

How does the “principle” of a Mitzva await us in the next world; why are we told this; and why recite this each day?

In “Reward & Punishment III”

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**Weekly Parsha**

# Bemidbar

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“Take a census of the entire congregation of Bnai Yisrael according to their families, by the households of their fathers, according to the number of names of each male, taken individually.” (BeMidbar 1:2)

Sefer BeMidbar begins with a census of Bnai Yisrael. Hashem commands Moshe to count the people. The phrase that Hashem uses to describe the counting of the

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## REWARD & PUNISHMENT III:

# THE GOAL OF MITZVAS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Over these past few weeks we have acquainted ourselves with the famous, first mishna in Peyah, worthy of reiteration, as we return to it, attempting to resolve its most primary issues:

*“These are the matters that have no required quantity: Peyah (the corner of the field left for the poor), first fruits, visiting the Temple on the three holidays, kindness to others, and Torah study.*

*These are the matters that man eats the fruits in this world, but the principle awaits him in the World to Come, and these are they: honoring parents, acts of kindness, hosting guests, generating peace among friends, and Torah study outweighs them all.” (Peyah, 1:1)*

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(Bemidbar cont. from pg. 1)

## Weekly Parsha

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nation is "se'uh et rosh" – lift the head – of the entire congregation of Bnai Yisrael. Our Sages ask why this particular phrase is used to describe the process of counting.

Our text of Rashi's commentary does not include any comments on this question. However, Nachmanides quotes an explanation that he attributes to Rashi. According to Nachmanides' version of Rashi, the phrase "lift the head" alludes to the instructions provided to an executioner. The executioner is instructed to lift the head – off of the shoulders – of the criminal. In other words, execute him.

Nachmanides explains that according to Rashi, this phrase – which alludes to execution – is employed as a foreshadowing. Those who were to be counted would ultimately be punished with death. Indeed this foreshadowing was accurate. Those that Moshe counted in this census died during the travels in the wilderness. This was their punishment to refusing to enter the Land of Israel.

Nachmanides asks what prompted Rashi to attribute this forewarning to the phrase "lift the head." What compelled Rashi to explain the phrase in this manner?

**"Count the sons of Leyve according to the households of their fathers, according to their families. Every male one month of age and above you should count of them."** (BeMidbar 3:15)

The shevet of Leyve was not included in the general census of the nation. Instead, Moshe was commanded to take a separate census of this shevet. In this command, Hashem does not use the phrase "lift the head." Instead, Hashem employs the more literal term "count." Why does Hashem use the phrase "lift the head" when commanding Moshe to take a census of the rest of the nation but the term "count" when commanding Moshe to take a census of Leyve?

Nachmanides suggests that Rashi's interpretation is designed to address this question. The shevet of Leyve was not included in the decree upon the generation of the wilderness. The members of the shevet of Leyve did not die in the wilderness. Therefore, when commanding Moshe to count the rest of the nation, Hashem used the phrase "lift the head." This phrase foreshadowed the eventual fate of the generation. However, this phrase is not used in the command to count the members of the shevet of Leyve. They were not destined to be included in the punishment.

Nachmanides rejects Rashi's explanation of the phrase. He points out that there is a second

census taken at the end of Sefer BeMidbar. This census preceded the entry into the Land of Israel. In commanding Moshe to take this census, Hashem again uses the phrase "lift the head." [1] However, in this case there is no foreshadowing attached to the phrase!

Despite this objection Nachmanides does not completely reject Rashi's explanation of the phrase. Instead, he suggests that Rashi's comments are not complete. He suggests the Rashi's comments are based upon a midrash and a study of this midrash will reveal the meaning of Rashi's interpretation.

