

HALACHIC AND HASHKAFIC ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

SERIES 3: 2 - TZADIK v'RA LO

THEODICY AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL - PART 1

OU ISRAEL/BEIT KENESSET HANASI - FALL 2024

A] THE PROBLEM

- The classic philosophical and religious problem can be put as follows: Theist religions (like Judaism) believe in a God who is Omnipotent (all-powerful), Omniscient (all-knowing) and Omnibenevolent (all-loving).

1. גדל העצה ורב העלילה אשר עיניך פקחות על כל דרכי בני אדם:

ירמיהו לביט

Yirmiyahu stresses God's omniscience and omnipotence.

2. הצור תמים פעלו כי כל דרכיו משפט אל אמונה ואין עול צדיק וישר הוא:

דברים לב:ד

In Shirat Ha'azinu we state that God is perfect in justice, without any iniquity and and entirely dependable.

3. (ו) כי עם קדוש אתה לה' אלהיך בך בחר ה' אלהיך להיות לו לעם סגולה מכל העמים אשר על-פני האדמה: (ז) לא מרצונם מכל-העמים חשק ה' בכם ויבחר בכם כי אתם המעט מכל-העמים: (ח) **כי מאהבת ה' אתכם** ומשמרו את השבעה אשר נשבע לאבותיכם הוציא ה' אתכם בנד חזקה ויפדד מבית עבדים מיד פרעה מלך-מצרים: ... (יב) והיה יקב תשמעו את המשפטים האלה ושמרתם ועשיתם אתם ושמר ה' אלהיך לך את-הברית ואת-החסד אשר נשבע לאבותיך: (יג) **ואהבך וברכך והרבך וברך פרי-בטונך ופרי-אדמתך דגנך ותירשך ויצהרך שגר-אלפיד ועשתרת צאנך על האדמה אשר נשבע לאבותיך לתת לך.**

דברים ו:ח, יב-יג

God chose the Jewish people out of love and wishes to give us and our families great success and beracha.

- Yet there is enormous suffering in the world, mostly endured by people who are either entirely innocent (such as children) or, at least, appear not deserving of the extent of suffering they experience.

4. Evil is an undeniable fact. There is evil, there is suffering, there are hellish torments in this world. Whoever wishes to delude himself by diverting his attention from the deep fissure in reality, by romanticizing human existence, is nought but a fool and a fantasist.

R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Fate and Destiny* (1992), p. 4

5. Judaism, with its realistic approach to human existence, understands that the reality of evil cannot be altered and concealed, and that any attempt to reduce the [religious] contradictions of evil's existence will not help a person arrive at inner calm or an understanding of the existential secret. Evil is a reality that cannot be denied...

R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek*

- Two claims are often made based on these propositions (Divine Omniscience etc and the reality of human suffering):
 - maintaining all of them is logically incoherent ie such a God could not possibly exist given the suffering - 'the logical problem of evil'. Thus, since we clearly perceive there to be such suffering, God cannot exist c'v.
 - the extent of the suffering in the world makes it probable that such a God does not exist - 'the evidential problem of evil'.

1. This is a complex topic with many moving parts. Many on line shiurim and source sheets were helpful to me in preparing the series. Three particular rabbinic friends and colleagues - Dayan Michael Harris, Rabbi Uri Cohen and Rabbi Daniel Fine - were particularly gracious in sharing their material with me, which is very much appreciated. Both Dayan Harris and Rabbi Fine have books forthcoming on the topic.

- Non-theist religions do not have an issue with the problem of evil since they do not posit an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God. Pagan belief systems propose capricious and vindictive demi-gods who impose undeserved suffering on people. Deist systems propose one God who is absent from the world and unaware and uninterested in the specifics of human suffering.
- An important distinction must also be made between 'Natural' vs 'Moral (Man-Made) Evil'. Natural Evil causes suffering as a result of natural phenomena, such as earthquakes, hurricanes etc. For Moral Evil, the suffering is caused by human choices which bring about harm to others, such as war. We will need to address whether the moral and theological issues are the same in both of these.

6. The problem of theodicy – “justifying” the ways of God to man, offering rational explanations for the ethical and philosophical dilemmas presented by the disjointedness and inappositeness of conduct and circumstance, the quality of one’s moral life and his fortune or misfortune – has a long and honorable history. But there is no one theodicy in Judaism. From Job to the sages of the Talmud, from Maimonides to Luria to the Besht, there is only one constant, and that is the question of *zaddik ve-ra lo*, the righteous who is afflicted with evil. The number of *answers* varies with the number of interpreters. No one approach has official, authoritative, dogmatic sanction in Judaism, although each has something of value to contribute. And the question remains the Question of Questions for Judaism, as it does for every thinking, believing human being.

R. Norman Lamm, *The Face of God: Thoughts on the Holocaust*, in *Theological and Halakhic Reflections on the Holocaust*, p. 119

7. When theological questions are asked, students must be told that the greatest questions in the world simply have no answers. Maybe they will discover them when they grow up. Likely as not, the questions will remain suspended between heaven and earth for all eternity. We are only human, we are not divine. We cannot answer all questions. Job taught us that. What we can do is take the suffering and the grief and the anguish and the agony and try to use them to lead us a step beyond where we are now. That is what I mean by *teshuvah*. Studying what happened must not get us “hung up” on the question of “why,” but propel us into responding to the question, “what then?” It must lead us to affirm our allegiance to Israel, our commitment to studying the Torah, our devotion to the Almighty.

