

HALACHIC AND HASHKAFIC ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

SERIES 3: 4 - TZADIK v'RA LO THEODICY AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL - PART 3 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 version of Punishment Theodicies which justified 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 this shiur we will look in depth at Free Will Theodicy and whether suffering at the hands of evildoers is also attributable to God.

A] FREE WILL THEODICIES

- We saw in previous shiurim that human free will is a central platform of Jewish thought.

1. א רשות לכל אדם ונתונה. אם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך טובה ולהיות צדיק הרשות בידו. ואם רצה להטות עצמו לדרך רעה ולהיות רשע הרשות בידו.
ג ודבר זה עקר גדול הוא והוא עמוד התורה והמצוה שנאמר (דברים לטו) ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים.

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ה

- If people make bad choices, is the outcome God's will? If A murders B do we say:-
(a) God wanted B to die but A chose to be the agent to perform this and is therefore guilty; or
(b) God did NOT want B to die but wanted there to be total freedom - THAT is the ratzon Hashem. Now that A has chosen badly there will need to be a realignment of all worlds to take account of that and produce a just outcome.

A1] MAJORITY POSITION: HUMAN CHOICES NEVERTHELESS REFLECT GOD'S WILL

- According to this position, there is no Free Will Theodicy. Even where people commit willful acts of wickedness, although they are liable for those acts, the suffering caused is ultimately an expression of Divine Providence.

2. משרשי המצוה - שידע האדם ויתן אל לבו כי כל אשר יקרהו מטוב עד רע הוא סיבה שתבוא עליו מאת השם ברוך הוא, ומיד האדם מיד איש אחיו לא יהיה דבר בלתי רצון השם ברוך הוא. על כן כשיצערהו או יכאיבהו אדם ידע בנפשו כי עוונותיו גרמו והשם יתברך גזר עליו בכך. ולא ישית מחשבותיו לנקום ממנו כי הוא אינו סיבת רעתו, כי העוון הוא המסבב. וכמו שאמר דוד עליו השלום (שמואל ב' טו:יא) הִנְחֵנוּ לֹא וְיִקְלָל כִּי אָמַר לֹא ה' יתברך - תלה הענין בחטאו ולא בשמעי בן גרא.

ספר החינוך מצוה רמא

The Sefer HaChinuch, explaining the prohibition of taking revenge against those who have wronged us, stresses that the REAL source of the suffering is God and its cause is our own misdeeds. The person who wronged us was indeed acting incorrectly, but they were simply the messenger.

- The Chinuch's example here is from the account of Shimi ben Geira who cursed David as he fled from Avshalom. When Avishei ben Tzeruya offered to kill him as a rebel, David allowed him to curse and saw this as God's direct rebuke towards him. Yet Shimi was certainly liable for this offence and David later instructed Shlomo to exact appropriate punishment from him¹.

3. (ה) ועתה אל-תעצבו ואל-לחר בעיניכם כי-מכרתם אותי הנה כי למחלה שלחני אלהים לפניכם: ... (ח) ועתה לא-אתם שלחתם אותי הנה כי האלהים ושימני לאב לפרעה ולאדון לכל-ביתו ומשל בכל-ארץ מצרים

בראשית מה:ח

Yosef tells the brothers that, even though they sold him, it was actually God that sent him down to Egypt!

1. See Melachim 1:2:8-9.

4. משרשי המצוה - לפי שעם היות השם ברוך הוא משגיח בפרטי בני אדם ויודע כל מעשיהם וכל אשר יקרה להם טוב או רע בגזרתו ובמצותו לפי זכותו או חובו. וכענין שאמרו זכרונם לברכה (חולין ט): 'אין אדם נוקף אצבעו מלמטה אלא אם כן מכריזין עליו מלמעלה'. אף על פי כן צריך האדם לשמור עצמו מן המקרים הנהוגים בעולם. כי האל ברא עולמו ובנאו על יסודות עמודי הטבע וגזר שיהיה האש שורפת והמים מכבין הלהבה. וכמו כן יחייב הטבע שאם תפול אבן גדולה על ראש איש שתצץ את מוחו או אם יפול האדם מראש הגג הגבוה לארץ שימות. והוא ברוך הוא חנן גופות בני אדם ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים בעלת דעת לשמור הגוף מכל פגע ונתן שניהם - הנפש וגופה - בתוך גלגל היסודות, והמה ינהגום ויפעלו במ פעולות. ואחר שהאל שעבד גוף האדם לטבע, כי כן חייבה חכמתו מצד שהוא בעל חומר, ציוהו לשמור מן המקרה, כי הטבע שהוא מסור בידו יעשה פעולתו עליו אם לא ישמר ממנו.

ספר החינוך מצוה תקמו

Similarly, on the mitzva to place a fence around a roof to prevent people from falling, the Chinuch explains that, ultimately, what happens to all of us is a result of God's Providence. Yet since God set up the world using rules of nature, this Providence is expressed through nature. So if a homeowner is negligent and fails to make his property safe, he will be responsible for injuries caused, even though the person who suffered them was destined to experience that by Divine decree.

5. כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חֹדֶשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקֶה לְגַגְךָ וְלֹא־תֵשִׂים דָּמַיִם בְּבִיתְךָ כִּי־יִפֹּל הַנִּפֹּל מִמֶּנּוּ:

דברים כ"ב

The wording of the verse refers to 'the faller' falling off a roof, implying that he was fated to fall.

6. כִּי יפול הנופל - ראוי זה ליפול. ואף על פי כן לא תתגלגל מיתתו על ידך, שמגלגלין זכות על ידי זכאי וחובה על ידיל חייב.

רש"י שם

Rashi explains that, even though the person was destined to fall from the roof, the homeowner should have ensured that it was not his home that brought about this (inevitable) tragedy.

7. מִכֶּה אִישׁ וְנָתַתְּ מוֹת יוֹמָתוֹ: וְאַשֶּׁר לֹא צָדָה וְהֶאֱלֹהִים אָנָּה לִידָרוֹ וְשָׂמֹתִי לָדָּ מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָנוּס שָׂמָּה:

שמות כא"ב-יג

The Torah deals here with the case of unintentional manslaughter caused by human negligence for which the perpetrator must flee to a City of Refuge. Again, the verse indicates that God delivered up the victim to die.

8. אָנָּה לִידָרוֹ - כִּי חֵיב מִיִּתָּה צִדִּי שָׂמִים כִּי־:

רשב"ם שם

The ultimate reason for the death was decreed in heaven, but the immediate cause was human negligence.

9. כֹּה אָמַר ה' הִנְנִי מְקִים עֲלֶיךָ רָעָה מִבֵּיתְךָ וְלִקְחָתִי אֶת נַשִּׂיךְ לְעֵינֶיךָ וְנָתַתִּי לְרַעִיד וְשָׁכַב עִם נַשִּׂיךְ לְעֵינֵי הַשָּׁמֶשׁ הַזֹּאת:

שמואל ב' יב"א

God's decree of heavenly punishment on David was destined to come though the evil choices of his sons.

10. הוּי אֲשׁוּר שֶׁבֶט אֲפִי וּמִטָּה הוּא בְּיָדָם זַעֲמִי: (רש"י - כִּי עָשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲשׁוּר שֶׁבֶט אֲפִי לְרֹדוֹת צוֹ אֶת עַמִּי):

ישעיהו י"ה

Assyria is the rod of God inflicting divine punishment on Israel, even though the Assyrians chose to act wickedly.

11. וְחִזְקָתִי אֶת זְרָעוֹת מִלְּךָ בָּבֶל וְנָתַתִּי אֶת חֲרָבִי בְּיָדוֹ וְשָׁבַרְתִּי אֶת זְרָעוֹת פְּרָעָה וְנָאֵק נֶאֱקוֹת חָלָל לְפָנָיו:

יחזקאל ל"ב

Similarly Babylon was used as the sword of God to smite Egypt.

12. כשבקש טוריינוס להרוג את לולינוס ופפוס אחיו בלודקיא, אמר להם: אם מעמו של חנניה מישאל ועזריה אתם - יבא אלהיכם ויציל אתכם מידי כדרך שהציל את חנניה מישאל ועזריה מיד נבוכדנצר. אמרו לו: חנניה מישאל ועזריה צדיקים גמורין היו, וראויין היו ליעשות להם נס, ונבוכדנצר מלך הגון היה, וראוי לעשות נס על ידו. ואותו רשע הדיוט הוא, ואינו ראוי לעשות נס על ידו. ואנו נתחייבנו כליה למקום, ואם אין אתה הורגנו - הרבה הורגים יש לו למקום, והרבה דובין ואריות יש לו למקום בעולמו שפוגעין בנו והורגין אותנו. אלא לא מסרנו הקדוש ברוך הוא בידך אלא שעתיך ליפרע דמינו מידך. אף על פי כן הרגן מיד. אמרו: לא זזו משם עד שבאו דיופלי מרומי ופצעו את מוחו בגזירין.

תענית יח:

In the martyrdom of Papus and Lulinus, even though the immediate cause of their murder was the Roman Trajan, they regarded their deaths as decreed by God. If the Romans had not killed them God had many other messengers available.

13. Men also ask: If it were to happen that God delivers up one of His servants to be killed, whether in punishment for sin or as a trial, what shall we think of that act? To whom shall we attribute it if the murder is carried out by a tyrant like Jezebel, who killed some of the prophets? Our reply is that the cutting down decreed for the victim is an act of God, but the manner of killing is and act of the tyrant. For as long as Divine Wisdom demands the extermination of the individual in question, even if the actual killer might not in his malice kill him, the victim might die by some other means.

Emunot Vedeot 4:5

14. כל מי שימות באיזו סיבה שתהיה הרי זה בגזירתו יתעלה. והנהרג על ידי הורג במזיד, הא-ל יתעלה גזר עליו שימות בהריגה. ולא הכריח את ההורג שיהרוג אותו, ומפני זה הוא חייב בעונש.