Like Rashi, the midrash is concerned with the meaning to the phrase "lift the head." The midrash explains that the significance of the phrase can be understood when compared to its use in another context. We all recall Yosef's encounter in prison with Paroh's wine butler and baker. Both were troubled by dreams and asked Yosef to provide interpretations. Yosef told the wine butler that his dream foretold that he would be reappointed to his former position in the royal household. Yosef told him that his head would be lifted and he would be restored to his prior position of prestige. Yosef told the baker that also his head would be lifted. However, in this context Yosef was telling the baker that he would be executed. [2] In speaking to the wine butler and the baker, Yosef resorted to the same terminology. Each would have his head lifted. In reference to the wine butler, this indicated reappointment to a position of honor. In the instance of the baker, the phrase referred to his imminent execution.

The midrash explains that in using the phrase "lift the head," Hashem is telling Moshe that Bnai Yisrael are confronted with to possible destinies. The phrase can be understood as an allusion to the destiny of the wine butler. Like the wine butler, Bnai Yisrael are poised to ascend to greatness. However, the phrase was used by Yosef to also allude to the destruction of the baker. Bnai Yisrael may also face destruction if they fail to follow the will of Hashem. [3]

The explanation of the midrash provides an answer to Nachmanides' objection to Rashi. The phrase "lift the head" consistently implies the possibility of multiple destinies. In our parasha, Hashem is telling Moshe that two possible destinies lie before Bnai Yisrael. They may either rise to greatness or be destroyed. So too, later in Sefer BeMidbar this phrase communicates that two possible destinies lie before the generation that will enter the land. They will either be successful in their conquest and possession of the land or – if they fail to follow Hashem – they too will be destroyed.

Nachmanides' text of Rashi seems to present the content of the midrash in an abbreviated form.

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(Bemidbar cont. from pg. 2)

Rashi is not suggesting that Hashem's command foreshadowed the destruction of the generation he was counting. But Hashem was providing a note of caution. Two possible fates were before the people. Because the people proved to be unworthy to enter the land, this caution turned out to be a foreshadowing. But Rashi is not suggesting that the destiny of the people was predetermined.

In order to more fully understand the midrash's explanation of our pasuk, it is important to consider another question. Why did Yosef use the same figure – the lifting of one's head – to describe restoration of honor and execution?

It seems that the image of lifting a person's head indicates that the person is acknowledged and given special attention. This heightened scrutiny can produce positive or negative results. Paroh would give special attention to both of cases. But once this attention was bestowed, the results would vary. In the case of the wine butler, Paroh would decide that his imprisonment had been a harsh and adequate punishment for his failings. Having served his sentence, Paroh would decide that the wine butler should be reinstated. However when Paroh would reexamined the crimes of the baker, he would come to the opposite conclusion. He would decide that the baker should pay with his life for his crimes.

With this understanding, let us now return to the use of this image in our pasuk. Hashem is telling Moshe that the nation is faced with two possible and opposite destinies. Why are these the only possible destinies? Why is there no option for some other destiny – one that is less than greatness but not as harsh as absolute destruction?

The counting of Bnai Yisrael represents a special acknowledgment of the people. Bnai Yisrael will be appointed to serve as Hashem's nation. This special relationship with Hashem is the source of all of the blessings described in Torah. But with this appointment comes with an expectation. As Hashem's chosen, the head of the nation will be lifted. The behaviors and attitudes of the people will be closely scrutinized and held to a higher standard. Being chosen and special provides rewards but this status brings with it responsibilities and expectations. Hashem is telling Moshe that if these expectations are met, the people will enjoy the blessings associated with their special status as the chosen of Hashem. But if the people's behaviors and expectations cannot stand the careful scrutiny that comes with their elevated status, then the people will face destruction. ■

[1] Sefer BeMidbar 26:2.

[2] Sefer Beresheit 40:1-19.

[3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary, Sefer BeMidbar 1:3.