R. Norman Lamm, *Teaching the Holocaust*, Speech at the OU National Convention, 1974. Reprinted in *Seventy Faces: Articles of Faith*, Volume 2, pp. 263-264

B] POSSIBLE APPROACHES

- There are four broad approaches to Tzadik v’Ra Lo:
 - (a) Skeptical Theism - an argument that it is logically impossible for us to understand the actions of God. As such there is an explanation for the suffering that we are not aware of.
 - (b) Theodicies² - arguments which attempt to resolve the problem of evil³ and justify the suffering
 - (c) Anti-theodicies - arguments that it is inappropriate or even immoral to try and resolve the problem and other approaches are required.
 - (d) Redefinitions of God’s direct involvement in human suffering and the extent of Divine Providence. This approach argues that the suffering is not a result of God’s actions but an indirect consequence of naturalistic causation. This invokes the broader concepts of Mazal (a persons fate or lot in life) and Hashgacha Klalit vs. Pratit (Divine Providence of a general as opposed to specific nature).
- Some of the classic theodicies suggested are the following and we will be’H see sources for these over the coming weeks. Some of these have been challenged by commentators over the ages. Some also seems less acceptable in our times than in the past.
 - ‘Punishment Theodicies’: arguing that the suffering was in fact justified on some level. This is not necessarily due to the misdeeds of the sufferer. It may be justified in light of the reward preserved for the sufferer in Olam HaBa or as a broader atonement for the sins of the generation.
 - ‘Soul-making Theodicies’: arguing that the suffering was necessary to enable the sufferer or those around them to achieve a greater moral virtue.
 - ‘Divine Intimacy Theodicies’: arguing that the suffering was not in any sense deserved but was imposed to bring about a religious experience for the sufferer leading to a knowledge of and intimacy with God.
 - ‘Free-will Theodicies’: arguing that the suffering was not caused by God but by free choices made by other people and God requires such unfettered free will to exist in the world to give human existence true meaning.

2. Theodicy - 'vindication of God', from Ancient Greek *theos* (god) and *dike* (justice).

3. Technically, some such arguments are true theodicies which seek to identify definitively a morally sufficient reason for God to permit the existence of evil. Others are more properly called a 'defence', which suggests an argument that *might* be a reason for God permitting the existence of evil.

8. The Holocaust reveals to the full the problematic nature of the religious interpretation of history. It has not yielded a single meaning but a vast multiplicity... In the absence of prophecy there are no such things as events which carry with them their own interpretation.

R. Jonathan Sacks, *Crisis and Covenant*, 48:

C] THE LIMITATIONS OF PHILOSOPHY & THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMILITY

9. ואמר רב הונא אמר רב משום רבי מאיר: לעולם יהיו דבריו של אדם מועטין לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא. שנאמר (קהלת ה:א) אַל-תְּבַהֵל עַל-פִּיךָ וְלִבְךָ אַל-יִמְתָּר לְהוֹצִיא דָבָר לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם וְאַתָּה עַל-הָאָרֶץ עַל-כֵּן יִהְיוּ דְבָרֶיךָ מְעֻטִּים.

ברכות ס:

Chazal teach that a person should always think hard before speaking up to challenge God for we see things only from a lowly and limited perspective.

10. Intellectual excitement is one source of my love for my religion; another is the inspired lives of my religion's devotees. Recently I attended a talk given by an Orthodox woman who has been bound to a wheelchair from childhood. She is married—to a blind man—and remarkably, they are raising a family. She spoke about the Jewish concept that “this, too, is for the good”; she explained how life had done her good turns by means of *ostensible* coincidences, which in truth, she felt, were signs of God's intervention. By means of her theology, she had turned adversity into inner strength and advantage. The thought of contesting her “invisible hand” interpretation with philosophical arguments seemed so offensive as to be unthinkable. Anyone who would impugn her perspective would only be reflecting their own lack of spirit. If that evening someone had furnished me on the spot with a dazzling philosophical solution to the problem of evil, that would have done less for me as a person than this simple autobiographical expression—which from a philosophical standpoint seemed so simplistic...

Philosophy has its place among the truly enjoyable, challenging, and edifying endeavors in our culture. But it is not the arbiter of all we think and do; what we do in our study and what we do in the rest of our lives are often not commensurate, because the study is the smaller room in life.

R. David Shatz, *The Overexamined Life is Not Worth Living*,

11. How can a good God abide such cruelty and suffering of an apparently innocent people? I don't have an answer any more than Job did. All I know is that when God appeared out of the whirlwind to Job, Job retracted not his questions, but the poignancy of his questions. I think that what Job retracted was his expectation of an answer, because the problem remains a problem. But when he demands of God an answer, that part is blunted at the very end. To ask the question not only is permissible, I think it is inevitable. Any moral human being, any moral religious person, must ask the question. But there comes a point when you bow your head and you say, *af al pi khen*, nevertheless, I accept. I don't know why. All I know is that I am mortal, and my mortality not only makes me vulnerable to pain and suffering, it makes me vulnerable to not understanding why I am suffering.

R. Norman Lamm, *The God I Believe In*, reprinted *Seventy Faces: Articles of Faith*, Volume 1, p. 113.

12. Regardless of what issues – moral, theological, textual or historical – vexed me, I was confident that they had been raised by masters far sharper and wiser than myself; and if they had remained impregnably steadfast in their commitment, so should and could I. I intuited that, his categorical formulations and imperial certitude notwithstanding, Rav Hutner had surely confronted whatever questions occurred to me. Later, I felt virtually certain the Rav had, so that the depth and intensity of their service of God was doubly reassuring.

R. Aharon Lichtenstein, *The Source of Faith is Faith Itself* (1996)

13. *Unlike many Zionist rabbis, you refrained from expressing an opinion on the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Why?*
To express a position is a fine thing when you have a position, when things are clear, unequivocal, when you have the sense that you understand not just the intricacies of the political moves but also what God would want. I didn't feel I had the tools or ability to express a position. I don't have God's phone number, the way some others seem to have. I was raised on the words of the Talmud about Balaam: he claimed having knowledge of 'the will of the Supreme.' He couldn't even tell what his own beast wanted, and he claimed to know the will of the Supreme?!

Please, have a little humility. Not the fake kind, but the kind that rises from a person's understanding of who the Almighty is and who man is – a base, ignominious creature. I understand there were people for whom it was clear where the disengagement was leading and what God wanted. That's not how I grew up. Humility is not only an expression of religious awe but also an expression of wisdom.

Are you insinuating criticism of the rabbis who opposed the disengagement?

