its fruit in season and its leaves do not wither and all that he does will be successful." This verse is written in future tense which hints to future reward.

"*K'eitz shatul...*" *Shatul* means to transplant. David Hemelech says the righteous will be like a tree transplanted to another place. Rav Hirsh explains, a righteous person doesn't see himself as a victim of circumstances. He recognizes that he was put on this world to fulfill a mission and the tools given to him are meant to help him. At times, he'll uproot himself from negative surroundings and plant himself where he might find the right role models. It's much easier to go with the flow. But this is the way of the wicked who want success but aren't willing to work for it. The *tzadik* plants himself on brooks of water. He ensures he'll have positive nourishment from various sources. He'll pursue anything that will help him in his spiritual quest. Torah is compared to water. The *tzadik* ensures that *Torah* will be that which nourishes his life regardless of his circumstances. He'll invest

and he'll see the fruits of his good deeds.

Even things that seem to be of secondary importance like leaves will not wither. Such mundane activities as eating, sleeping, and conversing will be an expression of Torah. Chazal say, "*Sichot chullin shel talmidei chachamim tzrichim limud*- A mundane discussion of *Torah* scholars is something that needs to be studied." It's full of *Torah* wisdom. A righteous person is rooted in *Torah* and all that he gives forth is meaningful and purposeful.

*L'hatziach* comes from the root word *l'tzeloach* which means to cross a river. This implies advancing against resistance. It's rising above one's base inclinations and becoming something greater. Chaff is dry and hollow. It may appear green on the outside, but inside it's empty. It's blown by the wind from place to place. The wicked are in constant movement back and forth achieving nothing. They are chased by the wind and don't have any central focal goal in life. They're constantly driven but they have no satisfaction inside. In contrast, the *tzadik* remain rooted in place like

a solid tree.

In *shemone esrei*, we ask Hashem to gather us from all the corners of the earth. On a deeper level this means, we run from one thing to the next. We're all over the place. There's nothing anchoring our life that will give us happiness and purpose and make us want to be who we are meant to be. David Hamelech's description of a *rasha* is someone lacking a focal point. In contrast, the righteous person is *shatul*, firmly rooted and set on a meaningful goal.

Everyone has challenges. No one's life is perfect. How can a person be happy? If we are rooted in *Torah* and understand that life is not about reaching the goal but striving to get there, we can achieve inner contentment. If we work on overcoming our obstacles, even if we aren't 100% successful, if we're moving forward towards a focal point, life becomes meaningful. *Ashrei* is written in the plural form because reaching happiness is an accumulation of small steps. What counts is not what we attained but what we invested to get there.