

HALACHIC AND HASHKAFIC ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

SERIES 3: 5 - TZADIK v'RA LO THEODICY AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL - PART 4 OU ISRAEL/BEIT KENESSET HANASI - FALL 2024

- We saw in Part 1 that there is more than one legitimate Jewish response to the Problem of Evil/Suffering and we examined the approach of Skeptical Theism - that it is simply impossible to understand God's thoughts or plan for the world.
- In Part 2 we looked at different versions of Punishment Theodicies which 'explain' or even 'justify' the suffering, especially in light of the reward due in the World To Come. We also began to explore the difficult concept of Yissurin Shel Ahava - Afflictions of Love.
- In Part 3 we examined Free Will Theodicy and whether suffering at the hands of evildoers is also attributable to God. We also looked briefly at 'Soul-Making' Theodicies - the concept that struggle and sometimes suffering is necessary to actualize people's potential and build them (or others who know them) spiritually, psychologically and personally.
- In this final shiur we will look briefly¹ at the question of Hashgacha Pratit and whether what happens to us should really be interpreted as some kind of direct message or intervention from God. We will then end the series by looking at 'Anti-theodicies' - a position that any justification of or attempt to explain God's role in causing suffering is in fact an inappropriate stance. Rather, the only relevant question is how to react to the suffering - forward-focused rather than backward.

A] HASHGACHA PRATIT

- Many people understand that their suffering or struggle is in some way a direct communication from God, assuming that every event in this world, down to the most minor and apparently inconsequential, is the object of God's direct Providence - Hashgacha Pratit.
- Indeed, this is the position of many of the commentators over the last 300 years, especially in Chassidic thought. However, we will see that this approach was opposed by many of the Rishonim and, even among contemporary thinkers, turns out to be far more complex than many people imagine.²

1. How God rules the universe and provides for it is a complete mystery: man is unable to solve it. For, on the one hand, it can be proved that God is separate from the universe, and in no contact whatever with it; but, on the other hand, His rule and providence can be proved to exist in all parts of the universe, even in the smallest. Praised be He whose perfection is above our comprehension.

Moreh Nevuchim 1:72

The starting point in this conversation is that NOBODY has direct and specific understanding of how God runs the universe. We can learn general concepts and principles from Torah and revelation - through the prophecy of Tanach and the ruach hakodesh of Chazal, and we may be able to deduce other ideas of Providence from our own reason and understanding. But we will never be able to attribute any specific event to a specific Divine intention.

2. אמר רבא ואיתימא רב חסדא: אם רואה אדם שיסורין באין עליו - יפשפש במעשיו, שנאמר (איכה ג'יב) נחפשה דרךנו ונחלקה ונשיבה עד-ה'.

ברכות ה.

Nevertheless, when suffering and challenge come to us, Chazal inform us that our response must be to introspect, examine our lives, and seek out opportunities for improvement.

1. This shiur will not attempt a comprehensive analysis of Divine Providence - that requires an entire series, which we will be'H get to. For the present purposes, the focus will be on issues that impact on our discussion of Tzadik V'Ra Lo.

2. By far the best book in English on this topic is *The Paths of Providence* by Chaim Gross. Unfortunately, this is now out of print and difficult to obtain.

3. תנו רבנן: שתי שנים ומחצה נחלקו בית שמאי ובית הלל. הללו אומרים: נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משנברא, והללו אומרים: נוח לו לאדם שנברא יותר משלא נברא. נמנו וגמרו: נוח לו לאדם שלא נברא יותר משנברא, עכשיו שנברא - יפשפש במעשיו. (רש"י - שטעה כבר, ויזדוק עזירות שזידו, ויתודה וישוב.) ואמרי לה: ימשמש במעשיו. (רש"י - כגון: אם בא מלוח לידו יחשב כפסד מלוח כנגד שכרה....)

עירובין יג:

Chazal also conclude that it may indeed have been easier (not necessarily 'better') not to have been born at all. But now that we are here, our focus should be on self-improvement.

