

Theodicy Suffering of the Innocent Kohelet and Iyov

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop
Summary by Devor Kaye

All of our great sages looked at the conundrums of life straight on. It didn't mean they always had answers, but they were willing to live with the questions. It didn't take away one iota from their relationship with Hashem. You cannot be angry or hate someone, if you don't believe he exists. At no point did they move an inch from the *Torah*. They lived and died as Jews. To live like that is to live like Yaakov whose name was changed to Yisrael, "*Ki sarisa im Elokim v'im anashim v'tachul.*" To live as a Jew is to live in a constant strife with the realities and problems of life. It doesn't mean succumbing to despair. It's precisely the great faith that there will be an answer some day, that has sustained us through the ages. When people are told not to ask questions, it sparks disillusionment which can lead to leaving the fold. Some choose to leave simply because life can sometimes be too difficult and the struggle too hard. In the famous story, Yossel Rakover speaks to God, Yossel calls these people cowards. We don't punish them, we pity them. But for the heroes who remained faithful throughout the ages, despite the strife and difficulties, we will look carefully at what *Kohelet* says.

Kohelet is attributed to Shlomo Hamelech who in his old age looked at life with clear 20/20 vision. *Kohelet* was a great teacher who didn't reject his student's questions. "I've seen it all in the days of vanity." The word *hevel* means hot air. Shlomo Hamelech views our intelligence and grasp of life as, "*Hevel*

hevalim hakol hevel," nothing more than a fleeting breath. He speaks about the righteous who struggle with difficulties and the cruel people who enjoy peaceful lives. *Kohelet* looks at life both in terms of the problem of where is Hashem and what is happening on earth in terms of what humans create. Good people sometimes suffer at the hands of evil. This is reality; it's an existentialist view of the world as we experience it with our five senses, not as it should be. *Kohelet* says we must recognize that we are but human who can see so far and know nothing more than what was given to us in this lifetime. And we must have faith in the afterlife and that justice will prevail in the end.

The Sefas Emes says, "*U'mossar h'adam min habehema ayin*-The ability to say no makes man greater than the beast." A Jew doesn't obey his instincts and his physical desires blindly. We're raised that way from day one. A two-year-old at the supermarket knows he can't have the treif chocolate. *Kohelet* ends, "*Reishit chochma yirat Hashem*- The beginning and end of all wisdom is fear of Hashem." This brings us to the book of Iyov. Iyov was a righteous upstanding man who was afflicted by Hashem. Eliyhu, one of Iyov's friends, condemns him for one thing only and that is his arrogance to think that he could understand Hashem's ways. At which point,

Iyov finally makes a case for himself and demands that Hashem save him. A voice comes out of the whirlwind and challenges him that his complaints and perspectives are

anthropocentric, believing that the human is the end all and be all of creation. Chazal tells us that *tzadikim* speak to Hashem from the heart, and when it hurts they scream and cry. It's an honest relationship. Chazal tells us that whoever wrote the book of Iyov, whether it was Moshe or Yirmiyahu, did not question his deep faith in Hashem, the Torah, and the prophets. Rabbah points out that while it seems that Iyov questions Hashem, we don't judge people for what they say in times of pain.

The book of Iyov begins, "There was a man in the land of Utz... and that man was a good man." At the beginning, there's a dialogue that occurs between Hashem and the Satan. Hashem tells the Satan, "Did you see my servant Iyov...there's none like him .. a straight, perfect person, a man of integrity..." The Satan responds, "Does Iyov fear Hashem for nothing...you protected him...you've blessed the work of his hand..." The Satan killed Iyov's children, destroyed his livestock, stole his possessions. Iyov accepted it all, "Hashem gave and took away may the name of Hashem be blessed." The Satan then tells Hashem, "All that man has he'll give for his own life. Just send your hand and touch him and his flesh and see if he won't curse you." Iyov then broke out in horrible, painful boils. To which his wife responds, "... "You're holding on to your innocence, get up and curse..." Iyov then retorts, "We accepted the good without question and the seemingly bad we won't accept?"

