

SUFFERING:

A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

Prepared by Ner Le'Elef

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CHAPTER A: JUDAISM'S EXCEPTIONAL SENSITIVITY TO SUFFERING

- i- Difference between relating to our own suffering as opposed to relating to others'**
- ii- Historical Jewish sensitivity to pain**
- iii- Degrees of Suffering**

CHAPTER A: JUDAISM'S EXCEPTIONAL SENSITIVITY TO SUFFERING

Section I of this book deals with our responses to the suffering of others. For responses to our own suffering, see **Chapter F - Responses**. When dealing with our own pain our job is to understand its causes and, based on that understanding, maximize the growth opportunities involved. With regard to the pain of others, however, our job is to be *נושא בעול* with the one who is suffering. Our relationship with the other person may lend itself to exploring the reasons for their pain as well as to discussing with them how they can grow from the experience, but that, too, comes from the attempt to relieve the pain by making it meaningful. When suffering takes over a person it affects all areas of his life.¹ The job we have as Jews is to try and remove the suffering or discomfort of others.

Judaism is sensitive to any pain: philosophically, there is no difference between a stubbed toe and great suffering.² Historically, the Jewish nation is very sensitive to the pain of others. "One of the defining characteristics of the Jewish people is that they are merciful and take pity on the suffering. ... This concern with the oppressed remains an enduring legacy of Egypt where we were the downtrodden and abused. No matter how assimilated a Jew becomes, as long as he still identifies himself as a Jew he is likely to be found siding with the oppressed. Jews were the pioneers in the Civil Rights Movement ... and it sometimes seems that being Jewish is a prerequisite for working for the American Civil Liberties Union. ... Much of this idealism is misplaced, but the concern for society's least fortunate is nevertheless a legacy from Egypt³."

¹ ביצה לב:

ג' חיייה אינם חיים... ומי שיסורין מושלם בגופו

² ערבין פרק ג טז:

עד היכן תבליית יסורין אמר רבי אלעזר בל שארג לו בגד ללבוש ואין מתקבל עליו ... אפילו נתרבוט למזג בחמין ומזג לו בצונן... הושיט ידו לביס ליטול שלש ועלו בידו שתים

³ R. Yissocher Frand, *In Print* pg. 228.

RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Bo: At the beginning of the book of Shmos, the Torah mentions an "attribute of Moshe Rabbeinu, which, in part, qualified him to be the leader of the Jewish people. "And Moshe [grew up, and he went out amongst his brethren and he saw their suffering" [Shmos 2:11

שמות בביא:

ויהי בימים ההם ויגדל משה ויצא אל אחיו וירא בשבלתם וירא איש מצרי מכה איש עברי מאחיו:

The Medrash comments that Moshe saw their suffering and cried: "How my heart goes out for your suffering! If only I could die for you, to spare you your suffering." The Medrash says that Moshe removed his princely garments and went out into the field to try to help his brethren make the bricks and mortar, just so that he could be a part of their pain. G-d, according to Medrash, said to him: "You left your comforts to participate in the pain of Israel as an equal, I will leave the company of the Higher Ones so that I may speak with you."

This Medrash says that Moshe merited communicating with the Divine Presence of G-d because he made himself a partner to and physically participated in the pain of Israel. Moshe was unable to stand idly by in the palace while his brethren were suffering. He felt the urge and the need to join them.

Rashi says on the words "And he saw their suffering", that Moshe did not merely see their suffering and then continue his daily business. Moshe "put his eyes and his heart to the matter" - he would constantly envision his brethren's suffering in his mind. When one can constantly visualize such suffering, he does not sit idly by; he becomes an active participant. This was Moshe's great attribute - the ability to psychologically participate with his brethren in the time of their suffering.

The Alter of Kelm (1824-1898) says that there is an even greater insight here. An earlier verse says that "G-d saw, and G-d knew" [Shmos 2:25].

"One dares not be silent in the face of someone else's suffering. ...Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz z"l used to say that this is the message of *Sefer Iyov*. One of the three advisors of Paroh, Iyov kept silent in the face of the decree that all baby boys be thrown in the river.... his silence was unacceptable. When something hurts, one cries out; when there is pain, one cannot keep quiet. It was only after Iyov experienced his own *yisurim* (suffering), and cried out to Hashem as a consequence, that he learned this lesson. ... [The Rambam states in Hilchos Taanis that] *It is a mitzvat aseh [positive commandment] of the Torah to cry out and blow the chatzotzrot [trumpets] for every trouble that befalls the community ... whether drought, epidemic, locusts or the like—cry out, and blow! And this is one of the paths of teshuvah; because if people cry out and blow when a calamity happens, everyone will know that it is because of their evil deeds that evil has befallen them ... and this will cause the lifting of the calamity from them. But if they do not cry out and blow, and say that "this happened to us because it is simply how the world functions, and the calamity is simply a random event," this is a cruel response, which will cause them to carry on in their evil ways, so that the first trouble will lead to further troubles.*"¹

שמות ב' ב'ה: וירא אלהים את בני ישראל וידע אלהים

And there Rashi uses virtually the same expression as he did concerning Moshe: "G-d placed his eye upon them and did not remove his heart from them."

The Alter of Kelm explains that G-d was inspired - as it were - by the actions of Moshe. It was Moshe's own similar actions that triggered G-d's looking at and taking to heart, so to speak, the troubles of the Jewish people.

In Kabbalah there is a concept called "inspiration from Above" and there is another concept called "inspiration from below". "Inspiration from below" means that sometimes we, down here, take an action that prompts G-d above to react. Moshe's personal, emotional participation in the pain of Israel was an act of "inspiration from below" which caused G-d to respond from Heaven to the point that G-d too now participated emotionally in the suffering of the Jewish people.

This teaching of the Alter from Kelm is saying that if we can participate and feel pain when the Jewish people are in a time of trouble, that elicits a similar response from G-d. When one Jew worries about another - when he cannot sleep well because another Jew is not sleeping well - then that prompts G-d to take note.

The pasuk [verse] tells us in Parshas Va'Era [6:14] "These are the heads of the houses of their patriarchs" (and the pasuk then lists the descendants of Reuven). The Torah uses the same expression by the tribe of Shimon. But when it reaches Levi, the Torah merely says, "These are names of the sons of Levi". The Shlo"h HaKadosh (1560-1630) explains that there was something special about the names of the children of Levi. Levi felt bad that he was not part of the enslavement (the Tribe of Levi, as a whole, was excused from slavery). The Tribe could not live with the idea that their lives should go on normally while their brethren were experiencing a time of trouble. Therefore Levi gave each of his sons names that impressed upon them the idea that they were, in fact, in exile. Gershom - I was a stranger (Ger) there (Sham) in a foreign land. Kehas - Their teeth were blackened and knocked out (Keehu Shenaihem). Merari - Because everyone has it so bitter (Merirus).

Levi felt the responsibility to participate in the larger trouble confronting Israel. He felt the need to participate. Life cannot go on as usual when the Jewish people are experiencing a time of trouble.

During World War I, the Chofetz Chaim's (1838-1933) wife woke up in the middle of the night to find her husband not in his bed. She went looking for him and found him sleeping on a bench. She asked for an explanation. He responded: "The Jewish people are in the middle of a war. There are people who have lost their houses. Whole communities have been dispersed. There are many Jews out there tonight who do not have beds. How can I sleep in my own bed under such circumstances?" RavFrاند, Copyright © 2001 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.

¹Reflections on the Tsunami, R' Beryl Berkovits: Jewish Action, Summer 2005

"If there are ranks in suffering, Israel takes precedence. If the duration of sorrows and challenges into which they are born ennoble, the Jews are among the aristocracy of every land. If a literature is called rich which contains a tragedy, what shall we say to a national tragedy lasting for fifteen hundred years? In poems are actors also the heroes?"¹

"One human tragedy is not as heartbreaking as a tragedy multiplied a million-fold. A man who murders one person is not as guilty as a mass murderer ... but justice and injustice, guilt and innocence, are matters of degree only for man ... an absolute G-d cannot be a tiny bit unjust ... Once the questioning of G-d over the Holocaust is motivated by the vastness of the catastrophe, the questioning itself becomes ethically questionable. It is of course more human to query G-d about the suffering of the many rather than the few, but it is not more humane... To suggest that one could put up with less evil and less injustice, but not with so much, is cruelly unethical. Indeed, the Holocaust was only possible because man was willing to tolerate less than a Holocaust. ... The question is not why the Holocaust, but why a world in which any amount of suffering is extant."²

How to Respond to Large-Scale Tragedies in the non-Jewish Population

A tragedy multiplied to large scale is coming from a deeper Hanhaga beyond שֶׁכֶר שֶׁכֶר וְעוֹנֶשׁ שֶׁכֶר וְעוֹנֶשׁ. It is a basic belief that G-d wants the world to exist, so an event of this magnitude touches on a deep point.

Furthermore, non-Jews do not have the same ability to do Teshuva as Jews do, but when dealing with a huge tragedy (the tsunami, for example) it touches on this deep Hanhaga and therefore they do, indeed, have the ability to do Teshuva (as we see with Ninve)⁴.

When we see such a catastrophe we react with Emunah first: we relate to this as an expression of G-d's actions in this world. We can't possibly react with נִשְׂאָה בְּעוֹל עִם חֲבִירוֹ first, as a mass tragedy is so tremendously huge. We can't relate to the personal loss of all the families torn apart by 100,000 + people dying. The only way to relate is with Emuna first (i.e. seeing it as touching on this deep Hanhaga of G-d). This reaction with Emuna leads to a quality of נִשְׂאָה בְּעוֹל עִם חֲבִירוֹ, as G-d is in pain when catastrophes happen in this world.⁵ Relating to this צֶעַר is the entrance to the נִשְׂעָה בְּעוֹל in this situation; נִשְׂאָה בְּעוֹל comes from realizing that it is "My creations" that are dying.⁶

¹Albert Friedlander in Suffering: A Jewish View referring to the Synagogal Poetry of the Middle Ages.

²Eliezer Berkowitz, The Hiding G-d of History

³Tur at the beginning of Hilchos Rosh Hashana, Rabbi Leuchter

⁴Maharam Mipanos Asarah Maamaros, Rabbi Reuven Leuchter

⁵Nefesh HaChaim

⁶Rav Leuchter

CHAPTER B: DEFINITION & LIMITATIONS

- i- Beyond human understanding**
- ii- Definition**
- iii- All great things acquired with difficulty**
- iv- These values higher than happiness**
- v- A function of this world's incompleteness**
- vi- צדיק ורע לו**
 - a- Incomplete צדיקים/רשעים**
 - b- תיקון העולם**
 - c- צדיקים are held to a higher standard**
 - d- Complete צדיקים**
- vii- רשע וטוב לו**
 - a- The רשע שאינו גמור receives his שכר in this world**
 - b- Even if the רשע has not yet done any good deeds, he may yet do תשובה and is sustained toward that eventuality**
 - c- Even if he will not actually do תשובה he may yet do מצוות and then receive his reward in this world**
 - d- Even if he himself will not do good deeds, he may be destined to produce righteous children**
 - e- It may be טוב לו because he had a righteous ancestor**
 - f- As a test of faith of those who see his success**

CHAPTER B: DEFINITION & LIMITATIONS

Suffering is beyond human understanding. It exists only as a means, not as an end. The ultimate state of man in the World to Come is to be in a state of true spiritual happiness, 'להתענג על ד', without any pain or suffering. Therefore, as an end in and of itself, suffering is akin to evil and both will ultimately have their demise. Suffering is only positive as a means, as a way of achieving higher spirituality, and as such, because it does not have any intrinsic reality it is so hard to understand. Yet, even as a means it is difficult to understand and know why השם uses one means rather than another. It is also difficult to understand what each specific suffering is coming to correct and why it must be in that form.