A1] HASHGACHA PRATIT - A VIEW FROM TEHILLIM

4. (י) יָרְאוּ אֶת־ה' קְדָשָׁיו כִּי־אֵין מַחְסוֹר לִירְאָיו: (יא) כְּפִירִים רָשָׁו וְרַעְבוּ וְדָרְשִׁי ה' לֹא־יַחְסְרוּ כָּל־טוֹב: ... טז) עֵינֵי ה' אֶל־צַדִּיקִים וְאֵזְנוֹ אֶל־שׁוֹעֲתָם: ... (יט) קְרוֹב ה' לְנֶשְׁבָּרֵי־לֵב וְאֶת־דַּפְאֵי־רוּחַ יוֹשִׁיעַ: (כ) רַבּוֹת רַעוֹת צַדִּיק וּמִכְּלָם יִצְלִיחוּ ה': (כא) שְׁמֵר כָּל־עֲצוּמוֹתָיו אֶת־מֵהֵנָּה לֹא נִשְׁבְּרָה: (כב) תִּמְוֹתֶיךָ רָשָׁע רָעָה וְשֹׁנְאֵי צַדִּיק יִאֲשָׁמוּ: (כג) פִּדְיָה ה' נַפְשׁ עַבְדָּיו וְלֹא יִאֲשָׁמוּ כָּל־הַחַסִּים בּוֹ:

תהלים לד

Tehillim emphasizes that God's Providence extends over all people of the world but not in equal measure. Those who are 'close to God' - described here as those 'tzadikim' who seek Him, fear Him, serve Him - receive more protection.

A2] HASHGACHA PRATIT - PERSPECTIVES IN CHAZAL

- There are MANY sources in Chazal which appear to indicate that our lives are micromanaged by Hashgacha Pratit.

5. ואמר ר' חנינא: אין אדם נוקף אצבעו מלמטה אלא א"כ מכריזין עליו מלמעלה. שנאמר: (תהלים לז:כג) מִה' מִצַּעְדֵי גִבּוֹר כּוֹנֵנוּ, (משלי כ:כד) נִמְה' מִצַּעְדֵי גִבּוֹר וְאֵדָם מֵהַיָּבִין דְּרָקוֹ

חולין ז:

Every time a person stubs their toe this was 'decreed from above'.

6. עד היכן תכלית יסורין? אמר רבי אלעזר: כל שארגו לו בגד ללבוש ואין מתקבל עליו. ... מר בריה דרבינא אמר: אפילו נהפך לו חלוקו. רבא, ואיתימא רב חסדא, ואיתימא רבי יצחק, ואמרי לה במתניתא תנא: אפילו הושיט ידו לכיס ליטול שלש ועלו בידו שתיים. דווקא שלש ועלו בידו שתיים.

ערכין טז:

Chazal instruct us to view even the most trivial annoyances as 'yesurin' - rebuke from above.³

7. ואמר רבי חנינא: הכל בידי שמים - חוץ מיראת שמים, שנאמר (דברים י"ב) וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל מֶה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שֶׁאֵל מַעֲמֶדָּה כִּי אִם־לִירְאָה.

ברכות לג:

Famously, R. Chanina states that EVERYTHING is in the hands of Heaven other than our free choices.⁴

8. א"ר סימון אין לך כל עשב ועשב שאין לו מזל ברקיע שמכה אותו, ואומר לו 'גדל!'. הה"ד (איוב לח:ג) הִיזְדַּעַתְּ חֲקוֹת שָׁמַיִם אִם־תִּשָּׂים מִשְׁטָרְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ וּגוֹ - לשון שוט.

בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת בראשית פרשה י

This Midrash could indicate that even inanimate objects - every blade of grass - has a direct counterpart in the spiritual world which determines its growth.⁵

3. But an important question on this and other similar sources will be whether Chazal are indeed saying that these things are controlled directly by God, or simply that we should see them as a constructive message and not simply become irritated by them.

4. But, again, is this a unanimous position or only that of R. Chanina? And what is the ambit of 'Yirat Shamayim'? We saw in the previous shiur that the Rambam's position on this is that any consequence of human choice is NOT in the direct hands of God and the expression 'everything' at the beginning of this statement refers only to entirely natural events. Also, a parallel source in Ketubot 30a - הכל בידי שמים חוץ מצנינים פחים - states that the consequences of our own negligent actions are also not in the hands of Heaven.

5. But is this what the source actually says? First, it invokes the concept of mazal, which may not be the same as Hashgacha Pratit but could be part of a much more general system. Also, 'kol esev ve'eser' could mean each species of grass, indicating not Hashgacha Pratit on every atom, but a general Hashgacha Klali expressed through the rules of nature.

9. כן תנא משמיה דרבי עקיבא: לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לומר כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד.