ר' אברהם בן הרמב"ם שמות כא:ג

This position is spelled out explicitly by Rav Saadia Gaon, R. Avraham ben HaRambam and others². Suffering at the hands of the wicked is ultimately from God, even though the perpetrator is liable for the act.

15. אם חלה שום אדם אל יתלה חולי זו שמחמת שום מאכל או שום משקה בא חליו, ולא ה' פעל כל זאת. ואפ"ל חבלוהו בני אדם רעים. אלא יאמר עונותיו גרמו לו שהרי כתיב (זכריה ח:י) וְאֶשְׁלַח אֶת-כָּל-הָאָדָם אִישׁ בְּרֵעֵהוּ. וכתוב (עמוס ג:ו) אִם-תִּהְיֶה רָעָה בְּעֵיר וְהָ לֹא עֲשָׂה? אלא ודאי עשה! ואומר (בראשית מב:כח) מַה זָאת עֲשָׂה אֱלֹהִים לָנוּ. לכן יתפלל אדם על מיני פגעים מנגעי אדם ונגעי שמים.

ספר חסידים (מרגליות) סימן תשנא

Sefer Chasidim is explicit that man-made suffering that affects us is decreed by God.

- But if the message is ultimately from God, why is the perpetrator culpable? They are simply performing the will of God! The commentators answer this in a number of ways, usually concluding that there was an element of free choice that went above and beyond God's decree.
- This is discussed at length regarding the punishment of the Egyptians for enslaving the Israelites, when God had decreed that slavery. Answers include:
 - The suffering had to take place but this particular person chose to be the vehicle through which it happened³.
 - The slavery had been decreed but the Egyptians took it far further than needed by drowning the babies etc.⁴
 - The Egyptians had no idea they were fulfilling God's plan. Their intention was simply evil.⁵
 - The punishment of the Egyptians was only for failing to release them when God announced an end to the slavery.⁶

2. This is also the position of Rabbeinu Bachya Ibn Pekuda (Sha'ar ha-Bitachon, Ch. 3), the Ramban, Sefer Hachinuch - see above, the Ba'al HaTanya (Igeres HaKodesh), the Vilna Gaon and the Chafetz Chaim (Shem Olam Ch. 3 fn).

3. Ramban Hilchot Teshuva 6:5. The slavery had to take place but there was no mention in the prophecy of the Egyptians imposing it. They chose that role and, within Egyptian society, each Egyptian made a choice to be part of the oppression. See also Emunot VeDeot 4:5.

4. Ravad Hilchot Teshuva ibid and Ramban Bereishit 15:14.

5. Ramban ibid.

6. Abarbanel Bereishit 15:12.

A2] THE RAMBAM'S POSITION: HUMAN CHOICES ARE THE DIVINE WILL

16. דע שיהכל כחפצו יעשה ואף על פי שמעשינו מסורין לנו. כיצד? כשם שהיוצר חפץ להיות האש והרוח עולים למעלה והמים והאֶרֶץ יורדים למטה והגלגל סובב בעגול וכן שאר בריות העולם להיות פמנהגן שחפץ בו. ככה חפץ להיות האדם רשותו בידו וכל מעשיו מסורין לו ולא יהיה לו לא כופה ולא מושך, אלא הוא מעצמו ובדעתו שנתן לו האל עושה כל שהאדם יכול לעשות. לפיכך דנין אותו לפי מעשיו. אם עשה טובה מיטיבין לו ואם עשה רעה מרעין לו. הוא שהנביא אומר (מלאכי א:ט) **מיידכם היתה זאת לכם. (ישעיהו סו:ג) גם המה בחרו בדרך כיהם.**

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ה הלכה ד

The Rambam takes a remarkable position - that God's will is essential that we exercise our own human free will. In this sense, everything that a person chooses to do is the will of God and the Rambam fits within the majority position, albeit in a somewhat different manner.

- However, some commentators see the Rambam's position as the 'Minority' response discussed below.

17. The brilliant rabbi, teacher of the entire exile, our master, Rabbi Chayim of Volozhin, said: 'I heard from the pious one [the Vilna Gaon], may his memory be blessed, and I as well have maintained since my youth, that there is an error that the masses believe - and even the Rambam concurs with this [erroneous] view - that a free-willed creature is able to affect an individual without a divine decree. Rather, [the truth is] that all things that occur to an individual are decreed, [even] which rock will strike him. However, when it comes to a free-willed creature it is not decreed which [specific] free-willed creature will do him good or bad [or that which will transpire is decreed].