Moshe Rabbeinu requested⁶ that G-d show him His ways¹. Moshe asked why it is that some righteous men prosper and others are in adversity, and some wicked men prosper while others are in adversity. G-d replied: the righteous man who prospers is the righteous man the son of a righteous man; the righteous man who is in adversity is a righteous man the son of a wicked man. The wicked man who prospers is a wicked man son of a righteous man; the wicked man who is in adversity is a wicked man son of a wicked man. Although G-d does not punish a son for the sins of his fathers, this is only true if the son does not continue in the bad ways of his fathers. Rabbi Meir, however, is of the opinion that G-d did not give Moshe an answer to the question of צדיק ורע לו, as it says: and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, although he may not deserve it, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy, although he may not deserve it.²

Rav Hirsch explains that צדיק ורע לו, רשע וטוב לו is no real מחלוקת. From a human standpoint, there is no answer; only from השם's standpoint, which is above time, is there an answer. השם says: There is a place near Me - only if you could see everything from my perspective, above time, could you understand.³

Some understanding of G-d's ways may be possible, however. The Chasam Sofer quotes the פסוק "My back you will see" and explains that sometimes we can discern השם's ways in retrospect. But, "My face may not be seen" as the events are unfolding.⁴ Rabbi Frand brings the well-known parable of a needlepoint that is amazing in its intricacy and strikingly beautiful. If one looks at the needlepoint from the opposite side, he says, all one sees is an unsightly, apparently random, mass of threads knotted and crossed. The reverse side is without apparent logic or beauty. The perspective from which we ask our questions is comparable to the one who judges the needlepoint from the reverse side. To ask why this one string is knotted and another not is pointless unless we can see the grand design on the other side into which each string fits.⁵

¹ברבות ז.

וא"ר יוחנן משום ר' יוסי שלשה דברים בקש משה לפני קב"ה ונתן לו ... בקש להודיעו דרבי'ו ... ונתן לו שנא' הודיעני נא את דרביך אמר לפניו רבש"ע מפני מה יש צדיק וטוב לו ויש צדיק ורע לו ... ופליגא דר' מאיר דא"ר מאיר שתיים נתן לו ואחת לא נתן לו

²Shemos 33:19

³ברבות סב. קבלה דיסורי שתיקותא (וידום אהרון)

אבות פ"ד מש' י"ט: רבי ינאי אומר אין בידינו לא משלוות הרשעים ואף לא מיסורי הצדיקים מהר"ל נצח ישראל פ"ח: וצומק הדין ... (הוא) מחוייב ומוברח (לבן) מבוסה מן בעי אדם, במה שהאדם גשמי ושבלו אינו שבל גמור לא יוכל לעמוד על השכל המחוייב שהוא הדין

⁴in Rabbi Frand pg. 229

⁵Rabbi Frand, pg. 230

During ימות המשיח we will be able to understand how everything, including suffering, was necessary to bring the world to completion¹. Even then, however, we will not fully understand all the reasons nor will we grasp the full depth of those reasons.² Limitations in our understanding of G-d's ways are intrinsic rather than technical. G-d is so exalted and elevated that surely we cannot reach a level of understanding His actions³. Even איוב, at the end his exhaustive inquiry into suffering, stated that he couldn't fathom nor know G-d's הנהגות.⁴ Rabbeinu Yonah on Avos comments that when a רשע receives good in this world and a צדיק has hardships, "there really is a question involved here but we cannot grasp the understanding of such a concept".⁵

Today, when science has shown that even with respect to the physical world we cannot know, even in principle, the exact parameters of any situation, we can more easily understand the limitations of our ability to understand the ultimate intentions behind the actions of the Almighty.

רמב"ן⁶ says that this is, indeed, what השם was trying to show איוב, explaining that one who does not know the mysteries of all creatures and creation should realize that G-d's ways and judgments are hidden to man as well.⁷

It is beyond human means to have a total picture, as we would need a picture of the universe across space, time and through its ultimate spiritual depth to understand how each individual fits in. This matter can be likened to a guest who visited a particular shul, and noticed that the רביעי from the East, שלישי from the South of the shul, לוי from the West, and חמישי from the North. He asked why they did things that way. One insightful member of the community replied, "You, sir, have come to the shul for one

¹ דעת ותבונת ש נד:

... בי יודיע דרביו הקב"ה לעתיד לבא לעיני כל ישראל, איך אפילו התובחות והיסורים לא היו אלא הזמנות לטובה, והבנה ממשי לברכה

² שם: והקטן שבכל מעשיו יש בו ב"ב מן החכמה הרבה והעמוקה, שא"א לרדת לעמקה לעולם (בי כל מה ששיג האדם אפילו ממעשי הבורא אינו אלא במיפה מן הים הגדול) ... אך לעתיד לבא זה לפחות נראה ונשיג, איך היו בולם משיבות ותחבולותיו ית' עמוקות להטיב לנו באחריתו.

See Chapter E i - Complexity, below

³The following until the end of i is all taken from the שפר השואה by רב יואל שוורץ and רב יצחק גולדשטיין (פרק and רב יואל שוורץ by שפר השואה Section א):

לקונו מזהר"ן תניינא ס"ב: אדרבה כך ראוי להיות, שמה"י"ה לו קושיות על השי"ת, וכן נאה ויפה לו לפי גדלותו ורוממותו, שהוא מרומם מאד מדעתו, בודאי שא"א שגבין ונשיג בשכלנו הנהגתו ויתברך, ועל כן בהכרח שיהיו עליו קושיות. ואם היתה הנהגתו כפי חוב דעתו, א"ב היתה דעתו בדעתו.

⁴

⁵ איוב מב:ג

לכן הגדתי ולא אבין, נפלאות ממנו ולא אדע

⁶ אבות ד' טו:

ר' ינאי אומר אין בידע לא משלוות הרשעים ואף לא מייסורי צדיקים
ר' יונה: ... שאנו יודעים באמת שיש מענה לדבר ואין אנו משיגים לדעת אותה

⁷ שער הגמול

⁷ שלא ידע סודות הארץ והשמים והבהמות והעופות והים ובריותיו, והבלל - מעשה בראשית, ורצון לומר, בי מי שלא ידע ובלל אלה, ... למה לא יחשוב ובלל שמשפטי האלוקים בבני אדם נעלמים ...

שבת and you want to understand the סדר עליות of the shul. If you would come every week you would see that the גבאי rotates the עליות: one week כהן is from the South, one week from the East, etc. and so too with the other עליות. We, too, cannot expect to understand all that occurs in this world from our limited perspective.¹

To quote the Chazon Ish: *"It is true that we are too small and puny to understand the ways of G-d, but we must recognize that even history's most incomprehensible and barbaric eras are part of the Divine Plan. Could we but see the complete design, we would understand each of its parts."*²

Of those who questioned G-d's wisdom in allowing the horrible death of Rebbe Akiva, G-d answered, "Be quiet, for if not I will return the world to its original state of תהו." This was not a threat of punishment. Rather, G-d was saying that the only way he could show why Rabbi Akiva died (and how and when he did) was by undoing the entire fabric of the world and showing how G-d put it together.

This can be likened to a tailor who was once asked by a king to make him a special garment. The tailor took 5 yards of the finest silk and made the king the most beautiful suit. The king was extremely happy with it. Someone came to the king and accused the tailor of stealing, stating that it only took 4 yards of material to make a suit in that style. The king demanded of the tailor that he either prove that he used all five yards of material in the suit or face the death penalty. The tailor said to the king, "I will prove it to you, but it is going to cost you the suit." Upon the agreement of the king, the tailor began to cut up and lay out the suit on a long table. Along the way, he showed the king how he had used four layers in places where only two were normally used, and continued to unravel the suit he was just 2 inches short of 5 yards. The tailor then took the cuffs of the pants, opened them, and laid them out in those two inches³.

Similarly, G-d would have to undo the very fabric of the universe for us to understand why certain things happen in this world.

A story is told of a student who ran to his Rabbi whenever he had troubles. Each time the Rabbi prayed for him, the afflictions went away. Suddenly the Rabbi died and the student was left in grief. The first time the student found himself in a difficult situation, he had no one to turn to, so he went to his Rabbi's grave. He begged the Rabbi to intervene on his behalf in front of the Heavenly court. However, this time his problems were not alleviated. A while later, the Rabbi came to his student in a dream and explained why he had not interceded on his behalf. "When I was alive, I heard about your troubles and felt terrible for you. So I prayed that they should be removed. But now that I am here in Heaven, I see that what we view as troubles on earth are really just the opposite and I will no longer pray for their removal. It is not that I no longer love you, but rather I now see things from a different point." This story illustrates that only in hindsight do we realize the purpose of the events in our lives⁴.

¹The חפץ חיים on the 136-137 (תורה)

²Z. Hauptman, Moreshet Essay

³Heard from Mr. Avi Shulman

⁴Rabbi Frand In Print, quoted by Esther Stulberger, Moreshet Essay

We do not understand the nature of good and evil; it is not just their application which is beyond us. For example, our natural understanding of death is that it is a great tragedy, but yet טוב מאד - זה המות say חז"ל¹.

Still, we can understand suffering in general. Although we cannot understand why any particular individual must suffer in a particular way, this does not mean that we cannot understand the basic nature of suffering or the ultimate goodness of suffering. We can talk about the meaning of suffering in such a way that each individual can use this to turn his/her suffering into a meaningful experience. To quote Lisa Aiken in an internet interview, "G-d is all powerful. He deliberately allows suffering and evil to occur as part of a complex plan that enables us to bring ourselves and our world to a level of heightened awareness and of closeness with our Creator. Every tragedy challenges us to find meaning in it. And Judaism gives us guidelines for using our losses as stepping stones for spiritual growth."

We know that there is a concept of meaningful difficulty.² Part of the problem of making suffering meaningful is in the fact that we are not looking to suffer. On the contrary, we are usually headed in the opposite direction. So, added to the pain is the loss of control (associated with loss of freedom) and the fact that one's destiny appears to be going in the opposite direction of what he had thought was in his best interests³:

יְבִרָא שִׁית רַבָּה נָ, מִתְנַת בְּהוּנָה (שם):
שִׁמְפִּידוּ מִזֶּה הָעוֹלָם הַבִּלָּה וּמִבִּיאוֹ לְעוֹלָם הָעוֹמֵד, וְגַם שֵׁם אֵינָּה בֹא לִידֵי חֲנוּא
עֵינֵי שְׂעָרֵי תְשׁוּבָה בֹּ בֹא; יִשְׁעִיהָ מִהָ זֶה הָרֵד"ק שֵׁם

²When one says life is difficult that means that it is very difficult to struggle; when one has said that life is absurd, that means that one is not struggling and that they are complacent. ("The Observer", Arthur Adamov, 1962)

³Acts of G-d, Emuna Braverman (Aish Hatorah Resources, www.aish.com): The pundits talk about how we have become a society of finger-pointers, a nation that always blames someone or something else for other problems. A society lacking a strong sense of individual responsibility.

This is in reality not a new phenomenon. Adam, the first man, blamed his wife Eve for his transgression in eating from the Tree of Knowledge (the implications for marriage not being discussed here!). Our commentaries suggest that Cain fought with his brother, Abel, and killed him, rather than face up to his own inadequacies.

We play the blame game with nations as well. If the U.S. shared more of its wealth, it wouldn't have been attacked on 9/11. If the government had heeded the warnings, we wouldn't have experienced the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. If the U.S. (or any other country) would leave Iraq, it would end terrorism. The list is endless. Read your daily newspaper.

I think that two psychological processes are at play here. One is the aforementioned desire to avoid responsibility. It begins in the playground -- "He hit me first!" "It's her fault!" And is reinforced by teachers and parents -- "Who started it?" And is rewarded in office politics and outrageous civil damage awards. Many words have been spilled over this issue and perhaps the much heralded tort reform will have a trickle-down effect.

The second is our desire for control.

By looking for someone, something to blame - whether it's the 'root causes' of terrorism or the head of FEMA, we exert our control and try to restore order to the world. We want to be in charge, in a safe and predictable world where everything has a logical, preventable root cause.

We don't want to accept the underlying message of all these calamitous events: we're not running the world; the Almighty is. And even the most powerful country in the world is subject to His will.

Of course we need to take practical steps and not ignore dire forecasts. But it is naive to believe we can be prepared for anything and everything. Who could really have imagined the degree of devastation? There's a reason these natural catastrophes are named "Acts of God" - no matter how hard we try (and yes, try we must) they will always remain uncontrollable, totally outside our domain....

“We must abandon the attitude of assuming that the best thing for us to do, and the thing we can do best, is that which we wish to do at a particular moment. We must admit that we are not our own masters, and become more our masters than we are by directing to our purposes the forces that we are mastered by.”¹

All suffering is a function of tension resulting from incompatibility between our (single or communal) existing state and the ultimate spirituality to which we are connected.² This refers to both immoral, anti-spiritual actions and also unfulfilled potential. The suffering is not just a reflection of the tension but also an active agent in promoting its resolution. The fact that suffering is a function of the tension described explains why, in the World to Come, the same **אור** which will provide the good given to the **צדיקים** is that which will cause the **רשעים** to suffer. For example, **משה רבינו** was at such a high spiritual level that something which appeared as **דבור קשה** to the rest of the world appeared as **חבה** to **לשון רבינו**.³

יסורים remove all superficial acquisitions of character which were not fully integrated into the individual and leave the essential self.⁴

All great things are acquired with difficulty. The Gemara in Brachos states that "G-d gave the Jews three gifts: Torah, Israel and Olam Haba, and all are acquired through suffering."⁵ In addition, Beraishis Rabba explains that G-d never unites His name with a living person save with those who are experiencing suffering.⁶ We see with **איוב** that had he not complained

I'm not suggesting that we understand all the reasons for the hurricane in Louisiana or other world-wide tragedies. But perhaps finger pointing is the least effective response. The average American -- not a politician, TV reporter or talk show host -- knows he doesn't run the world. And he knows this is a time to stop talking and blaming, and start giving, and perhaps a time to deepen one's awe and prayer.