I don't have to insinuate anything. It's no secret that there are large, self-confident segments of the public, that have the sense that you can take a chapter of the book of Isaiah or Malachi and find a perfect match between the text and what's happening before our eyes. I'm not comfortable with that; I'm uncomfortable with that also from a religious perspective. It's true: those of us within the religious Zionism camp have for years continued to march forward spiritually, economically and socially, with trust in God. Without that belief, it is doubtful that the religious Zionist stream would have come into existence to begin with. It began out of belief and hope, out of the feeling that mankind has a role to play in history. But the difference between that and the sense that I can explain exactly why a bus explodes and kills 22 children is enormous. It is religious arrogance. It also smacks of people over-stepping their limitations.

R. Aharon Lichtenstein, Rabbi Lichtenstein to Zionist rabbis: 'Some humility, please' Walla! March 15, 2011

14. 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", VBM⁴

15. Those who approach the Holocaust from a secular point of view end up spouting heresy. Those who approach the Holocaust from a religious point of view end up spouting stupidity.

R. Ahron Soloveitchik (20th century USA), Lecture at Yeshiva University c. 1989⁵

16. In addition to presenting conflicting opinions, the Talmud defines limits as to the applications of these positions. First, despite one's justifications, **one may not impose his positions on God**. The Talmud presents a story which contradicts explicit Biblical texts. *B. Kiddushin* 39b tells the story of a father [who] told his healthy son to climb a tree, chase away the mother bird, and collect its children. The child did so; but on his way down the tree, he fell off the ladder, broke his neck, and died. This child fulfilled two commandments for which the Bible states the reward is longevity. Yet despite the Bible's assurances, the child died immediately. According to the Talmud, this incident allegedly provoked Rabbi Elisha Ben Avuya to become an apostate. His perception of the Bible and God's place in the world was suddenly questioned. Although his reading was perfectly legitimate, most people would have difficulty reconciling the allegedly stated word of God with contradictory empirical evidence. However justified he might have been, Elisha Ben Avuya imposed his interpretation on God. When events did not occur as he expected, his faith was shattered.

The other limitation to Talmudic theodicy is that **one may not impose his beliefs on other people**. R. Ammi's statement, 'There is no death without sin' (*B. Shabbat* 33b), is one of the rare instances where a theological statement is forcibly rejected. I suggest that the first limitation is this range of imposition. When R. Ammi makes his statement, he is tacitly obligating all Jews to accept his worldview. Since everyone dies and everyone suffers, then it must be that everyone sins including small children! Such a position imposes far too much on the populace for it to be tolerated.

In their rulings on Jewish law, the Rabbis acknowledged that no philosophical solution will suffice during one's time of trouble. R. Shimon B. Elazar states, 'Do not offer comfort when one's dead lies before him' (*M. Avot* 4:18). While in a time of mourning, comforters may not speak until the mourner speaks first (*B. Moed Qatan* 28b). Before one buries his dead, he is in a state called "*onen*," where one is exempt from performing positive commandments (*Tur Y.D.* 341). In those times of grief, the Rabbis acknowledge that one's faith will be pushed to its limits. The Rabbis realized that the theological solutions of logic provide precious little human consolation.

R. Josh Yuter, Talmudic Theodicy, YUTOPIA website, April 26, 2004⁶

4. <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/philosophy/great-thinkers/harav-aharon-lichtenstein/after-tsunami>

5. Quoted by R. Mordechai Torczyner - How a Jew Responds to Tragedy, R. Mordechai Torczyner, December 16 2023 - <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/1083332>.

6. <http://joshiyuter.com/2004/04/26/judaism/jewish-thought-theology-machshava/talmudic-theodicy/>

D] OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF IYOV

17. Job consists of (a) the prologue ([Chapters] 1-2), (b) a series of dialogues in which Job and his friends argue whether God is just (3-32), (c) the speeches of Elihu (34-37) and of God (38-41), (d) the confession of Job (42:1-6), (e) the vindication of Job (42:7-8), and (f) an epilogue. Let us now develop the above schema in some detail.

(a) The test of Job. God accedes to [the angelic accuser] Satan's request that Job be tested, for the adversary contends that his morality is conditional upon his specific situation (1:6-13). Job persists in maintaining his moral views and behavior (1:20-21). Satan questions the validity of the test on the grounds that it did not affect Job's personal welfare (2:4-5). Once again, God agrees to Satan's request. This time Job fails the test. He does not blaspheme God "with his lips" (3:11). His subsequent speeches, however, witness to his loss of faith, both in God and in morality. Satan's claim is thus upheld.

(b) The dialogues between Job and his friends. Job's friends attempt to demonstrate the universal justice of God and concomitantly the obligatory guilt of Job. It is noteworthy that their thesis is already clearly disproved by the prologue. It will also be disputed by Elihu and God. On the basis of his own personal experience, Job rejects the thesis of his friends (9:21; 12:17-25; 16:17-18; 19:6-12; 22:2-6). He points to the significance of his experience by invoking concrete examples of inequities among men (12:6; 21:7-34: 24). On this basis, Job pronounces judgment on God and declares that He is unjust (9:15-10:7).

(c) The speeches of Elihu and God. Elihu does not dispute the fact of Job's innocence. Moreover, he censures Job's friends for imputing guilt to him (32:4). He rejects, however, Job's presumptive right to pronounce judgment on God, and rebukes him for doing so (32:1-2). God is not unjust since He is the Creator (34:12-37). Job may be qualified to pronounce judgment on another man, who as such is subject to justice and injustice, but not on God (35). Furthermore, since man is incapable of knowing God (36:24, 26), how can he pronounce judgment on Him (36:23)? God's actions in the human (36:1-22), animal, and physical worlds (36:27-37:24) are clear evidence of His unknowability.

The two speeches of God follow Elihu's line of argumentation. In his first speech (38-39), God challenges Job (38:2) by pointing to the Cosmos in all the harmonious variety of its constituent parts. In His second speech (40:6-41:26), God shows that Job is not qualified to pronounce judgment on Him.

(d) Job admits his error. Upon hearing the first speech of God, Job acknowledges his limitations (40:3-5). Upon hearing the second speech, Job confesses the error of his presumption (42:1-6).