Kitvei R. Yosef Zundel Mi-Salant, "Questions, Stories and Practices of R. Eliyahu of Vilna and R. Chayim of Volozhin"⁷

18. חבל בשון הנמלא לחכמים והוא אומרם (מגילה כה) 'הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים' - הרי הוא אמת אלא שברבה יטעו זו בני אדם, ויחשבו צקלת מעשי האדם הבחיריים - שהוא מוכרח עליהם, כגון הזיווג לפלונית או היות זה הממון בידו. וזה אינו אמת! כי זאת האשה, אם היתה לקחתה בכתובה וקידושין והיא מותרת ונשאה לפריה ורביה - הרי זו מלוה, וה' לא יגזור בעשיית מלוה. ואם היה בנשואיה פגם - הרי היא עזירה, וה' לא יגזור בעזירה. אלא כל מעשי האדם הבחיריים בהם צלל ספק יימלאו המשמעת והמרי. כי כבר בארנו בפרק השני שהליווי והאזכרה התוריים אמנם הם צמעשים אשר לאדם בחירה בהם אם יעשה או לא יעשה. ובזה החלק מן הנפש תהיה 'יראת שמים' ואינה בידי שמים, אלא היא מסורה לבחירת האדם כמו שבארנו. ואם כן, אומרם 'הכל' - אמנם ירלו זו הדברים הטבעיים אשר אין לאדם בחירה בהם, כגון היותו ארוך או קצר או רדת מטר או צלורת או הפסד אויר או בריאותו וכיוצא בזה מכל מה שבעולם, חוץ מתנועות האדם ומנוחותיו.

פירוש המשנה לרמב"ם מסכת אבות - שמונה פרקים פרק ח

In this source the Rambam limits God's Providence to purely natural matters over which a person has no control. However, any activity which fall under the ambit of human choice could ultimately lead to a mitzva or an aveira and is included in the category of 'Yirat Shamayim', thus falling outside God's independent decree⁸.

19. For an ignorant man believes that the whole universe only exists for him, as if nothing else required any consideration. If, therefore, anything happens to him contrary to his expectation, he at once concludes that the whole universe is evil. If, however, he would take into consideration the whole universe, form an idea of it, and comprehend what a small portion he is of the Universe, he will find the truth. The numerous evils to which individual persons are exposed are due to the defects existing in the persons themselves. We complain and seek relief from our own faults: we suffer from the evils which we, by our own free will, inflict on ourselves and ascribe them to God, who is far from being connected with them! I explain this theory in the following manner. The evils that befall an are of three kinds:--

(1) The first kind of evil is that which is caused to man by the circumstance that he is subject to genesis and destruction, or that he possesses a body.

(2) The second class of evils comprises such evils as people cause to each other when, e.g., some of them use their strength against others. These evils are more numerous than those of the first kind: their causes are numerous and known; they likewise originate in ourselves, though the sufferer himself cannot avert them.

(3) The third class of evils comprises those which every one causes to himself by his own action. This is the largest class, and is far more numerous than the second class. It is especially of these evils that all men complain, only few men are found that do not sin against themselves by this kind of evil. This class of evils originates in man's vices, such as excessive desire for eating, drinking, and love, indulgence in these things in undue measure, or in improper manner, or partaking of bad food. This course brings diseases and afflictions upon body and soul alike

Maimonides, Guide to the Perplexed 3:12

7. trans. R. Aryeh Leibowitz, Hashgacha Pratis p. 116.

8. As we saw above, the Rambam would explain that God's will is in fact that the people in question exercise their own free will.

A3] THE MINORITY RESPONSE - HUMANS HAVE FREE WILL AND GOD DOES NOT DESIRE THE SUFFERING

20. וישמע ראובן ויצלהו מידם ויאמר לא נכנו נפש:

בראשית לז:כא

Reuven argued with the brothers NOT to kill Yosef but to throw him in a pit to see what would happen.

21. למען הציל אותו מידם - כלומר מידם שהם בעלי בחירה ולא יבצר מהם כל אשר יזמו לעשות. מה שאין כן בהיות בעלי חיים כי מוראו וחתינתו תפול עליהם כי צדיק וישר הוא, וצלם אלהים שלם בפניו ולא ירעו ולא ישחיתו אותו.

אלשיך על בראשית פרק לו פסוק כא (פרשת וישב)

The Alshich understands that Reuven intended to save Yosef from the FREE CHOICE of the brothers who could do whatever they wished. However, the snakes and scorpions of the pit may be held back by Yosef's righteousness.

22. (כא) ויצלהו מידם. פי' לפי שהאדם בעל בחירה ורצון ויכול להרוג מי שלא נתחייב מיתה. משא"כ חיות רעות לא יפגעו באדם אם לא יתחייב מיתה לשמים. והוא אומרו 'וצילהו מידם' - פי' מיד הבחירי ובזה סתר אומרו ונראה מה יהיו חלומותיו וגו' כי הבחירה תבטל הדבר ואין ראייה אם יהרגוהו כי שקר דבר

אור החיים שם

The Or HaChaim understands that Reuven was concerned that their free will decision to kill Yosef may in fact go AGAINST God's will, yet God would not intervene to save him since they had full free will. But if they left Yosef to potential death by natural causes⁹, that would be decided by God.

• Important questions arising from this position include:

- Is there ever a question of 'where was God when people caused suffering to others'?
- Why should human free choice, even to kill and harm, override the 'just' deserts of others?
- Is this world 'fair'? To whom? Over what scale - in human numbers and over time?
- How could someone be 'compensated' for being the victim of human choice to harm?