## Fundamentals

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REWARD & PUNISHMENT III:

## THE GOAL OF MITZVAS

(continued from page 1)

After due reflection, we are confronted with a number of questions:

- 1) What commonality do all these mitzvahs share, to the exclusion of all others?
- 2) What are the Earthly "fruits", and what is the "principle" in the World to Come?
- 3) In what measure does this mishna compare Torah study to the other mentioned mitzvahs, and in what manner does it "outweigh" them?
- 4) Why do we recite this mishna each morning, and at that; why immediately subsequent to our blessings over the Torah, where we mention the concept of learning Torah "lishmah" – for learning's sake with no ulterior motive?
- 5) What primary message does this mishna wish to impart to us, and why is it the very first mishna in the order of agriculture, including gifts to the poor and the priests?

These mitzvahs are readily identified as "between man and man". (The Rabbis state that "acts of kindness" includes all other interpersonal laws.)

The Rabbis further state that the "fruits" – or rather the 'products' of these mitzvahs – are the kind reciprocations we receive from those upon whom we bestow our kindness. This is explained as follows: I experience another human being

going out of his way to make me happy. The response to someone who recognizes me, almost always is my kindness towards him; be it for the selfish motive of fostering further recognition of myself, or out of identification with those who recognize me...or for the right reason: he deserves my kindness regardless of his acts towards me, since God commanded me in kindness. Keep this last idea in mind.

Why must we be told in a mishna that this "produce" of mitzvah – reciprocal kindness – is not the principle, but leaves that principle untouched, or unconsumed? We now arrive at the core of this issue.

### The Goal of Mitzvahs

It is my assessment that this mishna seeks to correct the notion that mitzvahs between man and man, have as their primary objective, an "Earthly harmony". Now, while I do not deny this is "a" goal of these mitzvahs, I feel this unique mishna attempts to mature our evaluation of mitzvahs. The mishna teaches us that the "principle" of these mitzvahs, in fact, awaits us in the World to Come. This means that although we benefit in some manner from fostering harmony between individuals, this is not a mitzvah's ultimate goal. The truth is that even these interpersonal mitzvahs seek to do good for others, only as a means to their perfect Earthly state where they can approach God. The kindness we are commanded to perform is itself, not an end, but to secure a tranquil life for others so they too might reach a love of God. So even these interpersonal mitzvahs target the higher good of the love of God.

### All Good is Eternal by Definition

All God's laws have one objective: man's love of God, not man's love of man. Fostering harmony may be a portion of the mitzvah's good, but God's wish for man is that we enjoy an eternal life attached to Him. Our Earthly stay is but for a few decades, if we are fortunate. Then, in retrospect, our lives are meaningless, as we are gone...unless our Earthly existence services our souls, so that we earn the World to Come. For even a human existence of 1000 years, eventually expires...forever. What ultimate good did these 1000 years serve this person, if the person's soul is no longer existing, due to a corrupt life?

The true good, is what is eternal. For any good that expires, is not absolutely good, but only conditionally good. An example of a true good is "justice". Justice is an attribute of God's nature. Justice is therefore eternal. Justice is a good, because it partakes of God's nature...and God is good. This refers to what is a good in terms of

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“principles” or virtues. How do we measure what is a good for man? It must be that in which affords man an eternal life. When man attaches himself to true Torah values, his soul partakes of the eternal world, and man will then exist eternally in the World to Come. But if man does not partake of God’s will, and lives a hedonistic existence, his soul does not partake of anything eternal, so he dies like a beast.

### The True Purpose: Love of God

Mitzvahs perfect us here, and for the World to Come. Thus, all mitzvahs must have as their primary goal an enduring good, which will apply to the World to Come. Thus, the good of any mitzvah cannot be measured in Earthly terms, but only in as much as the mitzvah brings us to a closer relationship with the Creator, what we experience in the next world. Therefore, the mishna teaches us that we must not view interpersonal mitzvahs as reaching their objective ‘here’, but rather, they reach their objective – their principle – in the next world, when we relate to God alone, and not humans. Some mitzvahs perfect human relationships, but all mitzvahs perfect man’s relationship with God. This is what we mean that the principle awaits us in the World to Come.