(e) The vindication of Job. God then turns to Job's friends, and upbraids them for not having spoken of Him as appropriately as Job had done (42:7). Accordingly, He commands them to bring an expiatory sacrifice, and orders them to plead with Job so that he might intercede on their behalf (42:7-8; cf. *Gen.* 20:7, 17). God's position coincides with that of the prologue. However, by vindicating Job - who accused Him of injustice, and censuring Job's friends - who defended His justice, God concedes that He does not always act in conformity with the norms of justice.

Hakham José Faur (1934-2020), "Reflections on Job and Situation-Morality," *Judaism* 19:2 (Spring 1970), pp. 220-221

- Important points to bear in mind on the Book of Iyov

- Iyov is not necessarily Jewish and there are strong textual indications that he is Edomite⁷. Chazal give many different opinions (12 in Bava Batra 15a alone!) as to who Job was, when he lived and whether he was even a historical character. All of this points to the universal messages of the book.
- The text does not give clear and simple answer to the core question of why the righteous suffer. We are left with clear impression that Job's comforters were wrong and Job's reaction was justified

18. וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי דִבְרֵי ה' אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל־אִיּוֹב וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל־אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַתִּימְנִי חָרָה אַפִּי בְךָ וּבִשְׂנֵי רַעֲיֶדָּ כִּי לֹא דִבַּרְתֶּם אֵלַי נְכוֹנָה כְּעַבְדֵי אִיּוֹב:

איוב מבז

God tells the comforters that they spoke inappropriately and Job spoke correctly. But which of Job's statements is intended?

7. Many of the names of characters in Job resonate with the Edomite names found in Bereishit Chapter 36. The Ibn Ezra on Job 2:11 even suggests that the book was originally written in another language and translated into Hebrew! The language of the book of Iyov is also extremely dense and complex. In fact, over 10% of the hapax legomena (words found only once in Tanach) are in Iyov.

19. וַיִּקַּם אִיּוֹב וַיִּקְרַע אֶת-מְעִלוֹ וַיִּגָּז אֶת-רֹאשׁוֹ וַיִּפֹּל אֶרְצָה וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה: וַיֹּאמֶר עֲרֹם יָצֵאתִי מִבֶּטֶן אִמִּי וְעֲרֹם אָשׁוּב שָׁמָּה ה' נָתַן וְה' לָקַח יְהִי שֵׁם ה' מְבָרָךְ:

איוב א:כא

At the beginning of the process of his affliction, even after his children tragically die and he is in enormous emotional pain, Job accepts God's judgement with exceptional piety.

20. (כא) תָּם-אֲנִי לֹא-אֲדַע נַפְשִׁי אֲמַאֵס חַיִּי: (כב) אַחֲת הִיא עַל-כֵּן אֲמַרְתִּי תָם וְרָשָׁע הוּא מְכַלֶּה: (כג) אִם-שׁוֹט יָמִית פְּתָאֵם לְמִסַּת נְקִיִּם יִלְעָג:

איוב ט:כא-כג

By chapter 9, Job adopts a very different tone. He feels that he is innocent and yet afflicted; he is disgusted with life itself. God seems to him to afflict the wicked and righteous equally and Job feels that he is being mocked in his suffering⁸!

21. ...in the end it is not Job's comforters, who blamed his misfortunes on his sins, who were vindicated by heaven, but Job himself, who consistently challenged God. In Judaism, faith lies in the question, not the answer.

R. Jonathan Sacks, *Why Does God Allow Terrible Things to Happen to His People?*⁹

E] SKEPTICAL THEISM - WE CAN NEVER UNDERSTAND GOD'S PLAN

22. **Skeptical theism** is the view that God exists but that we should be skeptical of our ability to discern God's reasons for acting or refraining from acting in any particular instance. In particular, says the skeptical theist, we should not grant that our inability to think of a good reason for doing or allowing something is indicative of whether or not God might have a good reason for doing or allowing something. If there is a God, he knows much more than we do about the relevant facts, and thus it would not be surprising at all if he has reasons for doing or allowing something that we cannot fathom.

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

23. Skeptical theists are theists who are skeptical of our ability to make judgments of the sort expressed by 'If God exists, the world would not be like this' (where 'this' picks out some feature of the world like the existence of evil). According to skeptical theism, if there were a God, it is likely that he would have reasons for acting that are beyond our ken, and thus we are not justified in making all-things-considered judgments about what the world would be like if there were a God.

Justin P. McBrayer in *Philosophy Compass* 5/7 (2010)

24. If God were small enough to be understood, He would not be big enough to be worshipped.

Evelyn Underhill¹⁰

E1] WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND GOD

25. כִּי לֹא מַחְשְׁבוֹתַי מַחְשְׁבוֹתֵיכֶם וְלֹא דַרְכֵיכֶם דְּרָכֵי נֶאֱמַר ה':

ישעיהו נה:ח

God's thoughts and plans for the world are not ours. It is logically incoherent and theologically ridiculous to expect us to have any understanding of the infinite Divine plan.

26. (א) וַיַּעַן-ה' אֶת-אִיּוֹב מִן הַסַּעֲרָה וַיֹּאמֶר: (ב) מִי זֶה מַחְשִׁיךָ עֲצָה בְּמַלְיוֹן בְּלִי-דַעַת: (ג) אֲזַר-נָא כְּגַבְרַת חַלְצִיף וְאֶשְׁאֲלֶךָ וְהוֹדִיעַנִי: (ד) אֵיפֹה הִייתָ בְּיַסְדֵי-אֶרֶץ הַגֹּד אִם-יִדְעַת בִּינָה:

איוב לח:א-ד

This is also God's response to Iyov. He has no grasp of the complexity of the universe.

8. It is not clear who he feels is laughing at the affliction of the innocent. Some commentators (eg Rabbag) explain that the wicked are laughing at the slow suffering of the righteous. Others explain that Job feels the Satan is mocking him. It is very possible Job feels that even God is laughing at him - surely a position close to blasphemous.

9. <https://rabbisacks.org/archive/why-does-god-allow-terrible-things-to-happen-to-his-people/>

10. (1875-1941), English Catholic thinker

• God's response to Iyov is that the universe is THEOCENTRIC and not ANTHROPOCENTRIC. God is the center of existence and mankind, for all its importance in the grand cosmic scheme (let alone individual people) is not the only or driving factor in the functioning of the universe.