ברכות ס:

R. Akiva taught that a person should always see everything that happens to them as coming from God and for the good.⁶

10. אמר רבא: חיי בני ומזוני לא בזכותא תליא מילתא אלא במזלא תליא מילתא. דהא רבה ורב חסדא תרוייהו רבנן צדיקי הוו. מר מצלי ואתי מיטרא ומר מצלי ואתי מיטרא. רב חסדא חיה תשעין ותרתינן שנין רבה חיה ארבעין. בי רב חסדא שיתין הלולי, בי רבה - שיתין תיכלי. בי רב חסדא סמידא לכלבי ולא מתבעי בי רבה - נהמא דשערי לאינשי, ולא משתכת.

מועד קטן כה.

On the other hand, Chazal emphasize that many of the things that happen to a person are due to 'mazel', which appears to be unrelated to their actions and merits⁷.

11. [שלא עניות מן האומנות ולא עשירות מן האומנות] אלא הכל לפי זכותו - פירוש לפי מזלו. דבני וחיי ומזוני לאו בזכותא תליא מילתא אלא במזלא תליא מילתא.

תוספות קידושין פב.

Tosafot explain that when Chazal say that some things depend upon merit (such as parnassa), they really mean mazel!

A3] HASHGACHA PRATIT - THE RAMBAM

12. THERE are five different theories concerning Divine Providence

First Theory - that there is NO Divine Providence

There is no Providence at all for anything in the Universe. All parts of the Universe, the heavens and what they contain, owe their origin to accident and chance. There exists no being that rules and governs them or provides for them. This is the theory of Epicurus who assumes also that the Universe consists of atoms, that these have combined by chance, and have received their various forms by mere accident. There have been atheists among the Israelites who have expressed the same view; it is reported of them: '*They have denied the Lord, and said He is not*' (Jer 5:12). Aristotle has proved the absurdity of the theory - that the whole Universe could have originated by chance. He has shown that, on the contrary, there is a being that rules and governs the Universe.

Second Theory of Divine Providence

Whilst one part of the Universe owes its existence to Providence, and is under the control of a ruler and governor, another part is abandoned and left to chance. This is the view of Aristotle about Providence, and I will now explain to you his theory. He holds that God controls the spheres and what they contain.

From the existence of the spheres other beings derive existence, which are constant in their species but not in their individuals: in the same manner it is said that Providence sends forth [from the spheres to the earth] sufficient influence to secure the immortality and constancy of the species, without securing at the same time permanence for the individual beings of the species.

All other movements, however, which are made by the individual members of each species are due to accident; they are not, according to Aristotle, the result of rule and management; e.g., when a storm or gale blows, it causes undoubtedly some leaves of a tree to drop, breaks off some branches of another tree, tears away a stone from a heap of stones, raises dust over herbs and spoils them, and stirs up the sea so that a ship goes down with the whole or part of her contents. Aristotle sees no difference between the falling of a leaf or a stone and the death of the good and noble people in the ship; nor does he distinguish between the destruction of a multitude of ants caused by an ox depositing on them his excrement and the death of worshippers killed by the fall of the house when its foundations give way; nor does he discriminate between the case of a cat killing a mouse that happens to come in her way, or that of a spider catching a fly, and that of a hungry lion meeting a prophet and tearing him.

6. Again, this source could easily be read as referring to our attitude to the vicissitudes of life, and not as a direct statement concerning Hashgacha Pratit.

7. For more on mazel see <https://rabbimanning.com/superstition/>. This Gemara proved to be controversial for some Rishonim who either choose to ignore it entirely, or, like the Meiri (Moed Katan 28a, s.v. le-olam), reject Rava's statement. The Meiri asserts that such a position is religiously untenable and must be a minority opinion that is rejected by mainstream Judaism. The Ran (Chiddushei Ha-Ran, Moed Katan 28a, s.v. amar Rava) also concludes by rejecting this gemara. Although he give some credence to Rava's statement, the Ran claims that the conclusion of the Gemara in Shabbat 156 - that astrological fate does not control the destiny of a Jew - overrules Rava's conclusion. For more on this see R. Asaf Bednarsh at <https://etzion.org.il/en/philosophy/issues-jewish-thought/issues-mussar-and-faith/theodicy-2>

In short, the opinion of Aristotle is this: Everything is the result of management which is constant, which does not come to an end and does not change any of its properties, as e.g., the heavenly beings, and everything which continues according to a certain rule, and deviates from it only rarely and exceptionally, as is the case in objects of Nature. All these are the result of management, i.e., in a close relation to Divine Providence. But that which is not constant, and does not follow a certain rule, as e.g., incidents in the existence of the individual beings in each species of plants or animals, whether rational or irrational, is due to chance and not to management; it is in no relation to Divine Providence. Aristotle holds that it is even impossible to ascribe to Providence the management of these things.