Perhaps that is precisely why these few “interpersonal” mitzvahs were chosen...matters we might assume to have as their end, this human harmony. We are therefore taught otherwise: all mitzvahs have as their objective an increased relationship with God, not man. Yes, on Earth we enjoy their “fruits” (interpersonal harmony) but their true objective (principle) is to improve our concept of God, our value of His existence, His kindness, and His wisdom. This is the true benefit God makes available to any man or woman, bestowing eternal reward on those members of mankind who dedicate themselves to seeking out His Torah and His scientific or natural knowledge.

To underscore this very idea, our mishna concludes with the idea, “and Torah study outweighs them all”. The mishna wishes to stress that although kindness is crucial, nonetheless, ideational laws outweigh interpersonal laws, as they are more closely tied to knowledge, and love of God. Torah study is the greatest mitzvah, as it is the only vehicle through which we arrive at greater love of God, as Maimonides teaches in his last chapter of Laws of Repentance (10:6): “In proportion to one’s knowledge is his love of God: if one has little knowledge, he has little love of God; and if he has great knowledge, then he has great love of God.” Therefore our mishna concludes in a high note, as essential as interpersonal laws are, Torah study is of a higher nature, and surpasses all other laws.

### Part of Morning Prayers

We are now ready to answer ‘why’ we recite this mishna each morning, and ‘when’ we recite it.

Each morning we first recite “La-asoke B’Divrei Torah”, the blessing over Torah involvement, just as we bless God prior to all other mitzvahs. This blessing highlights Torah study “lishma”, our yearning to study with no ulterior motive, but to reach the level where we study purely based on genuine interest in God’s wisdom. We then recite “Asher Bachar Banu” (“You have chosen us” to give Your Torah) to express that we did nothing to deserve Torah...it was God’s will to “select us”...again referring to Torah study in its true light, our great fortune having nothing to do with our merit. We are made appreciative of God’s gift.

Then...we recite this mishna. Why?

We do so for this reminder: just as we seek to study Torah as an end, we also remind ourselves to relate to other mitzvahs in this same capacity, i.e., for their true objective of fulfilling God’s will, not simply to foster good human relations, or some other temporary good. Additionally, relating to others in this manner is truly an expression of our love of God, the “principle” of this mitzvah.

Each morning, we are taught to study Torah and perform mitzvahs on their highest plains. God desires the best for us, so the Rabbis in formulating our blessings and prayers, inserted our mishna here, since it too embodies the very idea of worshipping God on the highest level, just as we mention in connection with Torah study lishma.

Reciting this mishna is a daily reminder that our interpersonal relationships are a means to love God, and not for other objectives. And when we relate to people on this level, we are not moved towards revenge, Lashon Hara, or holding grudges, since social approval and value is no longer our focus. Our value matures from a social nature, to a desire to fulfill God’s will.

### Agriculture

This mishna commences the order of laws concerning agricultural gifts to the poor and priests, and for good reason. We are taught a proper philosophical approach when administering our tithes and gifts. Our mishna aims to divert our focus to God, in all laws, including when we relate to others. By elevating our focus from man, to God, in interpersonal laws, specifically when parting with our hard-earned dollars (grain), we better accomplish the mitzvah, avoiding miserly emotions typically encountered when commanded to give our

money to others. Many of us feel, “Why can’t that poor person work hard like me? He is just as healthy.” We also might feel a need to break any identification with the poor; since poverty bothers us...we are threatened by the reality that I too might become impoverished. Socializing with the poor also smacks of an image we wish to avoid...since by nature, we seek the approval of others: “God forbid my friends see me talking to a disheveled poor man on the street”. The Torah, in fact, commands us to commiserate with the poor, not to simply give him money and walk away. Tzedaka seeks to elevate the esteem of the poor, so as to assist his return to dignity: a necessary emotion for reaching independence. Giving the poor a job is the highest level of charity, as they say, “Give a man a fish, he eats for a day; teach him to fish, he eats all his life.”