27. As long as Job philosophized, like a slave of fate, regarding the cause of and reason for suffering, as long as he demanded of God that He reveal to him the nature of evil, as long as he continued to question and complain, asking why and wherefore afflictions befall man, God answered him forcefully and caustically, posing to him the very powerful and pointed question, "Dost thou know?" "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto Me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast the understanding. . . . Dost thou know the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? Or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?" (*Job* 38:2-4, 39:1). If you do not even know the ABC of creation, how can you so arrogantly presume to ask so many questions regarding the governance of the cosmos?

R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek*, 58, reprinted as *Fate and Destiny: From the Holocaust to the State of Israel* p. 11

28. Only if man could grasp the world as a whole would he be able to gain a perspective on the essential nature of evil. However, as long as man's apprehension is limited and distorted, as long as he perceives only isolated fragments of the cosmic drama and the mighty epic of history, he remains unable to penetrate into the secret lair of suffering and evil. To what may the matter be compared? To a person gazing at a beautiful rug, a true work of art, one into which an exquisite design has been woven – but looking at it from its reverse side. Can such a viewing give rise to a sublime aesthetic experience? We, alas, view the world from its reverse side. We are, therefore, unable to grasp the all-encompassing framework of being. And it is only within that framework that it is possible to discern the divine plan, the essential nature of the divine actions.

R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek*, p. 54 reprinted as *Fate and Destiny*, p. 5.

29. רבי ינאי אומר אין בידינו לא משלות הרשעים ואף לא מיסורי הצדיקים ...

משנה מסכת אבות פרק ד משנה טו

Pirkei Avot teaches that we will NEVER understand the prosperity of the wicked or the suffering of the righteous.

30. וי"מ אין צדיקו לא משלות הרשעים. כי אף על פי שכן הדיו הוא רשע וטוב לו צדיק ורע לו מ"מ אין אנו משיגין לטעם הדבר. והיא מן הדברים אמתיים שאין ידיעתנו משגת לטענה זו. וזכו שאמר ירמיהו ע"ה (ירמיה יב:ה) צדיק אֶתֶר ה' בִּי אֶרִיב חֲלִיד אֶךְ מִשְׁפָּטִים חֲדָבֵר חוֹתֵךְ מְלוֹעַ דֶּרֶךְ רָשָׁעִים לְלַחֵה שְׁלִי כִּלְ-צַנְדִּי צָנָד:

רבינו יונה שם

Rabbeinu Yona quotes from Yirmiyahu that we accept in principle on some philosophical level that there is ultimate justice from God and that we lack the intellectual tools to explain it. But we should still feel that we can protest the apparent injustice¹¹.

31. חֲלִלָה לָךְ מַעֲשֵׂת כְּדַבְּרֵךְ הַזֶּה לְהַמִּית צַדִּיק עִם-רָשָׁע וְהִיָּה כְצַדִּיק כְּרָשָׁע חֲלִלָה לָךְ הַשְׁפֵּט כֹּל-הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט:

בראשית יח:כה

Avraham's protest is stark and forceful. For the righteous to suffer is a gross chilul Hashem. Will the Judge of the world not act with justice!?

32. ואמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי יוסי: שלשה דברים בקש משה מלפני הקדוש ברוך הוא ונתן לו. בקש להודיעו דרכיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא ונתן לו. שנאמר: הודיעני נא את דרכיך. אמר לפניו: רבוננו של עולם! מפני מה יש צדיק וטוב לו ויש צדיק ורע לו, יש רשע וטוב לו ויש רשע ורע לו? אמר לו: ... צדיק וטוב לו - צדיק גמור, צדיק ורע לו - צדיק שאינו גמור. רשע וטוב לו - רשע שאינו גמור, רשע ורע לו - רשע גמור. ופליגא דרבי מאיר, דאמר רבי מאיר: שתים נתנו לו ואחת לא נתנו לו, שנאמר: וחנתי את אשר אחן - אף על פי שאינו הגון, - ורחמתי את אשר ארחם - אף על פי שאינו הגון.

ברכות ז.

Chazal debate whether even Moshe, at his closest connection to God at the top of Har Sinai, received any understanding of why the tzadikim suffer. R. Yosei understands that he did gain some insight - that the tzadik who suffers is not a total tzadik¹². R. Meir understands that Moshe was left totally in the dark on this. God favors whom He wishes, even though this seems random and inexplicable to him.

11. Interestingly, the focus of Yirmiyahu is on why the wicked prosper since this is a more obvious injustice. We can see more evidently who acts wickedly and the chances of them being a hidden tzadik is low. But those who appear righteous also definitely sin (as does everyone), and who is to tell whether this sin has more impact than imagined?

12. We will discuss the Punishment Theodicies in the following shiur be'H.

33. אמר לפניו: רבונו של עולם, יש לך אדם כזה ואתה נותן תורה ע"י? אמר לו: שתוק, כך עלה במחשבה לפני. אמר לפניו: רבונו של עולם, הראיתני תורתו, הראני שכרו, אמר לו: חזור לאחורך. חזר לאחוריו, ראה ששוקלין בשרו במקולין, אמר לפניו: רבש"ע, זו תורה וזו שכרה? א"ל: שתוק, כך עלה במחשבה לפני.

מנחות כט:

Moshe asked to see the reward for R. Akiva's greatness in Torah. When God showed him R. Akiva's excruciating death by Roman torture, Moshe expressed outrage. God's response was to demand acceptance, since His thoughts are not known to man.

34. No worldly attainment can compensate for the murder of those millions. All the claims about the establishment of the State of Israel serving as compensation for the Holocaust are hollow. Neither the State of Israel that exists in reality, that fights bloody wars for its existence from time to time, nor the ideal State of Israel, as in the vision of "Every man under his vine and under his fig tree" (Micah 4:4), can justify even partially what the nation of Israel went through during the Holocaust years. There is no honest religious response without this plea: "You would be in the right, O Lord, if I were to contend with You, yet nevertheless I will reason these points of justice with You" (Yirmiyahu 12:1).