Introduction to Laws of Bishul Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson
Summary by Devora Kaye

The Gemara discusses a disagreement between Rav Yochanon and Reish Lakish regarding damages caused by fire. Fire has the unique capacity to travel from place to place. If I light a fire here and it travels further, are the subsequent damages considered *adam hamzik*; i.e. is the person who caused the damage liable for full damages? Reish Lakish rules that fire is not *adam hamzik* but rather *mamon hamazik*. It's the person's property that does damage and therefore the person is only liable for partial damages. The Gemara concludes according to the opinion of Rabbi Yochanon that fire is *adam hamazik*. The Nimukei Yosef explains that if I light a fire on my property and it starts to travel, it's as if my force is behind that fire. It's as if I throw a soft ball, and my force behind the ball pushes it until it smashes a window. So too, says the

Nimukei Yosef, when I light a fire, halachically, I'm seen as lighting each step of the way until it reaches my neighbor's field, for which I am liable for damages. How then can a woman light *Shabbat* candles Friday afternoon? If we view fire as lighting all the way through and the candles are still lit on *Shabbat*, it's as if I'm lighting the candles on *Shabbat* and that's a *melacha d'oraysa*. Therefore we have to conclude that subsequent action is reverted back to the original action. The lightning now is considered to have happened before *Shabbat*. So too, if someone lights a fire in his field at 1pm and the fire travels and at 3pm it damages his friend's field, can the friend demand payment for damages? If the person who lit the fire died at 2pm, and was no longer alive when the damages happened, can he demand payment from his inheritors? The Nimukei

Yosef says he can, as we view subsequent action as having taken place when the initial action happened.

So too, when a woman lights *Shabbat* candles before *Shabbat*, even if lasts into *Shabbat*, the subsequent action reverts back to the original lightning and there's no *chilul Shabbat*. Similarly, if you put up food to cook erev *Shabbat*, but the *gemar* (conclusion) happens on *Shabbat*, the Nimukei Yosef considers it as if it happened erev *Shabbat*. On a *d'oraysa* level it wouldn't be a problem, although there's still an issue of *shehiya*. Rav Soloveitchik explains, the Torah says, "*Kol melacha lo taaseh*." On a *d'oraysa* level, there must be an actual *maaseh* (action) happening on *Shabbat* to violate the *issur*.

Travelling Through Life Accompanied by Tehillim Part 6 Class III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn
Summary by Devora Kaye

Hashem tells King David, "You will smash them with an iron rod, you will shatter them like a potter's vessel." On a simple level, at the time of *Mashiach*, the nations will be destroyed by Hashem. On a deeper level, Hashem tells King David that his future descendent, *Mashiach*, will merit to destroy all the nations that didn't follow the ways of Hashem. But at the moment, Hashem still wants the nations to continue to exist and the reason given is based on what happened at brit bein habesarim. Hashem told Avraham to take specific kosher animals, slice them in two, place them on two sides, and a divine torch of fire passed through them. There was also a *tzipor* (bird) that was not slaughtered. Commentaries explain that Hashem described via imagery, a time that would come when all enemies would be destroyed. The bird symbolizing the Jew would remain alive. Birds of prey descended on the carcasses and Avraham drove them away. The animals symbolize the nations and the birds who descended signify King David who had the ability to destroy all nations. But Hashem told him not yet, wait till *Mashiach*.

This explanation is based on another *Midrash* which says that Hashem asked Avraham, if your children will not follow in my ways, do you want them to be punished in the next world or do you want them to be exiled among the nations. Avraham chose exile. Hashem tells King David, a time will come when the nations will be conquered, but not yet. There's a reason for exile. It's not just a punishment but an opportunity for the Jewish people to correct what went wrong.

Exile is not only for our sake but for the sake of other nations. Although they don't need to bring the world to its purpose, they get a share in it indirectly if they serve the Jewish nation. But there's another benefit, we have to bring recognition of Hashem to all the nations; as it says in Yeshaya, we must be, "A light unto the nations." When the non-Jews see us acting as a Torah true Jew should, it gives them an opportunity to connect to Hashem on their level. In addition, when we are in exile, we draw non-Jewish people to join the Jewish nation, to undo their original choice and to

attach themselves to those who are bringing the world to its purpose.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakodesh explains that the ideal way of bringing the nations to Hashem is by being an ideal society that knows no physical or spiritual illness and is devoted to Torah. Our very reality should be like a magnet attracting people to come to us to uncover the secret of our society. And then we will teach them. This is what happened in the time of King Shlomo. Kings and noble leaders would come to Israel to learn; and then they would return and teach their nations. King David says to the nations, "And now, oh kings, be wise, oh judges of earth, serve Hashem with awe, and you may rejoice when there's trembling..." He tells the nations, now they have the ability to still change their ways. When *Mashiach* will come they will be destroyed instantly and there will be no possibility to do *teshuva*. Free choice will be taken away. It will be a time of reward and punishment. Therefore let them take action now so that they not be destroyed.