### Application

It is only with diligent study of the laws and Torah philosophies that we will arrive at the truth, removing emotional biases, and performing the laws because God desires charity, kindness, and justice. We will then become wise to identify false motives, and remove those elements impeding proper performance, as God desires. It matters none what our friends say, if we are found socializing with the poorly dressed street people. We are not given life to waste it seeking human applause. We answer to God in the end, not to man.

It is amazing how much of our lives we spend looking over our shoulders for human approval; how much we miss in life, from the fear that other people might talk. Insecurity also expresses itself in the religious sphere, as we mentioned last week the thousands who trekked to Meron based on the lies of religious Jews guaranteeing fertility, wealth and health...in exchange for their money. So many Jews blindly accepted the masses, even religious masses, despite their Torah violations.

Ultimately, we each must respond to God when we die. “Have we followed His Torah? Did we follow what was popular among Jews, or what is Torah-based and true to our minds? Are we pushing off Torah study in place of fancier homes and cars? Did we try to arrive at knowledge that meant something to us, or was simple rote activity the way we observed Shabbos and mitzvahs?” I don’t believe God will accept the defense of ignorance, when He gave each of us intelligence for the sole purpose of using it.

Are we simply living for the approval of others, or to arrive at real knowledge of God and His will? Only you can answer that question, and God will surely ask it. ■

## Letters



# Letters

*from our*

# READERS



## Letters

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*"The only poor question is the one not asked."*

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## A Word on Words

**Reader:** Dear Rabbi Ben-Chaim,

I read with interest your reader's (David and Fred) letters and your response to the question of the line in the Unesana Tokkef, which states "U'Teshuva, U'Tefillah, U'Tzedakah Maavirin Et Roah Hagezeira". Based on the translation of: repentance, prayer and charity avert the evil decree, your readers wonder how a mitzvah can cancel an evil decree. I believe the answer you give is excellent but I think some points need to be emphasized more.

When looking at this line from the prayer service, we must make sure we have the correct translation of the line and the proper definitions of the words. Most of us are comfortable with the translation given in the Artsroll siddur, and we neglect to ask ourselves if this is indeed the correct meaning of the Hebrew words. Your article makes reference that Tefillah means to "Judge oneself" and that Tzedakah means Justice. We must drive home the fact that Tefillah does not mean prayer. Prayer means "to ask" as in the old English "I pray thee?" Prayer is just a small portion of our Tefillah; it is only the middle 13 blessings of the Shemoneh Esrei. Tzedakah does not mean charity. As the posuk says "Tzedek, Tzedek Tirdof. Justice, Justice shall you pursue". Maavirin comes from the shorsh av'r which means to pass over. Lastly Roah Hegezeira means the evil portion of the decree. We now have a totally different sentence, it reads like this "Repentance, introspection and justice passes over (or lessens) the evilness of the decree". The decree still stands, we are not removed from the corrective action that is necessary, but the harshness of it is lessened. In addition, there are no mitzvot mentioned in this sentence; just three key ideas that keep man on the correct path. When we do wrong, corrective action must be taken. The change we make in ourselves through introspection, repentance and following a Just path, will decrease the harshness of the decree.

Thank you, *Mark Roth*

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** Mark, you are suggesting the punitive decree remains, but the degree of evil is passed over. Practically, and metaphysically, what does that mean?

Thank you Mark. ■

## Quite Quiet

**Reader:** It seems to me that in Rav Chait's essay "Torah from Sinai" there is a jump from the logic of conspiracy, which applies it outside of its purview. It is reasonable that generation A would not conspire to fabricate or keep something quiet from generation B because that would require sharing the same motivation to deceive, but that is not the same thing as saying that generation B can't be convinced of accepting that generation A witnessed something they in fact did not. The logic of conspiracy isn't a factor, as no masses are conspiring – Generation A isn't lying, hiding or fabricating anything as a group. Instead some third party is convincing generation B to accept something false, and a generation of people accepting something false is not too hard to believe (for arguments sake, let's say Jesus rising from the dead). What is different in this case?