¹Shraga Silverstein, A Candle by Day

²מהר"ל נתיב היסורין פ"א:
היסורים הם חסרון באדם

נצח ישראל פ' לב:
ענין היסורים הם מצד התנגדות אשר יש לדבר אחר

מהר"ל נתיב היסורין פ"ג:
כי בל דבר שהוא בנגד האדם דבר זה נקרא יסורין

³Based on שיעורי דעות - see reading list. See further B ii - the פחד יצחק.

⁴⁵Suffering occurs when an impending destruction of the person is present; it continues until the threat of disintegration has passed or until the integrity of the person can be restored in some other manner...although suffering often occurs in the presence of acute pain...or other bodily symptoms, suffering extends beyond the physical. Most generally, suffering can be defined as the state of severe distress associated with events that threaten the intactness of the person. (*Learning Process in Pain* Wilbert E. Fordyce--Rehabilitation Medicine and Pain Service. pg.51)

⁵מש' ברכות ה.
שלוש מתנות... נתן הקב"ה לישראל ובזמן לא נתן אלא על ידי יסורין אלו הן תורה וארץ ישראל והעולם הבא

מהר"ל נתיב היסורין פרק ב':
...אלו שלושה מדרגות של קדושה לישראל... בי היסורים יזכור הנפש ולבך באשר ישראל קטן מעלה נבדלת מן הגוף צריכים קודם מרוק וזכור הנפש עד שראוי לקבל המעלה הקדושה ודבר זה דומה ליסורין של אהבה ... ולבך אמר ג' מתנות טובות בנגד ג' מדרגות של קדושה

⁶בראשית רבה צ"ה:

unfaithfully when he was suffering we would connect his name with the names of the forefathers in our prayers.¹ As the famous Mishneh in Avos states, "the reward is in accordance with the suffering or hardship involved."²

When one goes through hardship, not only is there good in that Tzara but there is good that won't be found in any other situation.³ The reason for this would seem to be because we live in a world of Avoda, and Avoda, by its very definition, is something that requires us to exert effort and undergo stress and pain in order to reveal light. This is the exact opposite as the World to Come, where it will be all light and no pain. The very nature of Avoda is such that it necessitates one to push against existing reality in a way that that requires exertion and hence discomfort and some level of pain. This is why a person who feels that his life is effortless is really in a state of the World to Come whereas he is getting his reward in this world.

Furthermore, the suffering itself can bring the Yeshua. In Egypt, the suffering itself led the Jews down the only path that was available to them – they cried to G-d through the deepest prayers⁴ because nothing else was left. G-d heard their prayers not because of their Teshuva or because they were worthy of redemption⁵, but because of the suffering itself⁶.

When we say G-d heard the Jews because of their suffering, this does not just mean the pain which they endured. Rather, the Meforshim explain, the suffering of the slavery caused a purification of the Jews, like an iron furnace, which in and of itself made the Jews ready for redemption. This, says the Sefas Emes, is what the pasuk **כַּאֲשֶׁר יֵעָנּוּ אוֹתָן כֵּן יִרְבֶּה וְכֵן יִפְרוֹץ** means. The very act of the **עָנִי**, the affliction, is what caused their rise to holiness. The darkness itself serves to elevate and raise the Jews⁷. And this, in fact, is the lesson of suffering

וַיִּזְכֹּךְ זִמְכוּסִים לֹאֲלֹקִי אֲבִיו יִצְחָק (ויגש) ... אֵין הַקֶּבֶ"ה מִיִּיחִיד שְׁמוֹ עַל בְּרִיָּה בְּשֹׂהוּא חֵי אֵלָא עַל בְּעַל יִסּוּרִין ... לְפִיכֵךְ אֵין בְּתִיבָא בְּאֵן וַיִּזְכֹּךְ זִמְכוּסִים לֹאֲלֹקִי יַעֲקֹב אֵלָא לֹאֲלֹקִי אֲבִיו יִצְחָק... שְׂהִיָּה בְּעַל יִסּוּרִין

¹ילקוט איוב תתקכ"ב:

איוב אלולי לא קרא תגר בשבאו עליו יסורין בשם שאומר עבשיו אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב כך היו אומרים אלקי איוב

² לפום צערא אגרא (פרקי אבות ה:בז)

³Suffering creates good ... this concept does sound strange and it obviously is not something that can be easily seen at the time when our emotions are in focus. Rav Moshe Sternbuch compares us to a child who does not and cannot appreciate the good intentions of his parents when he is punished. (Rav Moshe Speaks pg. 4) What we may foolishly conceive as misfortune may be in reality an act of great kindness. G-d is constantly reminding us of this by having the month of all our pain and sorrow called AV, the Hebrew word that means father (Rabbi Kahn). Quoted by Russi Weingarden, Moreshet.

⁴רבינו בחיי ב' בג: וע"ד הקבלה יתכן לפרש כי נרמז באן ענין התפלה ומתוך הצרה וגודל השעבוד בוונ אל העשר ואל הראש ועד הסוף, ובענין שבטוב (ישעיה נח) אז תקרא וה' יענה, ולכך נרמז בלם בבאן, הוא שאמר ותעל שועתם אל האלהים מן העבודה, וישמע אלהים, ויזכור אלהים בנגד היראה והחבמה והביעה. את אברהם את יצחק ואת יעקב הגדולה והגבורה והיפוד, ושני עמודים בבולן וירא אלהים בנגד התפארת וידע אלהים בנגד המלכות, ותן לבך בי לא הזכיר בני ישראל אלא עם וירא אלהים בדי נרמז על תפארת ישראל, בי שם יצעקו בני ישראל ושם יתפללו בשאלת צרכיהם, ואליו אנו מברכים בקדיש אמנו יהא שמויה רבא מברך, ואנו אומרים לעלם לעלמי עלמיא יתברך הזכיר ה' עולמות בנגד ה' ספירות שמשם ולמעלה, וצריך הוא לחבר מלת עלמיא ליתברך ואין להפסיק בהם כלל בשם שאין להפסיק הבתר מאין סוף, שמע נא ואתה דע לך:

⁵ר' בחיי ב' בג: ותעל שועתם אל האלהים מן העבודה - בי אע"פ שהגיע הקץ בבר לא היו ראויים לגאולה אלא מרוב שצעקו אל ה' מן העבודה קבל תפלתם

⁶ספורט ב' בג: ותעל שועתם אל האלהים מן העבודה. לא בשביל תשובתם ותפלתם, אבל במקנא על אבירות המעבידים, באמרו וגם ראיתי את הלחץ:

⁷שפת אמת שנת [תרל"ח]: בלבות אש מתוך הסנה במד' אני ישנה ולבי ער בו'. פי' שהקב"ה הראה למשה מראה גדולה זו מתוך חושך הגלות עצמו. וזה הו' התימה מדוע לא יבער הסנה מאחר שנמצא באמת התלהבות הגדול הזה איך יש קיום

everywhere. Somebody who is graced with all manner of pleasure becomes more physical thereby. Someone in pain will actually find himself greatly aided by that very pain in his quest for spirituality¹.

Megillas Taanis is the Masechta that speaks of the Yomim Tovim; each Yom Tov has a fast day associated with it, signifying that on that day something bad would happen. It's only the תענית associated with the Yom Tov that shows the inherent potential of the Yom Tov itself.²

Greatness is acquired through suffering because יסורים (and any נסיון) bring forth one's full potential. Furthermore, only when something is acquired with difficulty does the quality truly become a part of the person.

One who has really internalized this idea will face most difficulties in a matter-of-fact manner; this is exactly the reality he anticipated in עולם הזה. This removes not only the anger of the injustice but any of the heightened awareness of pain resulting from focusing on the יסורים instead of the challenge they present.³

These values are greater than happiness, as people grow from challenges. "We mistakenly believe that happiness, comfort, ease, security and status are the goal, but the soul has another agenda altogether. It cares nothing for the personality's suffering, only that there be the refinement, the strengthening and the purification so that the person is worthy to serve the soul's purpose. Whenever we ask, "Why is this happening to me?" we must try to remember that our happiness, comfort, ease, security and status don't purify, don't strengthen or refine. But being hammered in the fire does."⁴

Happiness can be a means or a result, but it cannot be the goal. This applies even in this-worldly terms. For example, Stephen Hawking is one of the leading (if not the leading) physicists of our time, but Hawking is trapped in a wheelchair because of Lou Gherig's disease and is in fact totally paralyzed except for some slight muscular movement in his fingers. He cannot speak except electronically, by tapping out words with his fingers. Wouldn't it be better to be a happy worm than to be Stephen Hawking? Hawking himself has

לקליפה המחשבת אורות הגדולים הללו. אך זה באמת רצה הקב"ה להראות לו כי אדרבה לפי גודל החושך והגלות נשתר בו אור גדול גנוז והוא בחי' הגאולה. בי הגלות הוא סימן על הגאולה. ובפי רוב קישוי הגלות מורה על תוקף הגאולה. וז"פ הבתוב ובאשר יעט אותו בו' ובן יפרוץ. פי' הבתוב מתרץ עצמו אשר לא יהרהרו אחר הבורא ית' איך הניח לעטות את עמו ב"ב כי בפי רוב העיני' בן יהי' אח"כ תוקף הגאולה:

¹אור גדליהו, שמות, עמוד 12: זה נבלל במה שאמר ז"ל (ברכות ח.) שישורין ממרקין ... כי בעת אשר האדם מדושן בעונג נעשה מאד מגושם, וקשה לו להגביה את עצמו, אבל בעת אשר האדם מדובה בייסורין אז נקל יכול להגביה את עצמו דהיות נמשך אחר גלות השביעה.
באור גדליהו שמות עמוד 12 בהגה 4: ובמהר"ל נתייבות עולם ... ישורין של אהבה אין פירושו ישורין הבאים מחמת אהבת השם, רק ישורין המביאים לידי אהבת השם
אור גדליהו שמות דף ז: רק בני ישראל אשר בעצם הם טובים ... יש בבח היסורין למרק אותם ... אבל את עשו שנאתי, ולו לא יועיל ישורין ע"ש עוד

²מס' שבת יג:

ת"ד מי בתב מגילת תענית אמרו חנניה בן חזקיה וסיעתו שהיו מחבבין את הצרות מהרש"א:

... במ"ש בשם שמעון בן דורון (דאיתא בערבין דף יז בל מי שעברו עליו מיום בלא ישורין קבל עולמו) ולזה נקרא ספר מגילת תענית דהיום טוב הנזכרים בו עיקרן לא נתייחדו אלא ע"ש התענית שהיה להם בעת צרה

³ See Chapter F - Responses, below

⁴ Why Me Why This Why Now, Robin Norwood, pg. 34

never made that suggestion. If he is happy it is certainly not because he made happiness an aim. It is because he feels he continues to make a significant contribution to mankind's understanding of the cosmos – i.e. because he feels his life is meaningful. Similarly, take a person locked in a room who doesn't know it's locked or a 40 year old man who has the maturity of a five-year-old happily playing with his toy cars. In these 2 cases we react with sympathy, even though these people may be happy. The first person is externally limited in his freedom (whether he knows it or not) and the second because he is internally limited.

We are happy as a result of feeling that we are doing the right thing. Those who do things in order to be happy usually aim to fulfill themselves with very superficial things. This is because, as we state below, higher values cannot be acquired without some pain. But the superficiality of their endeavors leaves them unfulfilled. Happiness as a goal is therefore usually self-defeating.