23. (ג) ולהסביר יותר יש להקדים הא דחיתא זכור בק' צפ' ז'. דרובן אמר להשליך את יוסף בצור מלא נחשים ועקרבים ולא ירא שיהרגוהו שיהיה צטוח על זכותו. והא שיהיה ירא מן האחים היינו משום דבחירה שנאדם הוא למעלה מהשגחה העליונה ואמנם חלילה לומר שאין ציד בהשגחה העליונה לשמור גם מבחירת האדם! אלא כך יש לנו לומר - לזכור צעיק זכות יותר, והיינו שיהיה טוב גם בין אדם לחבירו, ויהיה לדיק וטוב לו בשביל שהוא לדיק גמור.

נצי"ב - הרחב דבר בראשית לז:יג

The Netziv, quoting the Zohar on the sale of Yosef, refines this idea. God's Providence does NOT prevent humans harming others against the Divine plan, but some individuals may have the private merit to deserve Divine intervention. Most, however, will not and therefore will be subject to the wicked choices and actions of other people.

24.

Rabbi Isaac said: If there were snakes and scorpions in [the pit], why does it say regarding Reuben, "In order to save him from their hands, to return him to his father." Was Reuben not concern with the fact that there were snakes and scorpions that could harm [Joseph]? How did he say [that his intentions were] "to return him to his father" and [how can the Torah claim that Reuben acted] "in order to save him?"

[The answer is:] Reuben saw that harm was possible in the hands of the brothers, for he knew how much they hated him, and that they desired to kill him. Reuben said: It is better for him

to fall into a pit of snakes and scorpions [than to be] given over to the hands of his enemies who will have no mercy on him...

Here, in a place of snakes and scorpions, if he is righteous God will perform a miracle [and protect him], and at times the merit of one's forefathers can assist a person and save him. However, when he is given over to the hands of his enemy, there are few [individuals] who can be saved [from such a scenario]. For this reason Reuben said: "In order to save him from their hands." [Meaning:] from their hands specifically. And the [Torah did not just state]: "In order to save him," and no more.⁷

Zohar Bereishit 185a-185b¹⁰

9. As such, throwing Yosef in a pit of water would be killing him directly. Throwing him into a pit of snakes was highly dangerous but not a choice to kill him.

10. Trans. R. Aryeh Leibowitz, Hashgacha Pratis p.137.

25. הרעה שעשה לעצמו עושה את שלה, והטוב עושה את שלה ... כך עלה במחשתו ביצירת העולם - ששֵׁלֵט הָאָדָם בְּאָדָם לְרַע לְו (קהלת ח:ט).

עמק הנציב על ספרי, נשא מ"ב

The Netziv quotes Kohelet to underline that God's plan for creation was that people should have power over each other even to inflict harm and suffering.

26. וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד אֶל גְּד צַר לִי מְאֹד נִפְלָה נֶאֱבָדָה ה' כִּי רַבִּים רַחֲמָיו וּבְנִד אָדָם אֶל אֶפְלָה: (מלבי"ם - ראה כי עונש הרעב הוא עונש טבעי, ועונש החרב צחיירי, ולכן צחר צדצר אחר שהוא השגחיי, ורבו רחמי ה')

שמואל ב' כד:יד

David asks for a punishment from God and NOT through man. The Malbim explains that man can inflict suffering through wicked choices which may NOT reflect the intended Providence of God.

27. והנה בהיות שרצה הקב"ה בבחירת האדם במעשיו, וכיושר משפטו הגמול לשלם לאיש כמעשהו. הנה כביכול משעבד הוא את הנהגתו למעשה האדם שלא ייטיב לו ולא ירע לו אלא כפי מעשיו.

רמח"ל, דרך השם ב:ח:א

The Ramchal also teaches that God, as it were, suppresses his Providence in the face of human free choice so that those choices will override God's 'higher' will.

28. נעשה אדם בצלמנו. הצלם האלקי הוא הצחירה החופשית בלי טבע מכריח, רק מרצון ושכל חפשי. ... והנה אם כי אין זיכולת בנו להבין איך היא - כי "אילו ידעתיו הייתי" - רק זאת אנו יודעים. שלבצחירה החפשית הוא מלמזום האלקות, שהשם יתברך מניח מקום לזרוואיו לעשות כפי מה שיצחרו, ושלל ממפעליהם הגזירה וההחלטה צפרטיות.

משך חכמה בראשית פרק א פסוק כו (פרשת בראשית)

The Meshech Chochma explains that we do not fully understand the workings of Divine Providence and human free will - since 'If I knew Him, I would be Him'¹¹, But we do know that God 'contracts' his Providence to allow human free will.

- According to this approach¹², suffering inflicted by people is a far greater theological question than natural disasters.

29. ... the awarding of freedom to man comes at a heavy price, and we pay it - along with God.