This view is closely connected with his theory of the Eternity, of the Universe, and with his opinion that everything different from the existing order of things in Nature is impossible. It is the belief of those who turned away from our Law, and said: "*God has forsaken the earth*" (Ezek. 9:9)

Third Theory of Divine Providence

This theory is the reverse of the second. According to this theory, there is nothing in the whole Universe, neither a class nor an individual being, that is due to chance; everything is the result of will, intention, and rule. It is a matter of course that he who rules must know [that which is under his control].

The Islamic Ashariyah⁸ adhere to this theory, notwithstanding evident absurdities implied in it ... they hold at the same time that the wind did not blow by chance; it is God that caused it to move; it is not therefore the wind that caused the leaves to fall; each leaf falls according to the Divine decree; it is God who caused it to fall at a certain time and in a certain place; it could not have fallen before or after that time or in another place, as this has previously been decreed.

Fifth Theory of Divine Providence

This is our theory, or that of our Law. I will show you [first] the view expressed on this subject in our prophetic books, and generally accepted by our Sages. I will then give the opinion of some later authors among us, and lastly, I will explain my own belief.⁹ The theory of man's perfectly free will is one of the fundamental principles of the Law of our Teacher Moses, and of those who follow the Law. According to this principle man does what is in his power to do, by his nature, his choice, and his will; and his action is not due to any faculty created for the purpose.

Another fundamental principle taught by the Law of Moses is this: Wrong cannot be ascribed to God in any way whatever; all evils and afflictions as well as all kinds of happiness of man, whether they concern one individual person or a community, are distributed according to justice; they are the result of strict judgment that admits no wrong whatever. Even when a person suffers pain in consequence of a thorn having entered into his hand, although it is at once drawn out, it is a punishment that has been inflicted on him [for sin], and the least pleasure he enjoys is a reward [for some good action]; all this is meted out by strict justice; as is said in Scripture, "*all his ways are judgment*" (Deut. 32:4); we are only ignorant of the working of that judgment. We, however, believe that all these human affairs are managed with justice; far be it from God to do wrong, to punish any one unless the punishment is necessary and merited.

My opinion on this principle of Divine Providence I will now explain to you. The principle which I accept is far less open to objections, and is more reasonable than the opinions mentioned before. It is this: In the lower or sublunary portion of the Universe Divine Providence does not extend to the individual members of species except in the case of mankind. It is only in this species that the incidents in the existence of the individual beings, their good and evil fortunes, are the result of justice, in accordance with the words, "*For all His ways are judgment.*"

But I agree with Aristotle as regards all other living beings, and a fortiori as regards plants and all the rest of earthly creatures. For I do not believe that it is through the interference of Divine Providence that a certain leaf drops [from a tree], nor do I hold that when a certain spider catches a certain fly, that this is the direct result of a special decree and will of God in that moment;

8. The Islamic Asharites maintain that the divine will rules everything – this is equivalent to individual providence extended to include all beings, animate and inanimate. The Ash'ariya were a Islamic philosophical sect who argued that there is no such thing as natural law; every movement in the world occurs through the direct will of God. "Natural laws" reflect the way that God generally runs the world. This position may have parallels in Jewish philosophy; compare, for instance, the position of the Rav Dessler that nature is a mirage. See also the Chazon Ish (Igrot 1:35): "המכוון בזה רצון היותר מתמיד של המהרה על היות יתברך". כי מה שאנו קורין "טבע", המכוון בזה רצון היותר מתמיד של המהרה על היות יתברך. However, Asharites went further in claiming that God has absolute control over the world, negating free will. This leads to yet another problem - if there is no free will, why do people suffer (and they could not answer 'by chance')? They were forced to maintain that God is not subject to the laws of morality and can do good or evil as He pleases. This is against the Torah's position (see Devarim 32:4).

9. Rambam does not simply present the Torah's view in a straight forward manner – rather, he presents different positions to explain the Torah, culminating with his own. He rejects certain aspects, like *yisurin shel ahava*, although these were accepted by some opinions in the Talmud and Geonim.

Understand thoroughly my theory, that I do not ascribe to God ignorance of anything or any kind of weakness; I hold that Divine Providence is related and closely connected with the intellect, because Providence can only proceed from an intelligent being, from a being that is itself the most perfect Intellect. Those creatures, therefore, which receive part of that intellectual influence will become subject to the action of Providence in the same proportion as they are acted upon by the Intellect.