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** We do not deny that masses can "believe" an event. But it is impossible that people will collectively proliferate a lie. Therefore, no event will ever arise as you suggest, that there will be any transmission in which listeners will blindly accept the transmission. The transmission will never take place due to the lack of a common motive to fabricate.

**Reader:** I am not saying there isn't an answer, but I am not satisfied as of now with saying that it implies a mass silence took place, at most it would imply that people can be convinced of a mass silence and that requires a whole different explanation from the improbability of a shared motivation to deceive. Rav Chait wrote "If someone were to tell us that an atomic bomb was detonated over New York City fifty years ago, we would not accept it as true because we would assume that we would have certainly heard about it, had it actually occurred." This is reasonable – but why? There has to be a more thorough explanation to accept that people can't be convinced despite not having heard of it before from their parents. What is that explanation?

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** "Mass silence is impossible" is based on two human emotions:

1) Social: Man's design includes powerful emotions, and one of our strongest emotions is our social need; expressed primarily through discussion.

2) Immortality: Our emotions are greatly effected concerning death, since we fear that unknown, because we view lifeless bodies with

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morbidity, and because we know only this life.

Put these two together, and we find a volatile mixture, impossible to extinguish: emotionally impacting events like bombings are irresistible topics of discussions since our social needs demand we talk with others. This explains all other events that impact our emotions...including Sinai. There too we read the Jews feared for their lives upon hearing God's created voice. Had Sinai not taken place, the Jews would be in possession of their "true" history of that era. But the evident silence regarding any other Jewish history proves Sinai is incontrovertible truth.

This principle also refutes the claims of other religions of miracles or divine events: had those purported events transpired as they claim, mass silence would not be an option...yet, mass silence exists concerning masses of eye witnesses in connection with Jesus' miracles, Mohammed's, and all others. The religions are quite quiet.

**Reader:** Does the source of the fabrication have to be a mass of people? I think everyone is in agreement that such mass fabrications are impossible, and it is only possible for a small group or individual to be the source of the fabrication. It was individual charismatic figures like Paul that convinced many people about Jesus' resurrection. I accept that Generation A could not have fabricated a lie about what they witnessed. I am unclear as to why a fabrication could not have been made ABOUT Generation A by a third party, Paul-like figure, and have been "sold" to Generation B? Is there some psychological/sociological factor at play that makes this impossible?

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** Neither Paul or any other person ever convinced people that masses attended any event. Paul convinced others to "believe" in the event, not that there were masses, or that their ancestors or parents had a history different than what they knew. He did not fabricate stories that precluded accepted history. Rather, he described events that could be accepted by those seeking miraculous meaning in life embodied in heroic figures, while not fabricating histories that were easily refuted.

Belief can be sold...but not events contradicting known history. No revisionist is that foolish.

**Reader:** A very interesting answer!

In truth, this just awakens even more new questions about this method of approaching history. Nevertheless, I still must reassert my earlier line of questioning. You have partially

answered my question by giving me the principle you see at work in historical methodology – just as we have principle 1) that "a mass conspiracy is impossible", so too we have the historical method principle 2) that "new histories that conflict with acquired histories will not be accepted by a society" But with principle 1 – the mass conspiracy – I can accept it because I have been provided with a strong basis to do so, namely the fact that a mass of people cannot share the same motivation. What grounds do I have to accept principle 2 – that societies will not accept the validity of events that conflict with their accepted histories? One answer you have already given is the reality on the ground that apparently no revisionist is foolish enough to have tried it. Assuming, for now, that your information on the habits of revisionists is correct, there is the "statistical" weight of your argument - we never see people accepting "new conflicting histories". Nevertheless, it doesn't explain how or why this historical rule works. What is the basis of this "loyalty" that makes it so strong as to be impenetrable by a charismatic revisionist? "Mass Conspiracy" has the motivation factor. What basis does this "loyalty to history" have, and why is it so strong?