R. Eliezer Berkovits, Faith After the Holocaust, p. 101

30. But if man alone is the creator of values, one who strives for the realization of ideals, then he must have freedom of choice and freedom of decision. And his freedom must be respected by God himself. God cannot, as a rule, intervene whenever man's use of freedom displeases him... If he did so the possibility for good would also disappear. Man can be frightened; but he cannot be bludgeoned into goodness. If God did not respect man's freedom to choose his course in personal responsibility, not only would the moral good and evil be abolished from the earth, but man himself would go with them. For freedom and responsibility are of the very essence of man. Without them, man is not human. If there is to be man, he must be allowed to make his choices in freedom. If he has such freedom, he will use it. Using it, he will often use it wrongly; he will decide for the wrong alternative. As he does so, there will be suffering for the innocent.

R. Eliezer Berkovits, Faith After the Holocaust, p. 105

31. If we were able to see how evil today leads to good tomorrow - if we were able to see from the point of view of God, creator of all - we would understand justice *but at the cost of ceasing to be human*. ... There is divine justice, and sometimes, looking back at the past from a distance in time, we can see it. But we do not live by looking back at the past. ... *God creates divine justice, but only we can create human justice*. ... God did not create humankind to demand of it absolute submission to His all-powerful will. In revelation, creation speaks. What it says is a call to responsibility.

R. Jonathan Sacks, To Heal a Fractured World, pp. 22-23

11. This phrase is often quoted in the words of 'the chacham', the earliest being the Drashot HaRan (Drush 4): אלו ידעתי הייתי; It is not clear who the 'chacham' is although there does seem to be strikingly similar to Augustine's statement "If you understood Him, it would not be God" (Sermon 52, 6, 16: PL 38, 360 and Sermon 117, 3, 5: PL 38, 663)

12. As noted above, some commentators understand the Rambam to take this approach, although the sources are not explicit on this. R. Aryeh Leibowitz also notes and discusses (Hashgacha Pratis pp. 140-142) other suggestions that the Ramban may also have taken this approach.

32. A number of possible approaches exist in tackling this problem [of the the Holocaust]
 (b) God has given man free choice and He now is, as it were, unable to interfere: "When the powers of destruction are allowed to act, they do not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked" (Bava Kama 60a).

R. Aharon Lichtenstein, *The Challenges of the Holocaust*¹³

33. To the question, "Where was God at Auschwitz? The answer is ... God was saying to humans: "You stop the Holocaust." True, the world did not respond adequately; even the Jews of the world failed to meet their responsibility. But, finally, the Jewish people heard the call and responded by taking responsibility and creating the State of Israel.

R. Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, *The Jewish Way* p.320

B] SOUL-MAKING THEODICIES

- Another approach to theodicy argues that the moral character of human beings can often only be truly built through struggle and suffering. This produces resilience and an ethical compass which enables the world to progress in a morally meaningful way.
- This could comprise the growth of the person suffering or, sometimes the impact that their suffering has on those around them who love and care for them.

34. Call the world if you Please "The vale of Soul-making"... Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a Soul?" • Another approach to theodicy argues that the moral character of human beings can often only be truly built through struggle and suffering. This produces resilience and an ethical compass which enables the world to progress in a morally meaningful way.

John Keats, Letter of April 1819, *The Letters of John Keats*, pp. 334-5:

35. Antitheistic writers... assume that the purpose of a loving God must be to create a hedonistic paradise; and therefore to the extent that the world is other than this, it proves to them that God is either not loving enough or not powerful enough to create such a world. They think of God's relation to the earth on the model of a human being building a cage for a pet animal to dwell in. If he is humane he will naturally make his pet's quarters as pleasant and healthful as he can... Such critics... are confusing what heaven ought to be, as an environment for perfected finite beings, with what this world ought to be, as an environment for beings who are in the process of becoming perfected... an environment whose primary and overriding purpose is... the realizing of the most valuable potentialities of human personality... we have to recognize that the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain cannot be the supreme and overriding end for which the world exists. Rather, this world must be a place of soul-making¹⁴.

John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, p 256

36. ... it is hard to see how such love [of e.g. a husband and wife] could ever be developed in human life, in this deepest and most valuable form of mutual caring and sharing, except in an environment that has much in common with our own world... such love presupposes a 'real life' in which there are obstacles to be overcome, tasks to be performed, goals to be achieved, setbacks to be endured, problems to be solved, dangers to be met... The same is true in relation to the virtues of compassion, unselfishness, courage, and determination - these all presuppose for their emergence and for their development something like the world in which we live.

ibid. p.326

37. Faith is a passionate experience, an experience of suffering. From the very dawn of our history, with the emergence of Abraham, suffering was considered both the main challenge which the covenantal community was expected to meet heroically and the great means of realizing the metahistorical destiny of this community. Abraham, as the incarnation of the knighthood of faith, was a great sufferer, a martyr. His greatness is manifested through his superhuman capacity for endurance and acceptance of sorrow. As a matter of fact, the election of his seed as a covenantal community was to be realized through suffering. The birth of the charismatic community was accompanied by affliction and pain... The realization of the covenant is possible only if the people is tested in the crucible of affliction.

R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Out of the Whirlwind*, 118-19

13. <https://etzion.org.il/en/challenges-holocaust>

14. Hick also addresses suffering which is so severe that it simply overwhelms those involved, which he calls 'disteological suffering'. This does not fit a 'soul-making' model and he appeals to theodicies focused on the Next World. It is not usual for philosophers to propose a combination of different theodicies to make their case for God.