Several higher values can only be achieved at the cost of some pain or suffering, although Koheles Rabbah¹ states that "through increasing wisdom I have increased vexation, and through increasing knowledge I have increased sufferings." We do not choose to remain totally ignorant. We choose the more "painful" course because it is worth more to us.² Sometimes that choice involves physical pain³, and pain is an essential part of our functioning in this world. "Pain is literally a lifesaver, alerting the brain to physical harm." "Pain is the body's smoke alarm," says Robert Coghill, a neuro-physiologist at the National Institutes of Health. Victims of congenital analgesia, a rare condition that leaves them unable to feel pain ... usually die by the time they are in their 30's from injuries they never felt, their bodies scarred from head to toe."⁴ Pain tells the body what to avoid; it is essential for the learning process. ... Pain also functions as a general warning system, a signal that something is wrong physically, emotionally, spiritually..."⁵

This world is structured in such a way that growth is not painless in order to avoid נהמא דכיסופא as well as to avoid being a spiritual robot, a created good. We instead participate in the creative process.⁶ Painless growth would mean automatic scientific-like rules of growth to which we would be automatically subject without choice. Choice involves choosing to give up options which are superficially attractive because they favor the natural state of the body in favor of options which appear difficult because they require our spiritual

יקה"ר א"י: ח' ובל זמן שהוא מרבה בדעת מרבה ביסורין

Our deeper understanding of things gives us a greater alertness and sensitivity to things which predisposes us to greater suffering. "Ignorance is bliss."

²נוב מאד זו מדת יסורין... שעל ידיה הבריות באים לחיי העוה"ב (ב"ר נ"ח:)

³Rabbi Ezriel Tauber to a terminal patient deciding whether to undergo therapy that may extend his life for another month: "You would be showing us how a person about to lose life is willing to pay the highest price possible for more life. After all, you would not be doing it for yourself, because you are not afraid to die; and you would not be doing it for your family, because they only suffer more by seeing you in this state. You would be doing it only because G-d told you what a moment of life is worth to Him. ..." (pg. 51)

⁴U.S. News and World Report, March 17, 1997

⁵Chana Willner, Neve Yerushalayim, 1981

⁶דרך השם

selves to overcome our natural, physical self.¹ Therefore, even a lesser achievement under adversity can be considered greater.²

Moreover, a person can be shown to be in a state of greater emotional and mental health when he makes such choices. Viktor Frankl states in The Will to Meaning³: "Von Bertalanfy could show that even within biology the homeostasis principle is no longer tenable. Goldstein could offer evidence on the grounds of brain pathology for his contention that the pursuit of homeostasis, rather than being a characteristic of the normal organism, is a sign of disorder. Only in the case of disease is the organism intent on avoiding tensions at any rate ...Allport ... Maslow as well as Charlotte Buhler have aired similar objections."..."Because of the self-transcendent quality of human existence... being human always means being directed and pointing to something or someone other than itself"⁴ ... "Like happiness, self-actualizing is an effect, the effect of meaning fulfillment. ...If he sets to actualize himself rather than fulfill a meaning (out there in the world), self actualization immediately loses its justification."⁵ ...The affluent society is an undemanding society by which people are spared tension. However, people who are spared tension are likely to create it either in a healthy or unhealthy way."⁶ ... "What man needs first of all is the tension created by direction."⁷ ... "When the picketing started (on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley) the number of admissions to the psychiatric department of the student hospital suddenly dropped. And it sharply increased once the picketing was over. For some months students had found meaning in the freedom-of-speech movement."⁸

"In the old days ... childbirth was a more natural, long and painful event - but the mother was awake when the child was born. There was a purpose and future reward in the suffering. Now we sedate mothers, trying to avoid pain and agony; we may even induce labor to have a birth occur on a relative's birthday or to avoid interference with another important event. Many mothers only wake up hours after the babies are born, too drugged and sleepy to rejoice in the birth of their children. There is not much sense in suffering, since drugs can be given for pain, itching or other discomforts. The belief has long died that

¹מהר"ל נצח ישראל פ"ז:

אין ד"ת מתקיימין אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה: דבר זה ענין מופלא בי התורה והגוף שהן שני הפכים וא"כ איך תתקיים התורה שהיא שבילית בגוף הגשמי שהגשמי הפך הנבדל ולפיכך אין קיום התורה באדם הגשמי שהם כמו שני דברים שאין מתדמים ומתייחסים ביחד, שאין להם עמידה ביחד ולפיכך אין התורה מתקיימת רק במי שממית עצמו על התורה ואדם בזה גופו אינו נחשב כלל ובאילו אינו גופני כלל שהרי הוא ממית ומסלק עצמו על התורה ובה התורה מתקיים שהרי אינו בעל גוף ...

²סנהדרין ב. שקר החן זה דורו של משה ויהושע, והבל היופי זה דורו של חזקי', וראת ה' היא תתהלל זה דורו של ר' יהודה ברבי אלעאי ... שהיו ששה תלמידים מתבשין בטלית אחת וצוסקין בתורה

ובשעורי דעות (חלק ג' יסורין של אהבה): היש גבול לבסוד התורה שהיה בדורו של משה (דור הדעה של מתן תורה) ... ובן בדורו של חזקי' ... (ש(בדקו מדן ועד באר שבע ולא מצאו איש ואשה תיעק ותיעקת שלא הי' בקיאים בטומאה וטהרה, ובב"ז שקר החן והבל היופי לצומת תהלת היראה בשלמדו מתוך הדחק...

³p. 32

⁴p. 25

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p.38

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p. 45

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p. 47

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p. 48

suffering here on earth will be rewarded in heaven. Suffering has lost its meaning."¹ (Note that although the medical information contained in this statement is outdated, the concepts hold true.)

Pain is therefore necessary for pleasure. One of the debilitating myths of the Western civilization is that the opposite of pain is pleasure. In overcoming any challenge we master the pain, gain a sense of control, and this is indeed the pleasure we feel (e.g. mastering a musical instrument, getting into physical shape, dieting to lose weight). The pain is the key to growth and improvement.²

We must know, as much as possible in our beautiful art [life]...and the only way to know is to have lived and loved and cursed and floundered and enjoyed and suffered.³

See **Chapter E ii Reasons – Future** for more on the idea of pain as growth.

Pain is a function of this world's incompleteness. "At first G-d created worlds that were destroyed, and then He created the worlds of rectification...A person's initial worship of G-d therefore corresponds to the worlds that were destroyed. He must initially undergo much suffering. Although one begins with suffering, one ends with contentment."⁴

All suffering is a function of tension resulting from incompatibility between our (single or communal) existing state and the ultimate spirituality to which we are connected.⁵ This tension can only be understood in the context of knowing that this World is not where we are supposed to receive the reward for our actions. Pain is a symptom of how far one is from G-d whereas evil is the distance itself. Pain and suffering are in reality a gift which one can use to help himself recognize the distance and get rid of the evil. Suffering was designed deliberately incomplete, so that we would work to perfect it.⁶

This incompleteness allows for choice which subsequently allows for reward. If, however, reward and punishment were immediate, this would undermine choice.⁷ The world of עבודה is not the perfect environment for reward. All suffering is ultimately purposeful once the World to Come is factored in.

¹Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, On Death and Dying, p. 13

²Rav Noach Weinberg, as quoted in *48 Ways* by Chana Willner

³Letter to Hugh Walpole, Aug. 21, 1913

⁴The Light Beyond, pg.87

⁵שעורי דעות

⁶אבות ד'ז:

העה"ז דומה לפרוזה בפה העזה"ב התקן עצמך בפרוזה בד' שתבגש לטורקלין
(ע"ן רמב"ם הל' תשובה ח' א'; דרך ד' א-ג-ד)

⁷See R. Dovid Gottlieb, The Informed Soul, pg. 138 – 140

Since suffering is ultimately purposeful, it is not intrinsically good or bad.¹ "Only meaningless occurrences are bad. Painful situations are always good if they serve a useful purpose; pleasures that interfere with our spiritual growth are always bad, no matter how good they feel. Eating a lot of junk food or abusing drugs can feel great, but the long-term effects are disastrous. The pain that a woman undergoes in labor results in bringing a baby into the world. How pleasurable something is says nothing of its consequences later, and how painful something is tells nothing of its real value later."²

If suffering leads to a final purpose, we then also have to believe that G-d controls that purpose and is directing everything that happens to us toward ensuring that we get to that purpose. In other words, suffering cannot be understood unless one accepts that this world is not the final purpose of our lives, that השגחה פרטית guides us toward our final purpose, and that we will be rewarded for all our suffering.

All questions of suffering ultimately amount to the question of צדיק ורע לו and its corollary רשע וטוב לו. For all a צדיק's righteousness we often see him suffer while a רשע endures even with all of his wickedness.³ A further point asked is why specific צדיקים suffer while others live good lives.⁴

¹Lisa Aiken.

Z. Hauptman, Moreshet: Reb Moshe of Kobrin used to say, "When a person suffers, he shouldn't say that things are *bad*. Rather, he should say that the situation is *bitter*. The Almighty does nothing bad. Just as medicine, although it might be bitter, is beneficial, so too events are always beneficial even if they are bitter." (Ohr Yeshorim, P.57)

²Why me, G-d, pg. xx

(צ"פ ברבנות ז')

משלי ז טו:

he endures for all (for all his righteousness) (יש רשע מאריך ברעתו) את הבל ראיתי בימי הבלי יש צדיק אבד בצדיקו) his wickedness

ירמיהו יב:א
מדוע דרך רשעים צלחה

רמב"ן הקדמה לאיוב:

יש דבר מבאים הלבבות ומדאיב המחשבות, ממנו לבדו נמשכו כל הדורות לבפירה גמורה, והוא הראות בעולם משפט מעוקל וצדיק ורע לו רשע וטוב לו ... זה שורש המרי בכל הנמרדים מבל אומה ולשון

⁴הרב חיים פרידלנדר:

יש להבין את בללי ההנהגה של צדיק ורע לו, אצ"פ שא"א להבין את פרמיה - למה צדיק זה רע לו, וצדיק זה טוב לו (הארה 3 על דעת תבועות)

ושם (הארה 465): ובשם שא"א להבין את טעמי הבריאה - משום מה נבדאה כך ולא אחרת - כך לא נבל להבין למה חלקו של צדיק זה הוא כך וחלקו של צדיק זה הוא אחר.

i.e. some צדיקים do seem to be blessed in this world:

(ברבנות ה):

he saw that he was living (he went to visit him) (עאל לגביה ר' יוחנן) ר' אלעזר חלש (fell ill) (עאל לגביה ר' יוחנן) he rolled up his sleeve and light fell (חזייה דהוה קא בב' ר' אליעזר) he saw that R. Eliezer was crying (א"ל אמאי קא בבית ... ואי משום מזני לא בל אדם זובה לשתי שולחנות תוס. ד"ה לא: במה צדיקים זבין לשתי שולחנות בגון רבי

חובות הלבבות שער הבטחון פ"ג:

והטעם מדוע לא נתנו הנביאים תשובה המבירה את סיבת הדבר, הוא מפני שלכל אחד ואחד מהצדיקים הללו יש סיבה אחרת מדוע שה' מנשה אותו ביסורין ועוני

In answer, the גמרא tells us that these seeming inconsistencies arise when the צדיק or רשע is not a complete צדיק or a complete רשע.¹ A צדיק שאינו גמור gets יסורין in this world in order to get his שכר in the next world.² In addition, צדיק ורע לו may be necessary for תקון עולם, the ultimate purpose of the world. The רמח"ל explains in his דעת תבונות that the ultimate purpose of the world, and therefore of each individual in the world, is the תיקון הכללי. There are times in history when the תקון הכללי requires that evil reign. This is all as a preparation for evil's ultimate demise. The greater the expression of the evil, the greater the revelation of G-d's Oneness when it causes the evil to disappear. At times like this צדיקים may suffer as a result of the general situation. When this happens, not even their זכויות will protect them from great suffering, suffering for which they will be rewarded many times over: firstly for the actual suffering; secondly for the love and faith with which they accept the suffering and thirdly because of the תיקון הכללי which will benefit the whole world. However, השם never allows a צדיק to suffer unless there is something, לפי מידת הדין, to be חוט השערה.³ Therefore, He may judge a צדיק according to a חוט השערה.

עין עוד בהוריות י': דרש רב נחמן

¹ ברבות ז. צדיק וטוב לו צדיק גמור צדיק ורע לו צדיק שאינו גמור רשע וטוב לו רשע גמור רשע ורע לו רשע גמור עין הוריות י' ד"ה דרש רב נחמן

ספורט על קהלת ז'טו: "את הבל ראיתי" שהוא מדה בנגד מדה לטוב ולרע ובהז' "יש צדיק אובד בצדקו" על איזה עבירה שלא שב ממנה ולא יבול צדקותיו וזכויותיו להצילו מן העונש שאין מצוה מבבזה עבירה. "יש רשע מאריך ברעתו" וזה בשישלים לו הקל ויתבדר גמול על איזה פועל טוב שעשה ולא יבול רשעו למחות ואמת הזכות.