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:**

You misunderstand me. When I say "No revisionist ever succeeded" it is not a statistical argument, leaving room for a future success. The argument is that he cannot possibly be accepted, since people will not abandon what their minds know occurred. For example, no American will ever deny 9/11, regardless of the charisma of any revisionist. The principle that governs this as an eternal truth is the unchanging human nature that masses will not lie: not to others, or to themselves. ■

Versus Verses

**Aaron:** I have been enjoying the evolution of this discussion on God's oneness and thought I'd make a comment.

I noticed that only once was the verse "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is One" mentioned, and it was very summarily disregarded as lacking deep insight into the topic.

On the contrary, this verse is the Scriptural statement of God's Oneness, in all its unfathomable dimensions, including indivisibility. As Maimonides states many times, the Torah in its perfection and the Sages in their wisdom are capable of expressing the greatest depths of an area of knowledge in the most incredibly succinct and precise phraseology.

The search for detailed philosophical proofs in Scripture of each element of an idea, such as "divisibility" in the realm of God's Oneness, is in error. This is the reason that Maimonides so many times (in the Guide, in the introduction to Avos [Shemoneh Perakim] and elsewhere) directs the reader to Aristotle's Metaphysics

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## Letters

for the lengthy details of the proof or provides his own proofs. The Torah simply states the truth that God has revealed to mankind. If a person studies and acquires knowledge, he will then see that every facet of the truth is contained in the Torah's and the Sages' briefest words.

Indivisibility is a natural truth that will result from any wise person's study into the idea of true Oneness, the positive nature of which we are of course unable to comprehend. When the verse states "...the Lord is One," it is making the only statement that can be made about God's Oneness in the human framework, namely that as hard as we try, all we will ultimately be able to say is that God is unlike any other "existence" and that all we can use are the most imprecise terms. When this idea is real to a person, he or she will no longer look to the verses for philosophical proofs. (As an aside: this also addresses the question that someone raised of Maimonides seeming to have taken his own track in presenting proofs that are not "verified" by Scripture.) ■

## "In" Possibilities? Impossibilities.

**Aaron:** If we are part infinite, then 'that part of us takes up no physical space'. It is not corporeal. HaShem is not finite and also takes up no physical space. Thus we can see that HaShem logically could be really "inside" of us insofar as we are infinite beings.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** You cannot use the term "inside" to describe a non-physical existence like God. Your assumption that He is inside man is impossible.

**Aaron:** The essential question to ask is why would the Torah want us to think that human beings are ethereal, and thus really have HaShem, "inside" us?

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** The Torah does nothing of the sort, and in fact, numerous verses attempt to move man away from any physical idea of God. This was Maimonides' praise of Unkelos, that he translated all possible instances of God's anthropomorphisms metaphorically.

**Aaron:** I completely agree with you. And because of the lack of terms I am forced to use the term "inside." There is no spatiality, and insofar as there is no spatiality, of course HaShem cannot be "inside" of a human being. For a lack of better words I used the term "inside." If you can think of something better please tell me. The Torah uses the anthropomorphisms for a reason. Sometimes they are the best way to describe certain ideas.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** Aaron, the Rabbis coined a phrase, "Had the Torah not said it, it would be impossible to state". This means we are licensed to discuss only those matters, which Torah discusses. For example, since the Torah said, "God was angered", we can discuss what this truth is of this "emotional description", although God is devoid of his own creations, i.e., emotions. How then, do we understand this? It means that God disapproves; just as man's anger displays 'his' disapproval. "God smelled the pleasant fragrance" (of sacrifice) means God approved of man's act of sacrificing a beast in his own stead, to show remorse, or thanks. However, God never said in His Torah, "I am hungry". This is because hunger has no other understanding outside the biological meaning. Therefore, it would be heretic to state, "God is hungry".