38. [L]ike any creative gesture, the self-forming and self-fashioning of man is a passionate experience.

R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Family Redeemed*, p. 76

39. ... all becoming and growth, everything that guarantees the future involves pain...There has to be an eternal 'agony of the woman in labour' so that there can be an eternal joy of creation, so that the will to life can eternally affirm itself.

Nietzsche¹⁵, *Twilight of the Idols X:4*:

40. [A]t precisely the right moment, that bad inheritance from my father came to my aid, and in a manner I cannot admire enough, - basically, a predetermination of an early death... the illness gave me the right to change all my habits completely; it permitted, it required me to forget; it gave me the need to lie still, to be idle, to wait and be patient... But that would certainly mean thinking!

Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo III*, "Human, All Too Human", 4

41. From life's school of war - "What doesn't kill me makes me stronger."

Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols I:8*

42. Religion is not, at the outset, a refuge of grace and mercy for the despondent and desperate, an enchanted stream for crushed spirits, but a raging, clamorous torrent of man's consciousness with all its crises, pangs, and torments. Yes, it is true that during the third Sabbath meal... we sing the psalm "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters...". However, this psalm only describes the ultimate destination of homo religiosus, not the path leading to that destination... Out of the straits of inner oppositions and incongruities, spiritual doubts and uncertainties, out of the depths of a psyche rent with antinomies and contradictions, out of the bottomless pit of a soul that struggles with its own torments I have called, I have called unto Thee, O Lord.

R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*, n. 4

43. Man's task in the world, according to Judaism, is to transform fate into destiny; a passive existence into an active existence; an existence of compulsion, perplexity, and muteness into an existence replete with a powerful will, with resourcefulness, daring, and imagination.

R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek*, 6

44. וְיָדַעְתָּ עִם-לִבְבְּךָ כִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר יִיטָר אִישׁ אֶת-בְּנוֹ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִיִּסְרָף:

דברים ח"ה

Moshe presents this theodicy explicitly in Devarim. God causes struggle for the Jewish people in the same way that a loving father chastises their child - for their own future growth and benefit.

45. מוֹסֵר ה' בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים וְאֶל-תַּמָּאָס וְאֶל-תְּקֹץ בְּתוֹכָחָתוֹ: כִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר יֶאֱתָב ה' יוֹכִיחַ וְכִאֲב אֶת-בְּרוֹ יִרְצֶה:

משלי ג:יא-יב

Mishlei also presents this theodicy. A person should accept God's rebuke since it comes from love as that of a parent - for the long term good of the child.

- Everyone understands that children who never have to struggle often lack the resilience to succeed in life.
- A comparison is often made with the moth that must squeeze through a very small opening of the cocoon. It's intense struggle forces fluid from its body into its wings, allowing the wings to develop into large, functional adult moth wings. If an observer were to 'help' by cutting open the cocoon to enable the moth to leave more easily, it would kill the moth since it had been denied its chance to develop properly.

15. For a comparison of the approaches of Nietzsche and Rav Soloveitchik see Daniel Rynhold and Michael J. Harris, *Nietzsche, Soloveitchik and Contemporary Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

46. וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְהָאֱלֹהִים נִסָּה אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֶר הֲנִי:

בראשית כב:א

The Akeida is presented as God's 'test' of Avraham.

47. ענין הנסיון הוא לדעתי, בעבור היות מעשה האדם רשות מוחלטת בידו, אם ירצה יעשה ואם לא ירצה לא יעשה, יקרא "נסיון" מלד המנוסה. אבל המנוסה יתצרך יורה זו להוֹיֵא הדבר מן הכח אל הפועל, להיות לו שכר מעשה טוב לא שכר לב טוב בלבד. ודע כי השם לדיק יצחן (תהלים יא ה), כשהוא יודע בלדיק שיעשה ראונו וחפץ להלדיקו יורה אותו בנסיון, ולא יצחן את הרשעים אשר לא ישמעו. והנה כל הנסיונות שצחורה לטובת המנוסה.

רמב"ן שם

The Ramban¹⁶ explains that God only tests those who are strong in order to bring out their potential.

- Maimonides¹⁷ presents a complementary perspective in the Guide (3:24) where he explains that the test of Avraham serves as an inspiration to others¹⁸.

48. ... שלפעמים יגיעו אל הצדיק רעות לטוב לו, והן הנקראים יסורין של אהבה, ונקראין גם כן נסיון... שאין ראוי שיהיה שכר הסובל הטורח והעמל בפעל לאהבתו של מקום שוה למי שאינו סובל אותו בפעל... ועל כן פעמים הרבה מביא הקדוש ברוך הוא יסורין על הצדיק להרגילו שיסכים המעשה הטוב עם המחשבה הטובה ויהיה ראוי לשכר יותר גדול, שמתוך המעשה יתחזק לבו באהבת השם, לפי שכל פעל יקנה בנפש תכונה חזקה יותר משהיא נקנית בזולת מעשה. וזוכה בזה לשכר מעשה הטוב עם הכונה הטובה לא לשכר כונה טובה בלבד.