This theory is in accordance with reason and with the teaching of Scripture, whilst the other theories previously mentioned either exaggerate Divine Providence or detract from it. In the former case they lead to confusion and entire nonsense, and cause us to deny reason and to contradict that which is perceived with the senses. The latter case, viz., the theory that Divine Providence does not extend to man, and that there is no difference between man and other animals, implies very bad notions about God; it disturbs all social order, removes and destroys all the moral and intellectual virtues of man.

Maimonides Moreh Nevuchim 3:17

13. HAVING shown in the preceding chapter that of all living beings mankind alone is directly under the control of Divine Providence, I will now add the following remarks. Hence it follows, in accordance with what I have mentioned in the preceding chapter, that the greater the share is which a person has obtained of this Divine influence, on account of both his physical predisposition and his training, the greater must also be the effect of Divine Providence upon him, for the action of Divine Providence is proportional to the endowment of intellect, as has been mentioned above. The relation of Divine Providence is therefore not the same to all men; the greater the human perfection a person has attained, the greater the benefit he derives from Divine Providence. This benefit is very great in the case of prophets, and varies according to the degree of their prophetic faculty: as it varies in the case of pious and good men according to their piety and uprightness. For it is the intensity of the Divine intellectual influence that has inspired the prophets, guided the good in their actions, and perfected the wisdom of the pious.¹⁰

In the same proportion as ignorant and disobedient persons are deficient in that Divine influence, their condition is inferior, and their rank equal to that of irrational beings: and they are "like the beasts" (Ps. xlix. 21). This belief that God provides for every individual human being in accordance with his merits is one of the fundamental principles on which the Law is founded.

.... Now consider how by this method of reasoning we have arrived at the truth taught by the Prophets, that every person has his individual share of Divine Providence in proportion to his perfection. For philosophical research leads to this conclusion, if we assume, as has been mentioned above, that Divine Providence is in each case proportional to the person's intellectual development. It is wrong to say that Divine Providence extends only to the species, and not to individual beings, as some of the philosophers teach. For only individual beings have real existence, and individual beings are endowed with Divine Intellect; Divine Providence acts, therefore, upon these individual beings.

Study this chapter as it ought to be studied; you will find in it all the fundamental principles of the Law; you will see that these are in conformity with philosophical speculation, and all difficulties will be removed; you will have a clear idea of Divine Providence.

Maimonides Moreh Nevuchim 3:18

14. For it is known from statements made in Scripture that these four i.e. the Patriarchs and Moses, had their minds exclusively filled with the name of God - that is, with His knowledge and love, and that in the same measure Divine Providence was attached to them and their descendants.

..... We have already stated in the chapters which deal with Divine Providence that Providence watches over every rational being according to the amount of intellect which that being possesses. Those who are perfect in their perception of God, whose mind is never separated from Him, always enjoy the influence of Providence. But those who, perfect in their knowledge of God, sometimes turn their mind away from God, enjoy the presence of Divine Providence only when they meditate on God. When their thoughts are engaged in other matters, divine Providence departs from them.

..... If man frees his thoughts from worldly matters, obtains knowledge of God in the right way, and rejoices in that knowledge, it is impossible that any kind of evil should befall him while he is with God and God with him. When he does not meditate on God, when he is separated from God, then God is also separated from him. Then he is exposed to any evil that might befall him. For it is only that intellectual link with God that secures the presence of Providence and protection from evil accidents.

10. We see here that greater people experience more hashgacha not simply as a supernatural reward for their piety, but that God's Providence and protection is a natural outgrowth of their perfection. God will protect the tzadik by helping her make good decisions. See also Mishne Torah Hilchot Deot 5:11 which implies that suffering is (at least in part) a consequence of people making bad decisions and not a Divine punishment for those errors.

..... It is now clearly established that the cause of our being exposed to chance, and abandoned to destruction like cattle, is to be found in our separation from God For if we prepare ourselves, and attain the influence of the Divine Intellect, Providence is joined to us, and we are guarded against all evils.

Moreh Nevuchim 3:51

For the Rambam, the world is run according to hashgacha klalit, which governs the fate of each species. Humans are governed by BOTH Hashgacha Klalit and Hashgacha Pratit but the latter depends, for each person, on the extent of their intellectual connection to God.