R. Yehuda Amital, A Kaddish For the Martyrs of the Holocaust

35. The Rambam – and even the prophet Yishayahu, we may assume – never imagined that a day would come when there would no longer be answers. Not only are there no answers about the great question of the Holocaust; there cannot be answers. The question is so unfathomable that no answer in the world could suffice. As Elie Wiesel just remarked, nothing in the world can justify the cruel murders of hundreds of thousands of children. Nothing can justify it – not the State of Israel, not the coming of the Messiah, not the mass repentance of the Jewish People. Nothing!

The Rambam says that there will be an answer to every question, but to this question there is no answer. I want the Rambam to know that we have lived through questions of the sort that are unanswerable.

Once I met Abba Kovner, the famous poet and the leader of the Vilna Ghetto Revolt. He asked me, "As a believing Jew, how do you deal with what you lived through in the Holocaust?" I answered him, in typical Jewish fashion, "How do *you* deal with it? I believe in God, Whom I don't pretend to understand. But you believe in man – can you still believe in man after the Shoah?" He didn't speak, as Elie Wiesel does, about the "Cain" in man. He believed in the goodness of man. So I added, "Your problem is greater than mine. For me, the ways of God are hidden." "Well, then," Abba Kovner replied, "Each of us has a problem."

"You Have Loved Us and Desired Us", based on a sicha by R. Yehuda Amital, trans. by Kaeren Fish

36. 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 Dov Soloveitchik, *Community, Covenant and Commitment: Selected Letters and Communications*, 331-2

37. God exists, therefore there is justice. But it is *divine* justice – justice from the perspective of one who knows all, sees all, and considers all ... But we who live in space and time cannot see from this perspective, and if we did, it would not make us better human beings but worse.

R. Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World*, (2005) 22–23

38. 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.

R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Kol Dodi Dofek* (trans. Lawrence Kaplan), 4

39. 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?

R. Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *Abraham's Journey*, 150

40. (ג) מִי זֶה מְעַלִּים עֲצָה בְּלִי דַעַת לְכוּ הַגְּדִילִי וְלֹא אָבִין נִפְלְאוֹת מִפְּנֵי וְלֹא אֲדַע: ... (ו) עַל־כֵּן אֶמְאָס וְנִחַמְתִּי עַל־עֲפָר וְאֶפְרָ: פ

איוב מבג, ו

Job finally accepts that he spoke of things that he did not really understand and he recants his position.

E2] HESTER PANIM - GOD'S HIDDEN FACE

41. (טז) וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהֵי מֹשֶׁה הִנֵּה שָׂכַב עִם־אֲבֹתַיךָ וְקָם הַעַם הַזֶּה וְזָנְהוּ אַחֲרַי אֱלֹהֵי נְכַר־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר הוּא בְּא־שְׁמֹהּ בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְעֲזָבֵנִי וְהִפְרֹ אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי אִתּוֹ: (יז) וְהִרְחָ אִפִּי בּוֹ בַיּוֹם־הַהוּא וְעֲזָבֹתַיִם וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פְּנֵי מַהֵם וְהָיָה לְאֹכֵל וּמִצְאָהוּ רַעוּת רַבּוֹת וְצָרוֹת וְאָמַר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא הֲלֹא עַל כִּי־אִין אֱלֹהֵי בְּקִרְבִּי מִצְאוֹנֵי הָרְעוּת הָאֵלֶּה: (יח) וְאֲנֹכִי הִסְתַּר אֶסְתִּיר פְּנֵי בַיּוֹם הַהוּא עַל כָּל־הָרְעָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה כִּי פָּנָה אֶל־אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרָיִם:

דברים לא:טז-יח

The Chumash describes an occluded relationship with God, where God 'hides His face' from us. This leads man to question the presence or even the existence of God.

42. All of the Bible is the record of the dialogue between God and Israel. . . . Now, the fortunes of this dialogue are described by two terms: *Hester Panim*, the "hiding of the face," and *Nesiat Panim*, the "lifting of the face." When two people love each other, they face each other, they look adoringly at each other. This mutuality in love is the essence of the dialogue; whatever "words" flow from it, whether narrative or normative, are significant but secondary. But when one party is disloyal to the other, when he sins against the other, then that other turns his face away, he refuses to gaze at the one who wrongfully injured him. As a consequence, the party who first sinned too turns his face away. Their relationship thus sustains a blow. Should they feel a need or desire to re-establish relations as of old, then one of them will slowly lift up and turn his face to the other and await the reciprocal turning of the other's face as a gesture of reconciliation.

[T]he removal of divine closeness and friendship catapults man into a state of doubt and denial, of coldness and a darkness of the spirit. As King David put it, "You hid Your face, and I was confounded" (*Ps.* 30:8). (Perhaps this is as good a reason as any for the custom of covering up the mirrors in the home of a mourner: it is a symbol of the hiding of the divine face, of *Hester Panim*.)

This spiritual consequence of *Hester Panim* is not one whit less devastating than its physical impact upon man. Indeed, it prevents man from properly interpreting his condition under *Hester Panim*; it confounds his self-understanding. The Besht thus interprets the key verse in Tanakh on *Hester Panim* – "And I will surely hide My face on that day" (*Deut.* 31:18). The double verb is normally interpreted as the intensive form, thus: "surely hide My face." For the Besht, however, a far deeper layer of meaning is uncovered as he takes the double verb quite literally: "And I will hide the hiding of My face from you." The *Hester Panim* itself is in hiding! The obscurity itself is obscured. Man suffers from *Hester Panim* – and he doesn't even know that G-d is turning His face from him. Hence, his physical travail – whether economic or political or medical in nature – leads to a deep questioning of "whether there is anyone out there," whether the G-d who doesn't care really exists. His physical suffering leads to religious morbidity. Suffering on the physical plane leads to existential doubt, and thence to religious denial, to *kefirah*, and from there to the death of the spirit.

R. Norman Lamm, *The Face of God: Thoughts on the Holocaust*, in *Theological and Halakhic Reflections on the Holocaust*, pp. 126-7 (with material from his lecture booklet, YU, 1986)

43. The Holocaust represents the "hiding of God's face" (*hester panim*). It is neither a purposeful act on His part, nor is He bound by human freedom of choice, but rather it is a situation whereby God withdrew His hand because of the sins of Am Yisrael. We may ask why God hid His face, despite the fact that He could have saved us, and the answer (according to this approach) is that since modern secularism broke off all contact with God, as described in Parashat Vayeilekh, this severance became reciprocal. God hid His face as a natural result of our severance of contact with Him – not as a punishment but as a consequence.