² תנענית יא.

קל אמונה ואין עול (דברים לב) קל אמונה בשם שנפרעין מן הרשעים לעולם הבא אפילו על עבירה קלה שעושים ברפצין מן הצדיקים בעוה"ז על עבירה קלה שעושים ואין עול בשם שמשלמים שברך צדיקים לעוה"ב אפילו על מצווה קלה שעושים בר משלמים שבר לרשעים בעוה"ז אפילו על מצווה קלה שעושים

קדושין לטו:

בל שביותיו מרובין מעוותותיו מריעין לו
רש"י: בעולם הזה לנקות מעוותותיו שיטול שבר שלם
(ובן בירושלמי מס' פאה א א)
עין קדושין מ: אמר ר' אלעזר

וברמב"ן הקדמה לאיוב:

ובן הדין טרם להקל מן הצדיק העונש, ושיהיה בדבר הגרוע והוא הגוף ובזמן הפחות והוא העולם הזה

הרחב דבר בהעמק דבר ריש פרשת נח (א):

ובן הוא לשון חז"ל ברבות ה' דמחלק בין צדיק וטוב לו לצדיק ורע לו. דזה בצדיק גמור וזה בצדיק שאינו גמור ... טוב לשמים וטוב לבריות זה צדיק טוב. טוב לשמים ורע לבריות זה צדיק שאינו טוב... ודאי יש צדיק שמ"מ מצד טובו ומזגו אינו טוב לבריות. וכן להיפך יש רשע ולבו רך וחומל ומרחם אבל ב"ז הוא בתחלת הליבות האדם בעולמו וקשה להפוך טבע הלב אבל לאחר במה שנים משתנה הצדיק בע"ב מצד וראית ד' ונעשה רחמן והרגלו יעשה טבע שני עד שנעשה טוב. וכן להיפך הרשע משתנה לאט לאט וחומד להיות רע ואבזר עד שנעשה טבע שני ונקרא רע... ואמר ישעיה הנביא אמרו צדיק בי טוב. שבחו לצדיק בי טוב. בי יגיע בסוף לעשות גם טוב ואז בי פרי מעלליהם יאכלו גם בעוה"ז. או לרשע שיגיע רשעותו לידי רע... ומערת מובן לשון גמ' ברבות הנ"ל. דצדיק גמור היינו שנגמר הליבותיו בצדקתו עד שנשתנה טבעו ונעשה צדיק גמור היינו שנעשה טוב בלבריות. ובהז' טוב לו בעוה"ז. אבל אם אינו גמור שלא נגמר ב"ב עד שיהפוך טבע לבו אז רע לו בעוה"ז משום שאינו מרחם עה"ב.

³ דעת תבונות (דף קצג):

בזמן תוקף עקבות משיחא, לא יקשה עלינו אם הצדיקים נשפלים השפלה גדולה, ואם בני האדם צועקים ולא נעים ... בי בל זה טלד לפי שאין הצדיקים יכולים אפילו בזכותם לתקן הקלקולים ההם, בי השעה גורמת לכך, ובדי להוליד מזה התיקון השלם שיהיה אחר כך בגילוי יחודו ית' במו שביארט

Furthermore, נפש צדיקים are held to a higher standard than the average person is.¹ The נפש explains that this is because צדיקים are akin to being in the palace of the king. An isolated farmer who disobeys the king is not nearly as culpable as someone who disobeys the king in his own palace.

The תקון הכללי explains that sometimes צדיקים have a role to play in the of the whole world which requires them to suffer. However, even then השם uses the כלים of עבירות to deliver this suffering and therefore requires at least the most minor of עבירות to “hook” the יסורין onto. Therefore, He uses the standard of חוט השערה. The יסורים are not, therefore, coming as a result of this minor עבירה. They are needed for the grander תקון. But the minor עבירה allows the הנהגת המשפט to deliver the יסורין. (Rav Chaim Friedlander in his notes on the דעת תבונות gives an example of Rebbe: when a calf that was about to be slaughtered ran into his arms, Rebbe sent the calf back to be slaughtered, saying that this was what the calf was created for. Because there was an element of cruelty in Rebbe’s response, he subsequently suffered greatly for many years. However, this was not the reason for his suffering, but just the way in which it could be delivered.) According to this, when the גמרא says that the case of צדיק ורע לו is referring to a צדיק שאינו צדיק גמור, it means to say that it is only the fact that he is an אינו גמור that allows for the יסורין for the תקון הכללי to be delivered.²

It is important to note that we are not able to evaluate anyone's situation, nor can we know the real reward and punishment of any action especially in reference to any particular person and their מדריגה (including ourselves). People can also be punished for their failure to prevent others from sinning. Additionally, we classically underestimate the gravity of our own sins.

A צדיק גמור, a complete Tzaddik, may yet suffer יסורים even though he is undeserving of pain.³ This suffering is called יסורים של אהבה and cannot be understood by mortal man.⁴

Even then, there has to be some חטא judged even to the standards of חוט השערה in order for the צדיק to suffer. See below **c-צדיקים are held to a higher standard** for a broader discussion on this.

(on pg. קפג in the Rav Chaim Friedlander edition – דרבי הנהגת היחוד)

¹יבמות קבא:

מלמד שהקב"ה מדקדק עם הצדיקים בחוט השערה.

שם משמאל ויקרא שמיני שנת תרע"ב ד"ה ויאמר משה (דף קס):

באשר אז הנשמה הולבת למקום גבוה ... ולפעמים פושקים עליו גיהנם אף שבבד זה מנקה מבמה שנים ויושב ברום המעלה. ומספרים על הרה"ק מראפשיץ זצללה"ה שהלך ראש השנה לתשליך ופגע בהרבי מלובלין זצללה"ה בחזירתו מתשליך, ושאלו הרבי אנה אתה הולך, והשיב שהולך להגביה מה שהשליך הרבי, ולא לבד בדרך צחות אמר בן אלא שכן הוא באמת

עיון במסילת ישרים זהירות

²See below **Chapter E ii Reasons – Future** for many other explanations

³רמב"ן הקדמה לאיוב:

והצדיק הגמור שלא חטא וזכארו רעות על חנם, באשר בא באיוב אשר בוראו העיד עליו כי אין במהו בארץ איש תם וישר ירא אלוקים וסר מרע (א ח) ותשיתני בו לבלעו חנם (ב ג), והורו שלא היה ראוי למכות ההמה, ובאשר בא בקבלה על ר' עקיבא שמחתבין בשרו במקלן זו תורה זו שברה, שתוק בן עזה במחשבה לפני.

⁴מהר"ל אבות ד' טז:

It is possible, however, for a complete צדיק to be punished for the sins of those around him if he does not stop them from sinning.¹

One who denies the whole reality of Hashem will not be rewarded even for the good things he does because he has no intention to do it as a result of a higher, divine imperative.²

We can also understand אבן שלמה in גרי"א as explained by the צדיק ורע לו as completely righteous person may have been a Rasha in a previous Gilgul and may be now suffering because of what he did in that Gilgul.³

With regard to רשע וטוב לו, we can make sense of such a phenomenon by recognizing that a רשע receives שכר in this world for the good he has done.⁴ A רשע is someone who has no intrinsic connection with עולם הבא; therefore, he is simply not in a position to receive his reward there. Where possible, however, he is punished in this world and then receives his reward. There is a deeper level of this that applies to a רשע גמור. Here, the טוב לו is actually used as an instrument for the רשע's destruction.⁵

In addition, even if a רשע has not yet done any good deeds he may yet do תשובה and is sustained toward that eventuality.⁶ And, even if he will not actually do תשובה he may yet do מצוות and will then receive his reward in this world. It is certainly worthwhile to sustain the רשע for that eventuality.⁷

ומ"מ קשה מ"ש אין בידע מיסורי הצדיקים שהרי בודאי יסורי הצדיקים אע"י יודעים באשר אינו צדיק גמור ובדאייתא היתם. ונראה דפי' אף לא מיסורי צדיקים היינו שיש יסורין על הצדיק בלא חטא... ואע"ג דיסורין של אהבה הם מ"מ אמר אין בידע בלומר כי יש צדיקים שלא נחא להו ביסורים ובדאייתא שם (ברכות ה:...) לא הן ולא שברן.

¹ (שבת נ"ה ע"א) אין דבר טובה מפי הקב"ה וחסד בה לרעה חוץ מדבר זה. מהר"ל חידוש אגדתא: והנה אף שהיו צדיקים מצד עצמם חטא הרבים תלו בהם שלא מחו את אחרים, ולכך חזרה המדה טובה לרעה, כי מנצח בח עונש הרבים את זכות היחיד. וממקדשי תחלו... אמר להו הקב"ה התחילו ממקום שאומרים שירה לפני. ממקום שאומרים שירה לפני. פי' זה שאמר אלו בני אדם שקיימו את התורה מא' עד תיו. אף כי בודאי אין בח למשחית למשול על הצדיק כמו [שיבול למשול] על הרשע, היינו דוקא שהוא יכול לעמוד בנגד [המשחית] ואינו מושל עליו, אבל אם נגזרה גזירה שלא יוכל הצדיק למשול עליו ח"ו, אז ההתחלה מן הצדיק.

² דמב"ן הקדמה לאיוב: כי הרשעים המבחישים בבך ויאמרו לא הוא, אינם ראויין לגמול טוב לעולם כלל כי לא עשו טובה לדעת הקל

³ מי שהיה רשע בגלגול ראשון מורידו הקב"ה בחסרון הלבנה ואז הוא בחסרון כל ימיו אע"פ שהוא עבשיו צדיק גמור וזהו "צדיק ורע לו" במ"ש בזהר וצ"ל אמרו לאו בזכותא תליא מליתא אלא במזל תליא מליתא (אבן שלמה ג' ה') עין מו"ק בח. אמר רבא ח"י בני מאנן לאו בזכותא תליא מליתא אלא במזל תליא מליתא ... דאיירי בצדיקים גמורים דזוקא ובן ברקאנטי (וישב לג' ב) ובלבוש שם; ובדמב"ן הקדמה לאיוב הקטע המתחיל "אבל", ועוד במה מקומות.

⁴ יתענית יא. קל אמונה ואין עול (דברים לב) קל אמונה בשם שנפרעין מן הרשעים לעולם הבא אפילו על עבירה קלה שעושין כך נפרעין מן הצדיקים בעוה"ז על עבירה קלה שעושין ואין עול בשם שמשלמים שבר צדיקים לעוה"ב אפילו על מצווה קלה שעושין בך משלמים שבר לרשעים בעוה"ז אפילו על מצווה קלה שעושין. דברים י' ז: ומשלם לשונאיו אל פניו להאבידו עיין בתרגום יונתן שם

⁵ חובות הלבבות שער הבטחון פ"ג (ח"א דף שיח במהדורת לב טוב): ולפעמים הטובה שד' נתן לרשע הוא הגורם העקרי למותו ורעתו, כמו שכתוב (קהלת ה' יב): עושר שמור לבעלו לרעתו ⁶ ממדרש רבה: קהלת ז טו

⁷ ממדרש רבה: קהלת ז טו חובות הלבבות שער הבטחון פ"ג (ח"א דף שיח במהדורת לב טוב): ולפעמים ד' משהה בידו את הטובות ומאריך לו אף, מפני שיודע שסופו לחזור בתשובה ויהיה ראוי להן, כמו שידע לך משופו של מנשה המלך (דבר הימים ב' לג)

Furthermore, even if a רשע will not do good deeds himself, he may be destined to produce righteous children. As such, he may merit to live and have good in this world.¹ This type of רשע may even refer to one who has destroyed his natural capacity to do good.²

השם allows the רשע maximum time to repent and gives him טוב either because he had a righteous ancestor³ or as a test of faith for those who see his success.⁴

¹מדרש רבה: קהלת ז טו

חובות הלבבות שער הבטחון פ"ג (ח"א דף שיז במהדורת לב טוב):
ולפעמים ד' מוסר לו הטובות בתור פקדון, עד שיתן לו הקל יתברך בן צדיק שיהיה ראוי להיות וגו'

ויש רשע מאריך בדעתו ולמה א"ר יאשיה מפני ג דברים שמא יעשה תשובה או שמא יעשה מצות שישלם לו הקב"ה שברו בעולם הזה או שמא יצאו ממנו בעים צדיקים שכן מציע שהאריך הקב"ה פנים לאחז (שנתן לו למלוך טו שנים) ויצא ממנו חזקוהו, לאמנו - ויצא ממנו יאשיהו, לשמעי' - ויצא ממנו מרדכי.