A4] HASHGACHA PRATIT - OTHER RISHONIM

15. **כִּי יִדְעֵתִי לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יִצְנֶה אֶת בְּנֵי וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשִׁמְרוּ דְרֹךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן הִבִּיא ה' עַל אַבְרָהָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר עִלְיָו: -** והנכון צעייני שהיא ידיעה זו ממש. ירמוז, כי ידיעת השם שהיא השגחתו בעולם השפל, היא לשמור הכללים. וגם בני האדם מונחים זו למקרים עד כא עת פקודתם. חבל בחסידיו ישום אליו לבו לדעת אותו צפרע, להיות שמירתו דצקה זו תמיד, לא תפרד הידיעה והזכירה ממנו כלל. כטעם לא יגרע מזדיק עיניו (איוב לו:ז). וזאת מזה פסוקים רבים, כדכתיב (תהלים לג:ח) הגה עין כי אל יראיו, וזולת זה:

רמב"ן בראשית יח:יט

16. וצריך שתשכיל כי ההשגחה בעולם השפל במין האדם היא כללית ופרטית, ... ובשאר בעלי חיים היא כללית לא פרטית רק בכלל כדי לקיים המין. וההשגחה הפרטית שבמין האדם נחלקה לשני חלקים: השגחה בו לידע כל פרטי מעשיו ומחשבותיו, והשגחה בו להגין עליו ולהצילו מן המקטגרים. ההשגחה בו לידע כל פרטי מעשיו, היא בכל אדם מישראל או מן האומות, כענין שכתוב: (תהלים לג:טו) היוצר יחד לבם המבין אל כל מעשיהם, ההשגחה בו להצילו מן המקרים, אין זה בכל אדם ואפילו בישראל, כי אם בצדיקים שבהם, שהקב"ה מציל את הצדיקים מן המקרים ששאר בני אדם נמסרים בידם, ולא יעזוב את חסידיו ולא יגרע מהם עינו, אלא השגחתו בצדיק תמיד, לא תפרד ממנו כלל ... וזה דעת הרמב"ן בפסוק זה כשתסתכל בו

רבינו בחיי בראשית יח:יט

The Ramban and Rabbeinu Bachya agree here¹¹ that Hashgacha Pratit is applied in different ways to different people.

17. אמנם הנרדמים אשר לא ידעו כלל, ולא התעוררו כלל לדעת דבר מזה - והם כל בני הנכר ורוב האומה הישראלית זולתי יחידי סגולה. הם בלי ספק תחת הנהגת הטבע והגרמים השמימיים הנכבדים מאותם בני אדם כשאר מיני בעלי חיים אשר לא תפול השגחה אלהית באישיהם אבל במיניהם בלבד

ספורנו ויקרא יג:מ רבינו בחיי בראשית פרק יח פסוק יט

The Seforno takes the same approach as the Rambam. Most people in the world, including most Jewish people, enjoy Hashgacha Klalit like animals, but not all enjoy significant Hashgacha Pratit.

A5] HASHGACHA PRATIT - LATER ACHARONIM

- From the 18th century¹² many Acharonim departed strongly from this earlier mainstream position in the Rishonim and asserted that there is absolute Hashgacha Pratit on every atom of creation which is constantly willed into existence by God.
- This became the strongly held position of Chassidut, particularly the Alter Rebbe of Chabad, and also of the Vilna Gaon. Consequently it has strongly influenced the teaching of this topic in almost all Charedi circles, whether Chassidish or Litvish.¹³
- According to this much more expansive approach to Hashgacha Pratit, every minute detail in the life of every person (and also in the animal and natural world) is, IN PRINCIPLE, a result of Divine Providence.
- However, IN PRACTICE, even this expansive approach recognizes that, for most people, the world in which they live is one of Hester Panim, where God's involvement is deeply hidden. As such, events appear to be less specifically attuned to those individuals and seem to be product of chance, or at least a much broader Hashgacha Klalit. For those with significant merit - be it Torah learning, Bitachon or other closer connection to God, God's Hashgacha Pratit is more evident.

11. Note that both of these commentators have other positions on Hashgacha which differ significantly from the Rambam's.

12. See *Paths of Providence* chap 6 for suggestions as to which historical and religious factors served as catalysts for this change of position. These may include the kabbala of the Arizal, the Tach veTat massacres, the false messianism of Shabbtai Tzvi, other Jewish reactions to modernity such as Spinoza, the Jewish Enlightenment and the emergence of Chassidut.