R. Aharon Lichtenstein, *The Challenges of the Holocaust*, sicha on 10 Tevet 5746 (1986)¹³

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

44. Far from disregarding the facts of history, the teachers of Israel in the Talmud were the first to speak of God's silence in history. In a discussion of the catastrophe of the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem (*Gittin* 56b), they quote the verse from Psalms (89:9): "Who is a mighty one like unto Thee, O Eternal," attaching to it the midrashic comment of Abba Chanan, who explained it in the following manner: "Who is so mighty and strong (i.e., in self-control) as Thou, able to listen to the tormentings and insults of the evil man (Titus) and remain silent." There was the study house of Rabbi Yishmael, where they quoted another verse of the Bible (Exodus 15:18): "Who is like Thee! O Eternal, among the mighty," but replaced the Hebrew *Elim* by *Ilmim*, in order to make it read: Who is like Thee, O Eternal, among the silent ones! This is no longer a question, as the questions of [the prophets]. It is not formulated as a problem; it is an exclamation.

R. Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith After the Holocaust*, pp. 93-94

45. In *Shir HaShirim*, there is a verse (2:9) which says, מְשַׁגְּלִית מִן־הַחַלְלוֹת מְצִיץ מִן־הַחַרְקִים – "He watches through the windows, He is peeking through the cracks (in the wall)." A certain Chassidic rebbe, in explaining this verse, said that if you sit in a room and somebody looks in from the window, he sees you and you see him. But if you sit in a room and someone peeks through a crack in the wall, he sees you but you do not see him. The rebbe said that the same is true of the Providence which the Jewish people experience. Sometimes Hashem looks in through the window. He watches us, and we see that He is watching us. At other times, we don't think He is watching us. He looks in through the cracks in the wall. But He always watches us.

R. Simcha Wasserman, *Reb Simcha Speaks*, p. 131

46. *Hester Panim*. The model of the hiddenness of God suggests that we should give the theological benefit of the doubt to 'secularists', and that a yeshiva education should seek to show the divine in the hidden, in the natural, and should respect doubt and questions. It is a time to pray out of longing, not out of a false certitude. It suggests that we should suppress the sacramental/"pietistic" approach which sees the death of Israeli children at Maalot [in a 1974 terrorist attack] as punishment for *mezuzot* which are *pasul*.

R. Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, *Orthodox Judaism and the Holocaust*, Gesher, Vol. 7 (1979), pp. 60-62

47. The Talmud [in effect] asks: How do we know God exists if God is hidden? If God is going to exercise self-control and not reveal the divine power, how will humankind know God exists? The answer it gives is: The existence of the people of Israel is the hint of the divine, a suggestion. This people is like a sheep among 70 wolves (i.e., the nations of the world). There must be a hidden force field, as it were, that is protecting them. That is the only hint we have of the presence of God.

R. Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, *The Need to Remember* (1977 lecture), in *Perspectives: On the Holocaust* pp. 12-13

48. Aside from that, sufferings are *hester panim*, concealment of the Divine Face. When a person perceives within his suffering the Hand of God, and His justice and truth, he abolishes the *hester* (concealment). He reveals God even out of the *hester* and *denim* (judgments). Then, as the concealment evaporates, it becomes *chesed* (loving-kindness), which reveals the Divine Light that is the Face of God.

How could we ever have said that the pain concealed God's Face? Not only does God say (*Tehillim* 91:15), "I am in pain with him," but God, blessed by He, endures the brunt of our pain. On the contrary, it is the person who does not accept suffering with acquiescence, God forbid, and thinks that his suffering is unjustified, God forbid, who creates the concealment. It is as if, God forbid, he was doing away with God, as it were.

R. Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, *Esh Kodesh* (Sacred Fire: Torah from the Years of Fury 1939-1942)

49. One could call it the divine dilemma that God's *erekh apayim*, his patiently waiting countenance to some, is, of necessity, identical with his *hester panim*, his hiding of the countenance to others. However, the dilemma does find a resolution in history. If man is to be, God himself must respect his freedom of decision. If man is to act on his own responsibility, without being continually overawed by divine supremacy, God must absent himself from history. But man left to his freedom, his performance in history gives little reassurance that he can survive in freedom. God took a risk with man and he cannot divest himself of responsibility for man. If man is not to perish at the hand of man, if the ultimate destiny of man is not to be left to the chance that man will never make the fatal decision, God must remain present.

The God of history must be absent and present concurrently. He hides his presence. He is present without being indubitably manifest; he is absent without being hopelessly inaccessible. Thus, many find him even in his "absence;" many miss him even in his presence. Because of the necessity of his absence, there is the "Hiding of the Face" and suffering of the innocent; because of the necessity of his presence, evil will not ultimately triumph; because of it, there is hope for man...

Yet He is present in history. He reveals his presence in the survival of his people Israel. Therein lies his awesomeness. God renders himself powerless, as it were, through forbearance and long-suffering, yet he guides. How else could his powerless people have survived! He protects, without manifest power. Because of that, Israel could endure God's long silences without denying him. Because of the survival of Israel, the prophets could question God's justice and yet believe in him. The theology of a God unconvincingly present in history alone might not have sufficed. The dilemma cannot be resolved on the intellectual level alone. And, indeed, neither Jeremiah, nor Habakkuk, nor even Job, were given an intellectually valid answer. The Talmudic conclusion was correctly reached: God was silent. Yet, the dilemma was resolved, not in theory, but, strangely enough, in history itself.

R. Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith After the Holocaust*, p. 107-109

E3] A HALACHIC RESPONSE TO GOD'S INSCRUTABILITY

50. חייב אדם לברך על הרעה כשם שהוא מברך על הטובה שנא' (דברים ויה) וְאֶהְבֶּתְךָ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל-מְאֵדְךָ. בכל לבבך - בשני יצריך ביצר טוב וביצר רע, ובכל נפשך - אפילו הוא נוטל את נפשך, ובכל מאדך - בכל ממונדך. דבר אחר: בכל מאד - בכל מדה ומדה שהוא מודד לך הוי מודה לו במאד מאד.