²גר"א:

יש מי שנפשו טובה בטבע במדותיה ואעפ"כ הוא רשע ולזה נותן לו בל שברו בעוה"ז שלא יהיה לו חלק לעוה"ב מפני שהיה נקל לו מאד לעשות טוב ולא רצה (ביאורו לברכות יז מובא באבן שלמה א:ח)

³חובות הלבבות שער הבטחון פ"ג (ח"א דף שיח במהדורת לב טוב):

ולפעמים ד' מניין לרשע מפני שאביו עשה חסד בעבר, והיה ראוי שיטיבו לבט בזהב, כמו שאמר ד' ליהוא בן נמשי (מלכים ב' י ל): בני רבצים ישבו לך על בשא ישראל, ונאמר (משלי ב ז): מתהלך בתומו צדיק אשרי בעין אחריו, ונאמר (תהלים לז בח): נצר הייתי גם זקנתי ולא ראיתי צדיק נעזב וזרעו מבקש לחם.

⁴חובות הלבבות שער הבטחון פ"ג (ח"א דף שיח במהדורת לב טוב):

ולפעמים מטרת הדבר היא, כדי לנסות את בני האדם העראים בצדיקים, ולברר מי מהם צדיקים רק בלפי חוץ, ומי מהם צדיקים באמת. אלה, שבראותם את הצלחת הרשעים, שרים מהר מעבודת הבורא ומזדקנים למצא חן בעיניהם וללמד ממעשיהם, מתברר שהם רמאים צבועים שפנימויותם מושחתות. ואלה, שלמרות הצלחת הרשעים ממשיכים לעבוד את ד', וסובלים ממה שהרשעים מושלים עליהם ומבלמים אותם, מתברר שהם הצדיקים שלבם שלם עם ד', ומתגלה שהם הנאמנים באמת לעבודתו, ויקבלו מהבורא ית' שבר על זה, כמו שידוע לך מהרד"פ ששכל אליו הנביא מאיזבל וירמיהו ממושלי דורו.

CHAPTER C: דין VS. רחמים

i- Need for דין

ii - עומק הדין -

iii- All חסד

iv- We are not trained to recognize דין

v- Hidden השגחה

a- Our יסורים show us that השם is looking after us

b- Our יסורים are in our best interests

CHAPTER C: רחמים VS. דין

¹ There is a need for דין in this world, as רחמים without דין would destroy the תורה. Since everyone's circumstances are unique, pure רחמים would mean a different תורה for everyone. To illustrate, we see that דין (ראש השנה, although with רחמים) comes first and then everyone. (Don't tell Me that you didn't know, that you were sick or tired, etc. Let's just see whether you kept the Torah or not.) However, השם does not implement the דין immediately. He introduces enough רחמים so that the דין is not total, is not immediate and allows for תשובה. Then, on יום כפור, the רחמים peaks. But even then, the objective standards of the Torah are applied (דין שברחמים).²

עומק הדין - ii

According to the Daas Tevunos, the reward one has or punishment one gets is not awarded through a separate Mishpat by G-d but emerges and is a natural consequence of action itself. Therefore, when we speak of G-d's Mishpat, we must understand that we are referring to the rules of Mishpat to which our actions are subject rather than a separate judgment afterwards.³

Even in this world there is intrinsic a correlation between the actions of a person and their consequences. An example of this is that eight kings descended from עשו before kings descended from יעקב because יעקב called עשו "Adoni" eight times. יעקב had to humble himself before Esav in order to save the lives of his family, and yet, his actions had an impression on him and his descendents.⁴

In truth, although all השגחה is just and according to דין, we know that G-d truly wants to benefit us – He loves His creations and wants to do good. As such, we must recognize that even דין comes from G-d's love for us and that within the very דין itself is רחמים as well.⁵

ימסילת ישרים

ז"ע"פ רב דסלד

³ דעת תבונות דף ג סי"ד (מהדורת ר פרידלנדר):
... האדם) ש(משלים את עצמו ... זה עצמו יהיה ... שברו
נפש החיים שער א פי"ב:

החטא עצמו הוא עונשו (ז"ע"פ זה משביר מאמר ח"ל: בל האומר הקב"ה ויתרן הוא ויתרו חייו) עין שער ב פי"ו הקטע האחרון

⁴ שיעורי דעת ח"א שיעור י (עומק הדין):

בזה שקרא לעשו שמונה פעמים אדוני גרם עי"ז שיעמדו מבניו של עשו שמונה מלכים קודם לבני יעקב ... ובאמת לא חטא יעקב בזה [ואדרבה רואים שפרשה זו שימש בדוגמה והדרבה איך להתייחס לשלטון במשך הגלות] ... ורואים אע"פ מזה ... [ש] המצוה ושברה, החטא ועונשו אחד הוא ... ולכן אף שמוברח היה יעקב להבנע לפני עשו ולהשפיל א"ע לפניו מפני שבגת נפשות בבל זאת הטבע עושה את שלו שכל קמט ותנעה שבנפש האדם עושה רושם בו ותולדותיו, ובהיות יעקב צדיק מוט לפני רשע, נעשה עי"ז רושם בנפשו שנחסר בו במדה ידועה בח המלוכה ולא היו בניו ראויים למלוכה עד אחרי עבוד שמונה דורות שמלכו בני עשו.
ולא יקשה לו שא"ב נמצא שעבד ח"ו הקב"ה דינא בלא דינא ...

⁵ דרך ה' ח"ב פי"ח אות א:

...היות בל סדרי ההשגחה ודרביה יושר המשפט וקו הדין ... ואמנם, ידענו באמת שאין חפצו של הקב"ה אלא להיטיב, והנה הוא אוהב את ברואיו, באב האהבה את בן אלא שמתעם האהבה עצמה ראוי שייסר האב את בן, להיטיב באחריות; ובענין שנאמר: "כי באשר יושר איש את בן ה' אלקיך מייסרד" (דברים ח"ה); ונמצא שהמשפט והדין עצמו ממקור האהבה הוא טובע...ואולם... שהמוסר בעצמו יהיה ממתק ולא קשה ואכזרי, כי האהבה בעצמה תמזג את הדין ברחמים, והשני שלפעמים, בשהשעה צריכה לכבד, יעבור האדון ב"ה על שורת הדין לגמרי, ויעהג ברחמים, ובענין שנאמר: וחנתי את אשר אחן ורחמתי את אשר ארחם" (שמות לג יט)

The חסד states that all משפט by השם starts out as an attempt to reward us for our merits. The חסד of חוב (the clearest expression of which is יסורים) is only a result of our incapacity to receive השם's חסד more directly. יסורים therefore only exist as a rebound effect of מתן שכר, like a ball rebounding off a wall. The שכר is being given but cannot be received by us appropriately and is therefore registered by us as יסורים.¹ In other words, יסורים have no independent existence in the הנהגת ד' and therefore in reality. The moment we rid ourselves of what was preventing us from receiving the שכר directly, the שכר no longer rebounds as יסורים. יסורים, then, are really our invention, not השם's, reflecting the incompatibility between the Giver's giving and the recipient's ability to receive.²

However, the יסורים themselves help remove the very incompatibility which they express (see reasons below). חז"ל say that זו מדת פורעניות טוב מאד - i.e. מאד is the capacity to do more and more, ever greater. יסורים facilitate open-ended חסד by השם.

השם, so to speak, suffers the hiding of His חסד (and the potential ח"ו השם, חלול השם) in order to allow for the incompatibility to be removed so that a greater חסד can then be done. The יסורים are part of that greater חסד.³

One of the greatest incompatibilities with השם's חסד is גאווה, which also expresses itself as not recognizing השם's השגחה (& therefore feeling יסורים ידני). humble a person and make it easier for him to see that he is not in control.

We are not trained to recognize דין in our lives nor to recognize the חסד in דין from which the דין comes. We can get as far as making a ברכה on something that is seemingly bad, but not as far as the same ברכה for both "good" and "bad."⁴ As such, we notice the bad more easily. An article in Scientific American⁵ states that in the years between 1967 and 1994, 46,380 articles in 'Psychological Abstracts' mentioned depression, 36,851 mentioned anxiety and 5,099 anger. Only 2,389 mentioned happiness, 2,340 life satisfaction and 405 joy. We are, however, able, to know at some level that what we perceive as bad is also ultimately good.⁶

עיון שם עד סוף האות

בל שהקב"ה חפץ בו מדבאו ב'סורין' ברבות ה.

לפום צערא אגרא (פרקי אבות ה:בז)

¹see definitions above by the שיעורי דעת

²יום הבפורים בו

³However, where the חלול השם is potentially too great, that same source in חסד will require that השם reveal Himself (e.g. משה's reasoning to השם not to destroy ישראל. See מדרש תהילים קז that this will also be why השם will redeem us from the final גלות.)

⁴ברכות מח:

מגין שבשם שמברך על הטובה מברך על הרעה
עיון מגילה טו:

ברכות ט:

על בשורות טובות אומר הטוב והמנוח על בשורות רעות אומר ברוך דיון אמת

⁵May, 1996, p. 54

⁶ברכות ט: מאי חייב לברך על הרעה בשם שמברך על הטובה...לקובלניהו בשמחה (ע"ש במה ראיות מהפסוקים) ... וכן תנא משמיה דר' עקיבא לעולם יהא אדם רגיל לומר בל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד בי הא דר' עקיבא דהוה קאזיל באורחא מטא להויה מתא. בעא אושפיזא – לא יהי ליה אמר בל דעביד רחמנא לטב אזל ובית בדבא (ולן בשדה) והוה בהדיה

Miriam Adahan points out that one of the main reasons people cannot handle challenges is because they feel, "This is unfair. This should not be happening to me." The issue, however, is not what one deserves. The issue is, rather, whom he is here to serve - Himself or G-d? Furthermore, שכר בהאי עלמא ליכא.

Rabbi Shlomo Canvasser and his wife were childless for twenty years. After their tremendously long wait for children they gave birth to twins, one of which had Down's Syndrome. R' Shlomo wrote as follows: "The 2nd day at the hospital, I noticed that the nurses were 'walking on eggshells' around my wife. I went to the head nurse and said the following, 'Please know that my wife and I know that whatever השם has given us is a ברכה שלימה. My wife is happy and I am happy and there is every reason that you and your staff should share in our joy. I would ask that anyone who is not able to share in these feelings should not have contact with my wife.'

"A dear friend, who was our birthing coach, recently met one of the nurses who had been on duty that day. The nurse told our friend that after the birth, the nurses in both departments (newborns and mothers) were quite emotional (upset) about our having a daughter with DS after waiting for children for 20 years. She added that what I said to the head nurse spread like wildfire among the nurses in both departments and she related that several nurses said that their השקפת החיים was changed after what I said."

In the Western World today, the generation of Instantaneous Gratification, suffering is more difficult to understand and more likely. Peggy Noonan stated: "Why are we so unhappy when we have it so good? We are not happier. We are just cleaner, more attractive, sad people than we used to be...It is embarrassing to live in the most comfortable time in history and not be happy...Somewhere in the 60's and 70's we started expecting to be happy, and society cracked and strained in the storm...We are among the first generations of man that actually expected to find happiness here on earth, and our search for it has caused such unhappiness...We teach the culture of resentment." We avoid relating to other people's pain and speak in dehumanizing terms: for example, civilian injuries in war are referred to as "collateral damage" or a tragedy in which lives were lost is often referred to as "a 12 million dollar tragedy".¹

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her book On Death and Dying states that the more training a physician had, the less willing he was to become involved in the human aspects of terminally ill patients.² Moreover, 90% resisted Kubler-Ross and her colleagues talking to any of their patients. When in one hospital ward for the terminally ill, she met with the nursing staff, and an older nurse expressed her dismay about "the absolute absurdity of wasting precious time on people who cannot be helped any longer". Another nurse expressed her particular anger when the patients died on her when there were family members present or after she had just shaken their pillow. Only one out of twelve expressed the idea that dying patients, too, needed their care. Most implied that the patients had expressed an angry act against them by

תרנגולא וחמרא ושדגא. אתא זיקא בבייה לשדגא, אתא שוורא אבליה לחמרא. אמר בל דעביד רחמנא לטוב. ביה בליליא אתא גייסא שבייה למתא אמר להו לאו אמרי לבו בל מה שעושה הקדוש ברוך הוא הבל לטובה.