Similarly, God never licensed a prophet to write of Himself, "I am inside man", for this too carries a heretic meaning. So you too Aaron must mature your thinking to a true understanding that "inside" cannot apply to God. What you are doing currently, is forcing your faulty thinking. Instead, do not create statements that the Torah never licensed, rather, claim ignorance, if you cannot understand this idea at present. In fact, the Torah says, "God is the place (makome) of the universe, and the universe is not God's place". This statement corrects this very false notion that God exists geographically: in fact, He is the "place" (the enabler) of the universe. Meaning, without God, the universe could not exist.

The closest the Torah comes is "And build for Me a temple, and I will dwell amongst you." Not "inside you" but "amongst" you...meaning, He offers His providence, and not that He occupies space.

"Had the Torah not said it, it would be impossible to state". The Torah never said God is "inside". Therefore, we cannot use that term. ■



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# the Book of Job

## PART XI RELIGIOSITY

### Chapter 29

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

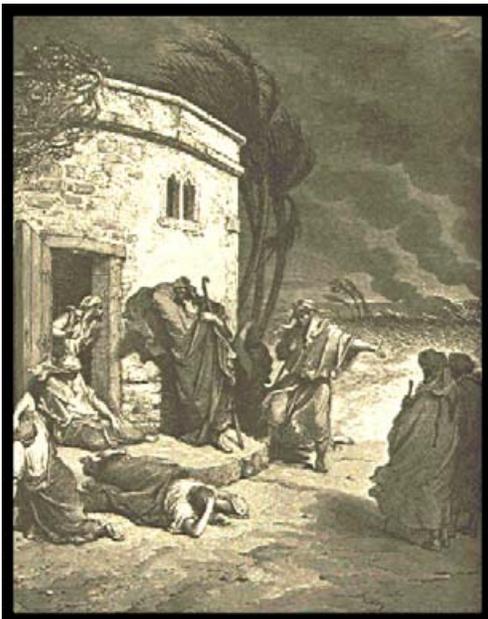
Transcribed by students

*"1. Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, 2. Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; 3. When His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; 4. As I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle."*

Job now reflects on his ignorant state, as he thought, "God walked with me". Job says he remembers his joy in this thought. This joy was his sensing his religiosity.

*"He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes."* (30:19)

How could Job entertain the idea of his being "cast into the mire" if Job also maintained Aristotle's opinion that there is no Divine Providence? With this view of being "cast" by God, Job contradicts his position that man receives Divine Providence. However, we may suggest two answers: 1) God did not cast him directly, or, 2) within some system of God's creation, man may fall into a "bad lot."



### Chapter 31

Job discusses sinning with eyes, followed by sinning in action, viz., "laid wait at my neighbor's door." (31:9) Job was describing the eyes and heart: first, the eyes see, and then the heart desires. Job describes two matters: 1) he did not follow his eyes to fall prey to his emotions, and 2) even if the emotions got the better of him, he did not succumb and sin. With his words, he describes the two pitfalls towards sin. The former is following desires before emotional involvement, and the latter is after the emotions grip the person.

Job continues to describe the emotions, to which he did not fall prey. In verse 13, Job describes how he never looked down upon a servant based on egoistic drives sourced in his relatively higher position. Why does Job state the words, "manservant and maidservant when they contended with me"? A manservant denotes the plain idea of "looking 'down upon'", while the second part deals with the idea of feeling that he could use his position as "master" to mistreat his maidservant. In verse 15 Job explains why he should not feel any more important: both he and the servants were 'made in the belly' alike. Thus, they are the same and the feeling of importance due to a situation, did not have a hold upon him. In verse 14, Job states, "he did not make gold his hope." He never felt any different due to the wealth that he had. Verse 29, he felt no joy in seeing his enemy's fall. He never succumbed to base emotions. Verse 34, no amount of pressure could cause him to deviate from his values.

Job ends his words here, and states that if a man totally righteous like he could be subject to so much evil, this refutes God's Providence.

The story of Job to this point, as an account of someone who lived his best, according to Halacha and philosophy, and yet, very terrible tidings befell him. This is to say that this could happen to anyone even though he tries his best to keep Judaism. How is this possible that one can do everything in his power to live the correct life and yet the system of God does not work for him? ■

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