13. See for instance the 2019 book *Ein Od Milvado - Divine Providence/Hashgacha Pratit* by Ephraim Pinczower, who brings hundreds of sources on the topic, all of which either promote this position or are interpreted to fit within in. See also R. Aryeh Leibowitz's 2009 book - *Hashgacha Pratit* - which bring both approaches and attempts to bridge between them.

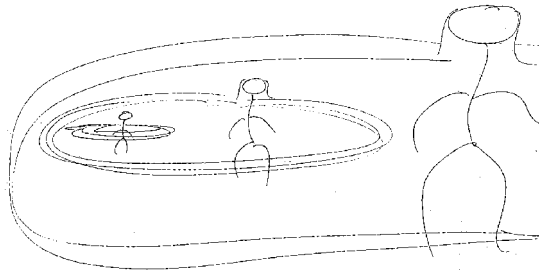
במעשיו כדי לגלות את כבודו יתברך באופן ישיר. תוכן חייו הוא במה שעוסק בהכנות הנדרשות לצדיק לצרכי עבודתו הוא; היינו שתכליתו היא להיות "כלי" לצדיק האמיתי ולתקן את העולם שבו עושה הצדיק את עבודתו. מה שמגיע לאנשים כאלה בעולם הזה איננו מכוון לפי מעשיהם הם, כי בזכות עצמם לא היה להם זכות קיום, אלא זוכים כפי צרכי עבודת הצדיק. נמצא שההשגחה עליהם היא באופן בלתי-ישיר, וגם נקרא כללי, כי יתכן שצורך הצדיק ידרוש שינתן חלק שוה להרבה בני אדם למרות שיגוייהם הפרטיים במעשים. כזה הוא חלקם של כל אמות העולם, וגם של אותם בישראל השמים עיקר עסקם בענייני קיום העולם הזה, וגם של אותם העוסקים בתורה ובמצוות באופן חיצוני — מצות אנשים מלומדה, מחמת שיגרא לבד, או שלא לשמה. עיין מש"כ הרמב"ם במורה ח"ג פ' יז—יח. ובהקדמה לפירוש המשניות על או"ל: "איך לו להקב"ה בעולמו אלא ד' אמות של הלכה". וכן עיין ספורנו פ' תזריע י"ג מ"ז: "... אמנם הנרדמים אשר לא... התעוררו כלל... הם כל בני עכו"ם ורוב האומות הישראליות, וזולתי יחידי סגולה, הם בלי ספק תחת הגהגת הטבע... כשאר מיני בעלי חיים אשר לא תפול השגחה אלקית באישיהם אלא במיניהם בלבד, כי בהם תשלם כונת הממציא ית'...".

השגחה פרטית וכללית

הנה הדברים עמוקים, ואי אפשר לנו לבארם בכל היקפם, אך זה ניתן להאמר: שתי הבחינות בדין מקבילות הן לשני אופני ההשגחה הידועים — השגחה פרטית והשגחה כללית. נבארם כאן בקיצור: ההשגחה הפרטית מכוונת היא כלפי האיש העומד בדרגת עובד השי"ת לשמה, שהוא בעצמו בבחירתו ובמעשיו מגלה בעבודתו את כבודו יתברך בעולם, ונקראת פרטית מפני שהיא מכוונת כלפי כל איש ואיש לפי עבודתו העצמית, וע"כ נקראת גם השגחה אישית, כמבואר בראשונים. הנהגה זו הינה בדקדוק רב לפי מעשיו, לתת לו כל הכלים הנדרשים לו לעבודתו; וגם למנעם ממנו לעת הצורך, כי לאיש כזה גם המניעה סיוע היא בגרמה לו לפשפש במעשיו, ועל זה נאמר: "הקב"ה מדקדק עם חסידיו כחוט השערה". אך ההשגחה הכללית היא למי שאינו עובד ה' כלל, או שעובדו מחמת שיגרא בלי הכרה פנימית, ולכן אין

ר' אליהו דסלר, מכתב מאליהו כרך ב' ימים נוראים, שני ימים של ראש השנה

Rav Dessler explains that those who are close to God experience more direct Hashgacha Pratit. Those who are more distant are impacted by Hashgacha Klalit and, crucially, by the Hashgacha Pratit of other people who are more connected to God. As such, things may happen to a person through Hashgacha Pratit, not in their own right but insofar as their lives are instrumental to the needs of greater tzadikim around them



A (crude) representation of how we might be caught up in the 'hashgacha vortex' of those greater than us

B] ANTI-THEODICY

- In recent generations, especially after the Holocaust, some thinkers have stress a position of Anti-theodicy - that it is not only impossible, but also inappropriate to try to understand, let alone explain or justify, the involvement of God in the context of human suffering.
- Rather, the only morally and theologically responsible reaction to suffering is to seek to bring relief to those in pain and to act to try to prevent such suffering in the future.