משנה מסכת ברכות פרק ט משנה ה

The Mishna rules that our obligation to develop exceptional love God requires us to thank Him, irrespective of the lot we experience in life. As such, there is a halachic obligation to bless God even for the suffering that we experience.

51. מאי חייב לברך על הרעה כשם שמברך על הטובה? אילימא כשם שמברך על הטובה 'הטוב והמטיב', כך מברך על הרעה 'הטוב והמטיב'. והתנן - על בשורות טובות אומר הטוב והמטיב, על בשורות רעות אומר ברוך דיין האמת! אמר רבא: לא נצרכה אלא לקבולינהו בשמחה. אמר רב אחא משום רבי לוי: מאי קרא - (תהלים קא:א) חֶסֶד וּמִשְׁפָּט אֲשִׁירָה לְךָ ה' אֲזַמְרָה. אם חסד - אשירה, ואם משפט - אשירה. רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר מהכא - (תהלים נז:א) בְּאֱלֹקִים אֶהְלֵל דְּבַר בְּה' אֶהְלֵל דְּבַר. בה' אהלל דבר - זו מדה טובה, באלהים אהלל דבר - זו מדת פורענות. רבי תנחום אמר מהכא (תהלים קטז:ג) כְּלוֹסִי שְׂנוּעוֹת אֲשָׁא וּבְשֵׁם ה' אֶקְרָא. (תהלים קטז:ג-ד) צָרָה וַיִּגְוֹן אֲמַצְיָא. וּבְשֵׁם ה' אֶקְרָא. ורבנן אמרי מהכא (איוב א:כא) ה' יִתֵּן נֶהַל לְקַח יְהוָה שֵׁם ה' מְבָרָךְ.

ברכות ט

The Gemara clarifies that we cannot of course say 'hatov vehamativ' on suffering, at least in this world. Instead, we bless God for being the Dayan Emet - the true Judge that we trust to have a grand plan. The Amoraim then bring various verses, mostly from Tehillim, which encapsulate our blessing to God in good times and in bad.

52. חייב אדם לברך על הרעה בדעת שלמה ובנפש חפצה, כדרך שמברך בשמחה על הטובה. כי הרעה לעובדי השם היא שמחתם וטובתם. כיון שמקבל מאהבה מה שגזר עליו השם נמצא שבקבלת רעה זו הוא עובד את השם, שהיא שמחה לו.

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים הלכות ברכת הפירות סימן רכב סעיף ג

The Shulchan Aruch rules this requirement - to bless God with a full heart even in times of tragedy c'v.

53. The destruction of the First Temple somehow brought about the end of idolatry as a theological force in the Jewish community, though it would have been easy to see the event as the triumph of idolatry, since the destroyers were pagans. The destruction of the Second Temple led to the writing of the Oral Law - the Mishnah and later the Gemara - and the deepening of commitment to Jewish knowledge and observance, though it could easily have led to capitulation to the Greco-Roman culture of the conquerors. The expulsion from Spain led to the deeper spirituality that came with the popularization of Jewish mysticism and to great codifications of Jewish law. It could easily have led to the acceptance of the more militarily powerful religious cultures of the time, Christianity and Islam. Finally, the Holocaust was followed by the creation of the State of Israel and, hopefully, by a greater awareness of the importance and preciousness of every single Jewish soul.

Contemporary Orthodox Judaism's Response to Modernity, pp. 56-57

54. אמר רבי אהא בר חנינא: לא פְּעוּלְמָה הָיָה הַעוֹלָם הַבָּא. הַעוֹלָם הַזֶּה, עַל בְּשׂוּרוֹת טוֹבוֹת אוֹמְרִי: "בְּרוּךְ הַטוֹב וְהַמְטִיב", וְעַל בְּשׂוּרוֹת רְעוֹת אוֹמְרִי: "בְּרוּךְ דַּיִן הָאֱמֶת". לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, כּוֹלוּ "הַטוֹב וְהַמְטִיב".

פסחים נ.

Nevertheless, there will come a time when we are able to bless 'Hatov vehamativ' even over the tragedies, since we will see with clarity the purpose of our suffering.

55. אמר רב הונא אמר רב משום רבי מאיר וכן תנא משמיה דרבי עקיבא: לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לומר כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד. כי הא דרבי עקיבא דהוה קאזיל באורחא. מטא לההיא מתא, בעא אושפיזא לא יהבי ליה. אמר: כל דעביד רחמנא לטב. אזל ובת בדברא, והוה בהדיה תרנגולא וחמרא ושרגא. אתא זיקא כבייה לשרגא, אתא שונרא אכליה לתרנגולא, אתא אריה אכלא לחמרא. אמר: כל דעביד רחמנא לטב. ביה בליליא אתא גייסא, שבייה למתא. אמר להו: לאו אמרי לכו כל מה שעושה הקדוש ברוך הוא הכל לטובה! ואמר רב הונא אמר רב משום רבי מאיר: לעולם יהיו דבריו של אדם מועטין לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא. שנאמר (קהלת ה"א) **אֶל-תְּבַהֵל עַל-פִּיךָ וְלִבְךָ אֶל-יְמִינְךָ לְהוֹצִיא דָבָר לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם וְאַתָּה עַל-הָאָרֶץ עַל-כֵּן יִהְיוּ דְבָרֶיךָ מְעֻטִּים.**

ברכות ט:

The Gemara continues with the famous story of R. Akiva who suffered a series of misfortunes which eventually saved his life. On each of these he was able to say 'gam zu letova', even though they also ultimate ended in tragedy for others.

- In Part 2 we will examine other types of theodicy that appear in our traditional sources.
- In Part 3 we will look at Anti-theodicies which reject entirely the exercise of trying to justify theologically human suffering.
- Finally, we will look in more detail at Hashgacha Pratit and human free will to try and understand the extent to which human suffering is coming in any sense 'from God'.