ספר העיקרים דיג

Sefer HaKharim sees Yissurin Shel Ahava as a Soul Making Theodicy which builds resilience and spiritual strength in the sufferer¹⁹.

49. ... דזולת היסורין בלתי יכולת להנשמה אף לאחר הפרדה מן הגוף להשיג ולקבל כל האורות והעולמות העליונים הצפונות והנעלמות... לא מבעיא לאחר שחטא אדה"ר שאפילו הצדקים גמורים יש בהן קצת מעטיו של נחש שעשתה פגם בכל הנשמות העתידות לבוא. אלא אף קודם שחטא אדה"ר אפילו בתחילת בריאת עולם כתיב וירא אלקים את האור כי טוב... שראה הקדוש ברוך הוא שאין העולם כדאי להשתמש באותו האור... שאי אפשר לקבל אותו אור מחמת היותה מעורבת עם החשך שהם מענייני התאות הגופניות והגשמיות... ולכן לעולם לא תוכל לקבל האור הגדול אלא ע"י יסורין, שמתוך כך תזדכך הנשמה כאילו היא נפרדת מן הגוף.

פני יהושע ברכות ה.

The Pnei Yehoshua understands that suffering is sometimes needed to purge and purify the body in order to enable it to achieve a higher level of spirituality. The suffering removes the person from this world somewhat (albeit not to the same degree as death) and enables it to perceive a purer spiritual light. This is partly needed due to the sin of Adam and Chava but also independent of that.

50. מאי דכתיב (ישעיהו מח:י) הִנֵּה צַרְפְּתִיקָה וְלֹא בָכָסֶף בְּחַרְתִּיקָה בְּכֹר עֲנִי? מלמד שחזר הקדוש ברוך הוא על כל מדות טובות ליתן לישראל, ולא מצא אלא עניות. (רבינו חננאל - כדי שיהא לנס שצור וכוונתם לשמים ועיניהם תלויות לרחמי וחסדיו.)

חגיגה ט:

Chazal understood that God chose poverty for the Jewish people since this is the best state to bring them close to Him.

51. א"ר יצחק: מפני מה היו אבותינו עקורים? מפני שהקב"ה מתאוה לתפלתן של צדיקים.

במות סד.

Chazal ask why the Avot had to endure the pain and suffering of childlessness and understand that this enabled them to grow in tefilla and closeness to God.

16. This approach is based on Midrash Rabba 32:3.

17. See <https://www.mhcn.org/parasha/1105.pdf> for a broader analysis and comparison of these approaches.

18. In the words of R. Yitzchak Arama in his commentary Akeidat Yitzchak: "Since this trial was narrated in the Torah as testimony of the living God, it is as if the trial took place in the presence of every Jew, past, present and future."

19. In the previous shiur we saw Yissurin Shel Ahava as presented as a Divine Intimacy Theodicy, or even a mild Punishment Theodicy. There is a significant overlap between Soul-Making Theodicies and Divine Intimacy Theodicies. Ultimately, both bring the sufferer closer to God.

52. אמנם צריך לדעת כי היסורין הם סיעתא דשמיא אשר בהם יסיע הקב"ה אותנו להתקרב אילו.

רב דסלר, מכתב מאליהו א' עמ' 21

Rav Dessler understands that the function of suffering in life is to bring us closer to God.

53. When I finally did arrive in Israel, I met a former friend who had been with me during those times. He had already become a member of Kibbutz Kfar Etzion. When he saw me, with the hoe in his hands, he yelled in anger, "You! Yehudah! You were saved?! You, the one who told us to be ready to die in sanctification of God's name?" He could not forget me, nor my former words. He was a hot-tempered man, and this was his first reaction to seeing me alive in Israel. When he calmed down, he finally asked me, "Yehudah, have you remained true to your beliefs? Are you still religious?"

I immediately answered him. "And if I did not remain religious? Then what? Would it then be easier to understand all that has taken place? Do things become simpler for one who has lost his faith?"

I clearly experienced the hand of God during the Holocaust - only I did not understand its meaning. It was so clear - so abnormal; so unnatural; so illogical. I was not in Auschwitz, but I saw the Jews who were being taken there. I saw regiments of Germans who were not going to the Russian front, but rather guarding the trainloads of Jews that were headed to the death camps. It was against all military logic and interests. Can one possibly begin to understand such madness? I saw the hand of God in everything. It was not natural, it was not human. I saw the hand of God, but I did not understand its significance. The establishment of the State of Israel does not explain why millions of Jews were led to their deaths. I do not accept the theory that has since been espoused by many, that the State of Israel gives reason and answer to the Holocaust.

There is one thing that I must emphasize. I never said the blessing, "Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who did not make me a gentile" with such fervor as I used to recite it during those dark days. Specifically during those days, especially during those days - despite everything, I was proud to be counted among the murdered and not the murderers.

R. Yehudah Amital, Forty Years Later: A Personal Recollection