19. It is impossible to overcome the hideousness of evil through philosophico-speculative thought. Therefore, Judaism determined that man... will seek in vain for the solution to the problem of evil within the framework of speculative thought, for he will never find it.¹⁴

Rabbi Yosef D. Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek*, trans. Lawrence Kaplan as *Fate and Destiny: From the Holocaust to the State of Israel* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav, 2000), 4

20. The well-known metaphysical problem arises yet again and the sufferer asks: "Why dost Thou show me iniquity and beholdest mischief?... For the wicked doth best the righteous; therefore, right goes forth perverted" (Habakkuk 1:3-4). However... God does not address Himself to this question, and man receives no reply concerning it. The question remains obscure and sealed, outside the domain of logical thought... When the impulse of intellectual curiosity seizes hold of a person, he ought to do naught but find strength and encouragement in his faith in the Creator, vindicate God's judgment...

14. Anti-theodicy approaches are often presented together with Skeptical Theism which asserts that we cannot logically know the mind of God. We examined this in more detail in Part 2.

If we wish to probe deeply, to question profoundly during a period of nightmarish terrors, then we have to pose the question in a halakhic form and ask: What is the obligation incumbent upon the sufferer deriving from the suffering itself? What commanding voice, what normative principle arises out of the afflictions themselves?... Then, and only then, will we rise from the depths of the Holocaust, possessed of a heightened spiritual stature.

Kol Dodi Dofek, 18-19

21. Judaism did not approach the problem of evil under the speculative-metaphysical aspect. For such an inquiry would be a futile undertaking. As long as the human mind is unable to embrace creation in its entirety and to gain an insight into the very essence and purposiveness of being as such, it would not succeed in its attempt to resolve the dilemma of evil. The latter is interwoven into the very fabric of reality and cannot be understood outside its total ontological configuration. Job was in error because he tried to grasp the nature of evil. Therefore, Judaism has recommended that the metaphysical inquiry be replaced by the halakhic ethical gesture. Man should not ask: Why evil? He should rather raise the question: What am I supposed to do if confronted with evil; how should I behave vis-à-vis evil?... instead of philosophizing about the nature of evil within the framework of a theodicy, Judaism wants man to fight it relentlessly and to convert it into a constructive force.

Rabbi Yosef D. Soloveitchik, *Community, Covenant and Commitment: Selected Letters and Communications*, ed. Nathaniel Helfgot, 331-332

22. We have never answered the question of why evil exists. There is no answer. Every philosopher who has tried to write a theodicy has failed, including Maimonides in his Guide of the Perplexed. But the Jew always asks: How am I supposed to act in the face of evil, when confronted by evil?

Rabbi Yosef D. Soloveitchik, *Abraham's Journey*, 150

23. The message that arises in the wake of the events of the twentieth century is that we have no business poking our noses into the "why;" in the context of such questions, what is required of us is absolute humility. We have no business explaining, or pretending to explain, things that cannot be explained. We must remember Chazal's teaching concerning Bilam, who thought that he understood God's supreme wisdom. The Gemara derides him: "This person, who claimed to know God's mind – could he not understand his donkey's mind?" This pretentiousness – moral, philosophical and religious pretentiousness – we totally reject.

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, "After the Tsunami" VBM - <https://www.etzion.org.il/en>

24. The religious question is, therefore, not: "Why did this happen?" But "What then shall we do?" The religious response is not to seek to understand, thereby to accept. We are not God. Instead we are the people He has called on us to be His "partners in the work of creation". The only adequate religious response is to say: "God, I do not know why this terrifying disaster has happened, but I do know what You want of us: to help the afflicted, comfort the bereaved, send healing to the injured, and aid those who have lost their livelihoods and homes." We cannot understand God, but we can strive to imitate His love and care.

R. Jonathan Sacks - Why does God allow terrible things to happen to His people?¹⁵

15. <https://rabbisacks.org/archive/why-does-god-allow-terrible-things-to-happen-to-his-people/>. Also, for a very moving video clip on this topic by Rabbi Sacks recorded shortly before the end of his life see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrW1znmPFE&ab_channel=collivedotcom