¹Erich Fromm, The Sane Society

²p. 218

dying in their presence."¹ In contrast, Judaism allows one million Jews to be מחלל שבת to extend the life of one (Jewish) patient, even a vegetable, by one second.²

At times, it is easier to see אמת in pure דין, especially the death of a close relative or friend. דין is really pure and naked truth. As stated above, we are not trained to recognize דין, i.e. to recognize the חסד in the דין and from which the דין comes. But although it is more difficult to recognize the חסד of דין, it is easier to recognize the אמת in a situation of דין. (People may say I don't understand why G-d did this at the same time that they get closer to G-d. This includes the non-observant as well.)

When a person suffers, there is more hidden 'השגחה with that person than at a time when all is well.³ Suffering comes in the exact measure that G-d decrees; we get exactly what we need. For example, when יוסף הצדיק was sold to the ישמעאלים, he was surrounded by sacks of good smelling scents even though ישמעאלים normally carry hides and fuel, which have bad odors. One might have thought that יוסף, with his life seemingly destroyed, could not have cared less, but השם only decrees what is necessary and not a hair's breadth more. Additionally, we only get what we can handle, just as a pottery manufacturer will be wary of testing weak pots by knocking on them lest they break but will readily knock on his strong products. When we recognize these principles we can see that ישורים show us that השם is looking after us.⁴

We also subsequently see that our ישורים are in our best interests and we cannot bring out our potential without them. Without נסיונות, one can only work on the potential that he knows he has. נסיונות bring out hidden potential. Every נסיון, by very definition, brings us to a point where we do not know how to resolve that נסיון. Our normal range of internal qualities and environmental tools does not appear to be sufficient. Therefore, the only way we can ultimately resolve such situations is by taking a leap of faith. The leap of faith allows us to confront the נסיון without the solution at hand. This produces qualities in us we would never have known about. נסיון from the word נס - the miracle of the self.

¹p. 224

²Rabbi Tauber

³ובשעור דעת (חלק ג' יסורין של אהבה):
הקב"ה קרוב אליו בצרנו במשנ"ל עמו אנכי בצרה דוקא בצרה עוד יותר מאשר בשלוח... ובשנ"ל (ועין במתע')בברכות
ל"ג. (מזכירין גבורות גשמים)בברכות-בש"ד (בתחיית המתים, וצדיקים להבין למה קראו את זה גבורות גשמים, והענין הוא
שירידת גשמים מתראות בזעף ואעפ"כ היא הברכה הבי גדולה בעולם ...)אבל (הקרוב הזה קשה לו לשונו, וגם ענין
המיתה במו"ב קרוב הוא שהנשמה שבה אל מקורה העליון ובבל זאת את מרגישים אותם לצער ויגון רב.)שעור דעת

⁴בי את אשר יאהב ה' יוביח (משלי ג':א)
אשרי הגבר אשר תיסרט קה, ומתורתר תלמדט (תהלים צד:יב)
בל שעברו עליו ארבעים יום בלא יסורין קבל עולמו (ערבין טז:)

CHAPTER D: METHOD

i- ברישא חשוכא

ii- הקדים רפואה למכה

iii- Unexpected Source of ישועה

CHAPTER D: METHOD

יסורים come in many different forms which are all a function of what type of growth השם is trying to illicit.¹

A person may be unhappy because he is simply unhappy with himself; he doesn't like himself². One might be unhappy as a result of emotional, psychological causes or for physical bodily reasons that result from human inflicted pain or non-human environmentally inflicted pain (like natural disasters). One may be unhappy as a result of knowledge that he will suffer a shortened life span (which in turn might not be a proper attitude since the purpose of life is not its length but completing one's potential).

Nevertheless, all יסורים follow certain patterns of השגחה. Firstly, there is the concept of ברישא חשוכא – the dark, hard times precede the light, good circumstances. In creating the world, השם first created darkness and then light. This then became a law of עולם הזה, including the human condition.³

In addition, ה' always prepares the cure before the sickness. It is not just that השם arranges the רפואה in advance (e.g. ensuring that משה grew up in פרעה's palace; that חאסתר had become the queen), but rather, the מכה itself is part of the רפואה. Therefore, we thank השם for bringing us out of מצרים despite the fact that He was the one who put us there

¹In **Chapter E** below, we discuss the various reasons why השם brings יסורים.

²To quote Dwight L. Moody, "I have more trouble with myself than any other man I ever met."

³צדקת הצדיק יא:

ילפינן מבריייתו של עולם דבבל דבר הלילה קודם ליום בדאי' ריש בברכות. בי בבבל דבר ההעדר קודם להויה ובי אשב בחושך אדע בי אח"ב ד' אור לי. בי בל חיי האדם כך מורבבים מהזמן חושך ואור (עולה ויורד – ש' יג) יום ולילה כך חושך חלילה רק שהחושך קודם דקליפה קודמת לפרי) ע"ש שזה אינו בן בקדושה

Physically:

In a sensory free environment, our senses deaden. (e.g. stare at a completely white wall, and your eyesight begins to blip out; we only feel our clothes when they rub against us. Sustained background noise is cut out.)

Emotionally:

Jung-Man needs difficulties; they are necessary for health. (See quotes from Victor Frankel, toward end of **Chapter B iv**)

Spiritually:

Our נשמות will always reach for more than we are - i.e. to move from חושך to אור.

ערוך לגר, סנהדרין סז:

בל דבר טוב בשיעלה ויוסיף על שלמותו...בתחילה ירד למטה ממעלתו ויפסד ואחריו בן יעלה למעלה בגו בחיטה שנזרעת שנמלטתחילה היא אובל ואם ירצה שתוליד עוד במותה יזרעה והיא תרקוב תחילה ואח"כ חטה חדשה ובן ענן האדם בועה"ז בשיעלה במעלתו לבא לידי חיי עוה"ב שאחר תחיית המתים ימות ויבלה בארץ ואחר בן יחיה ויוסיף במעלתו...

Similarly, he explains why the המקדש בית המקדש had first to be destroyed in order for the third המקדש, which is בית המקדש, to be built.

This too explains the exceptional lowliness of the immediate pre-Messianic generation.

This is why משיח is called בן נפלי.

(Perhaps this is the deeper reason why עקיבא ר' laughed when seeing the חורבן, connecting the fulfillment of the prophecies of destruction and rebuilding together.)

See 1 on 3 weeks (vol. 3) who explains that the very קדושה of בלל ישראל requires that when they fall, they fall to very great depths

to begin with. The process of **הר סיני מעמד** did not begin with **יציאת מצרים**; it began with the **ירידה** of **יעקב** and the **שבטים** to **מצרים**.

נסיונות have unexpected sources of **ישועה**. Not knowing where a **ישועה** will come from is of the essence of a **נסיון**.¹

¹see **Chapter B iv**, end

CHAPTER E: REASONS

i- Complexity

ii- Past and Future

a - Past

1- תשובה

2- כפרה

3- Self-Inflicted

4- גלגולים

5- חטא האבות

6- (ארץ ישראל especially in כלל ישראל)

7- General state of the world

b - Future

1- General - Growth

2- Test

3- עיקר תפקיד

4- Focus

5- Understand השגחה's השם

6- שכר - יסורים של אהבה Increase

iii- קדוש השם

iv- Choice

a- Avoid Greater Negative Consequences of Own Choice

b- Freedom of Choice by Others

CHAPTER E: REASONS

The reasons for suffering are complex.¹ In each person there are different points and explanation as to why he is judged in a specific way and given certain conditions.² Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb says that the Jewish explanation for suffering is general and not specific. In order to understand the difference between general and specific explanations, consider this example: ask a physicist why, when a leaf falls from a tree, it lands where it does, and he can list a complete list of relevant factors. The force of gravity, motion of the air, mass and aerodynamic properties of the leaf etc. determine the leaf's downward path. Now suppose there is a leaf still attached to the tree, and we ask the physicist to mark the exact spot on the ground where it will land when it falls in ten seconds from now. He cannot do it. Does this show that his explanation of why the leaf falls (gravity, air motion) is wrong? Not at all - he has cited all the relevant factors, but he cannot quantify them in a particular case. He cannot ascertain the exact motion of all the molecules of air in the vicinity, the exact aerodynamic characteristics of the leaf and so on. His explanation applies to leaves generally, but cannot be applied in detail to any specific leaf.

So too, G-d's Providence is a function of our entire life situation present, past and future. Our entire physical, emotional, mental and spiritual makeup are included, as are all our commitments, character traits, immediate and broader environment, financial status, knowledge of Torah, and many, many more criteria, some of which may even appear to be contradictory to us. Although we may identify many of the factors involved, factoring their exact influence on השם's decision-making process in any situation is beyond us.

One could add to this משל that while a scientist cannot predict which way the leaf will fall because of the complexity of all the variables, after the leaf has fallen he may be able to explain why it fell the way it did. חתם סופר writes that when משה רבינו asked to see G-d's face, G-d answered that he cannot see His face. Mortal man cannot understand the acts of G-d before they have come to pass. But, man can see G-d's back - he can see and understand the effects of G-d's acts after they have come to pass.

¹הרב חיים פרידלנדר:

יש להבין את כללי ההנהגה של צדיק ורע לו, אע"פ שא"א להבין את פרטיה - למה צדיק זה רע לו, וצדיק זה טוב לו (הארה 3 על דעת תבונות)
ושם (הארה 465): ובשם שא"א להבין את טעמי הבריאה - משום מה נבראה כך ולא אחרת - כך לא טבל להבין למה חלקו של צדיק זה הוא כך וחלקו של צדיק זה הוא אחר

²דרך ה' ח"ב פ"ו ב:

בי הנה בבבל, בבבל איש מן האנשים, ימצאו טענות רבות, לפי סבות שונות, להיות נידון האיש ההוא לדרכים רבים מדרכי המשפט; ובפרט ג"כ, בבבל מעשה ומעשה ממנו, הנה ימצאו בחינה לחובה, ובמה צדיקים רבים; בי כל עניני העולם מרובים בהרבות רבות באמת, ונמשכים בדרכים שונים; ... בבבלי דיעים העליונים... ישקל הענין לפי כל הבחינות האמתיות ההן, ותצא הגזרה בפי הנאות.
ד: ...ואולם גם (לקטורגו של המקטרג) לזה חקק חקים ושדר סדרים... איך יהיה ומתי יהיה, ובענין מה שאמרו חז"ל: "השמן מקטרג בשעת השבעה" (ברא"ר צא), ובן מה שאמרו חז"ל: "שלשה מזבירים עונותיו של אדם" (ברכות נה), ופרטים רבים ביוצא בזה.
ה: ... (מה שאמרו חבמים ז"ל: "בארבעה פרקים העולם נידון") ר"ה מז' (א...ההפרשים שבין קודם גזר דין ולאחר גזר דין...)

ברכות סב.

קבלה דיסורי שתיקווא

מהר"ל אבות ד' מז:

(שמה שלא הודיע ה' על דרכיו היינו ש) לא היה יכול משה לעמוד על הסבה, דודאי דבר זה אינו תמיד רק לפי שעה ולא ידע ענין השעה ולמה השעה הזאת דוקא, ועל זה אמר אין בידיו לא משלות רשעים (ואף לא מיסורי הצדיקים) (ודבר זה לא הודיע למשה... ועוד ... אע"ג שידוע מ"מ אין ידוע איזה חטא עשה הצדיק שב"ב יהיה ביסורין ואיזה מצוה עשה הרשע שכל כך יהיה בשלוח ובטובה

Therefore, bearing in mind all the limitations of our understanding, it does behoove us to try and understand why we have been inflicted – שיפּשפּש במעשיו. Understanding the purpose of יסורים does not mean that we will understand why G-d chose that path but will give us an insight into what message we are being given by the יסורים and what we have to do to correct the situation.

The failure to fully understand is part of the lesson of יסורים to begin with. It aids us in acknowledging that there is something out there which is far greater than ourselves - the acknowledgment that ultimately, the finite cannot understand the infinite.¹

יסורים may come on a person because of past transgression², or, in the case of a Tzadik, for the sake of some future need.³ The existence of the world as distinct from G-d entails the pain of separation from G-d. The greater the disconnection from השם, the greater the absence from existence itself which is essentially evil. The sin of man increases man's distance from השם, which subsequently increases השם's פנים and corruption in the world.⁴ יסורים come to restore the closeness that existed prior to the sin in various ways. Firstly, יסורים bring a person to תשובה (which subsequently brings him closer to G-d).⁵ It is only when a person is under duress that he gains true insight into what part of himself requires further growth.⁶

In a sense, pain as a spur to do תשובה is no different from when the body aches physically in order to tell a person that something is wrong and needs attention. If one's tooth would not hurt he would not know to get it filled. The decay would then totally destroy the tooth without him even knowing about it. One feels under the weather as a message that he is eating wrong, that he needs more sleep or exercise, that he must go to the doctor or that he must pull his hand from fire:

¹ יחובות הלבבות שער הבטחון פ"ג:

והנעם מדוע לא נתנו הנביאים תשובה המבהירה את סיבת הדבר, הוא מפני שלכל אחד ואחד מהצדיקים הללו יש סיבה אחרת מדוע שה' מגסה אותו ביסורין ועונ

² Pain and suffering came into the world because Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, man's first sin. It is sin which causes human suffering. Pain and suffering are not synonymous with evil. Pain and suffering are the effects that occur when a person chooses not to have a relationship with the Ultimate. The person denies himself ultimate pleasure bringing upon himself true pain. Pain is a symptom of how far one is from G-d, whereas evil is the distance itself. Pain and suffering are in reality a gift which one can use to help himself recognize the distance and get rid of the evil. It is worthwhile to view suffering as a prophet telling one to improve his ways. (Ohr Yahail vol. 3 p.98, quoted by Ziesel Hauptman, Moreshet)

³ בית אלוקים, שער התשובה פ"ט:

בשנחפש על בלל היסורין נמצא אותם נחלקים לשני מינים, יסורין שהם באים על האדם החייב על העבר, או הבאים על האדם הצדיק על העתיד

⁴ Z. Lebovitz

⁵ יבצר לך ומצאוך ... (דברים ד:ל)

יומא פו.

רש"י ד"ה באן ע"י יסורין: שלא שבו עד שנתיסרו ביסורין
רואה אדם שיסורין באין עליו יפּשפּש במעשיו (ברכות ה).

is תשובה (שערי תשובה) שער א { רב צדוק הבהן, שימון יב ותקנת השבים } accepted. See

⁶ תקנת השבים יג: ...

בחדר לבבו אור הער יפה לבדיקה שאור שבעיסה הנמון בחורין ובסדקין זה טוב יותר בלילה בעת החושך שאז אור הער מאיר
(ע"ש)

“When I was in medical school, we were taught that it may often be needed to dilate a patient’s pupil in order to see the eye-grounds. We were instructed to always have a syringe of morphine available, because if the patient had undetected glaucoma, dilating the pupils could precipitate an attack of acute glaucoma, which is extremely painful. But our instructor said, “Do not hesitate to dilate because of fear of precipitating an attack of acute glaucoma. You will actually be doing the patient a great favor by revealing that he has glaucoma, because this can be treated. If it is not discovered and goes untreated, it could lead to a loss of vision.”¹

So, too, with our spiritual selves. Here we also feel the pain of our being out of sync with our spiritual harmony. יסורין is a symptom; תשובה is the treatment.

Furthermore, when one suffers the pain atones for his sins.² It is a great חסד of the Ribono shel Olam that He cleanses our souls from blemishes and imperfections through יסורים.³ A Jew with great יסורים once approached מרדכי, saying "What does השם want of me?" רבי ישראל answered: "A Jew with many sins and few merits was brought in front of the heavenly court. The scales were tipped heavily against him. Then his יסורים were added to his merits, but there was still a tiny bit lacking, and he was dragged off to גיהנום. As he was being taken away crying he said, 'Oh Almighty, everything comes from you and everything belongs to you. Were you not able to find a little extra suffering for me so that I did not have to be dragged to גיהנום?...'" The Jew walked away happily, "You have comforted me, you have comforted me".⁴

¹On a similar note, G-d says רפאיד בי אני ד' רפאיד. Rav Tzadok HaCohen points out the inherent contradiction in this verse. In the beginning, it says that G-d will not bring any of these diseases on us. But the end of the verse says that G-d will heal us, implying that we will get sick to begin with. Rav Tzadok explains that the Makos that were brought on the Egyptians were to punish and destroy them. G-d promises that He will not inflict such a blow on the Jewish people. But, the Jewish people will receive a different type of Yesurin, the kind that a doctor would inflict on a patient to cure him.

²שבת נה.

אין יסורין בלא עון

נפש החיים שער ב פ"ח:

שבמו שמטבוע האדם יאכל מאכל שבטבועו הוא מקלקל ומזיק לגופו יזיק לו אותו המאכל או גם יחלה ממנו ואם שם המעות הוא ימות ממנו ... בן הוא בענין העוונות ...

נתיב היסורין פ"ב:

(יסורים הם) מעוט לאדם ובל דבר שהוא מעוט לאדם הוא בפרה ושלק החטאים בודאי

רמב"ם הל' תשובה פ"א הל' ד':

עבר על ברייתו ומיתות ב"ד ועשה תשובה וזה"ב תולין יסורין הבאין עליו וגמדין לו הבפרה

³שחשד גדול מאוד עושה הקב"ה עם הנשמה לרחוץ אותה מביתנים ופגמים (האוסר שבאמונה דף ג"ה)

To what may this be compared: To a person who lent a large sum of money to two other people, the first his friend, the second his enemy. From his friend he claimed a little of the money owed each month, until, when it was finally time to pay, his friend owed him very little. From his enemy he claimed nothing. When it came time for his enemy to repay the loan, he was not able to, and went to debtors prison. So too, those of us who G-d loves, He claims a little of the payment of our sins each time He sends יסורים. Then, when we die, we come in front of the Heavenly Court owing very little. (תרומה חפשי מספר חב"ב יסורים דף ג)

יובדומה במדרש רבה פרשת עקב: מעשה היה ברב חמא שראה שומא אחד עוסק בתורה, נתן לו השומא שלום והשיב לו רב חמא שלום עליך בן חורין. אמר לו השומא ובי עבד הייתי שאתה קורא לי בן חורין? אמר לו בן חורין אתה מן הגהטם, שתלך ישר לגן עדן בין ששבלת יסורין בעוה"ז, שהיית שומא

This is פשוט in the פסוק

אודך ה' בי אנפת בי (ישעי' יב:א)

הללו עעיז והללו שר של הים who claimed עעיז. The Jews had the merit of their great suffering in מצרים which allowed for their rapid approach to תורה מתן.

[It is interesting to note that even the English word for pain has to do with the idea of purification. The word pain is derived from the Latin word poena ("punishment") which can be traced to the Sanskrit root pu, meaning purification.¹]

In addition, יסורים may sometimes be self-inflicted, i.e. one makes a foolish mistake and must suffer the consequences.² Lack of faith leading to anxiety can also be self-inflicted.³ So too can suffering result from a person failing to search sufficiently for meaning in life.⁴

Furthermore, a person may suffer to atone for a previous גלגול. The מכתב מאליהו states that if one is born with יסורים it is definitely not יסורים of punishment unless it is to be מכפר on sins done in a previous lifetime.⁵ Or, one may be punished for the sins of his fathers if he follows in his father's path and sins as well.⁶

See for when יסורים need תשובה to effect בפרה and when it effects בפרה even without תשובה and the reasons for this. He states there that יסורים never help when a person is angry about them (lit. kicks against them).

On the other hand the שער התשובה ט (בית אלקים) explains that even where יסורים come for other reasons (e.g. because of his own stupidity - see below), if he intends that they should serve as a בפרה, they do.

explains that a person who sins effects all the עולמות to some extent. The עונש a person receives not only restores his personal פגם, but also that of all the עולמות:

ואינם חוזרים לאיתן בריאותם ותקונם האמיתי במקדם עד אשר יתרוקט אלו בחזית המומאה ע"י קיבול האדם עונשו הראוי לו

¹One of the primary socio-cultural functions of pain is its punitive and purifying significance. (People in Pain, Mark Zbrowski, pg. 38, 40)

²בית אלקים:

ולפעמים באים לאדם יסורים בסבת רוע הנהגתו וסבלותו, ואינם ביסורין שהם לבפרת עון, מצד בי ברוע בחירתו הבאים עליו, במי שלא נזהר במאכלו ומשקיו ומלבושו ובא לידי חולי, ובן מי שלא נזהר בלשונו ובמעשיו והיה סבה שהבן אותו בן אדם ויסרו אותו, וביוצא באלו היסורים הבאים על האדם ברוע הנהגתו... (ותעא) ב"ב קמ"ד (הבל בידי שמנים חוץ מציעים פחים) שער התשובה ט)

³ We walk in circles so limited by our own anxieties that we can no longer distinguish between true and false, between the gangsters whim and the purest ideal. (Ingman Bergman, *Morow's International Dictionary of Contemporary Quotations*)

⁴ I feel lost, inadequate, incomplete, inept, unworthy. I wish this world would go away. (Female 44 yrs. Old.) (www.palace.het~/llama/psyche/ems9.html)

⁵מכתב מאליהו ח"ב דף 225 פ' וישב):

מי שיסורין הם חלקו מתחילת יצירתו, הרי לא שייך שיהיו יסורי עונש (אם לא לעונש על חטא בגלגול אחר) במדב"ד יז: יסורין קשים... היו ראויין לבא על אברהם... ואלו הן היסורין אותן שבאו על איוב

would stand up for child with Downs Syndrome.

⁶גור אריה - פרשת שמעי (דף סב)

ואע"ג שמטו בשביל עונש אהרון שהקב"ה משלם חטא האבות לבנים, ו"ל דבמו שאצל הרשע בשאוחזין מעשה אבותם משלם להם הקב"ה מעשה אבותם כך בצדיק גמור אם בט עשה שום חטא משלם לו מעשה אביו אם הקב"ה רוצה שיביא חטא הצדיק על בט ואם לא חטא הבן כלל אין מביא על בט חטא הצדיק לכך צריך ג"כ שיהיה חטא לבנים ובאשר יש חטא לבנים אז יתוסף על זה חטא האבות וענשו הבנים ולפיכך חטא האבות וחטא הבנים גרם זה בודאי ביחד וזה נכון

Sometimes **קדושה** as a whole suffers because of its lack of overall **אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל**.¹ This is particularly so when **יִשְׂרָאֵל** is in **אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל**. When our Sages and later scholars give the causes for the Exile, they refer only to communal transgressions that affect the entire nation. Only wrongs common to the nation as a whole seal the fate of a generation and bring the curses of the Admonitions down upon it. It should also be noted that an entire society may be judged by its majority.² There is also an additional principle to be taken into account: "Once the Destroyer (the Angel of Death) has been granted power to act, he does not differentiate between **רשע** and **צדיק**."³

Along these same lines, there are times when a **גדול הדור** will suffer on behalf of the whole Jewish nation.⁴ Where there are no **גדולים**, children may suffer.⁵ The Jewish people is not merely a collection of disparate individuals; it is an integral unit – much like a human body, that, although made up of many different organs and limbs, comprises an integrated and unified being. Carrying this analogy further, there are times that G-d causes certain parts of the "body" to suffer for the sins of the organism as a whole. When this occurs, the punishment is directed against the *essential* part of the organism, for, in effect, this is a strike against the body as a whole. In the case of the Jewish people, this would mean that suffering is sometimes directed against the most righteous of individuals, for these people are the community's support and lifeblood. If, in a certain generation, there are no righteous people, then the essential part of the community is deemed to be its schoolchildren, for it is through the merit of their innocent Torah study that the community draws its sustenance. Thus, in such cases the schoolchildren can be afflicted for the sins of the generation.⁶

Each person suffers pain according to the condition of his soul and the level of his service to G-d. There is one who knows pain only because of his children, his parents or his

¹מ"ד תצוה לוֹא

ואתה תצוה ההוא הוא דבתיב (ירמיה ו"א) "זית רען יפה פרי תואר קרא ה' שמך" ובי לא נקראו ישראל אלא בזית הזה בלבד והלא בבבל מיני אילנות נאים ומשובחים נקראו ישראל... אלא מה הזית הזה עד שהוא באילט מגרדין אותו...נחבט...ועתה אתה במטחן...ו(מזרחי) אותן...בך ישראל באין עובדי בובבים וחובטים אותם ממקום למקום...ואח"כ עושים תשובה...

ועיין רש"י על ישעיה נג: ד-ה) אבל עיין בדד"ק ובמצודת דוד שם)

² הלכות תשובה להרמב"ם פרק ב' see also: קידושין נ

This rule of the majority is not restricted to a limited period, but may sometimes encompass several generations together, as is explained concerning the native population in the Land of Canaan (15:16) **בְּרֵאשִׁית 15:16** and in **אבות ב:ב** - Ten generations from Adam until Noah.

³מבילתא

⁴משבת שבת לב:

בזמן שצדיקים בדור צדיקים נתפסים על הדור המהר"ל חידושי אגדות (דף ב:):

פרוש בי העיקר שהוא בדור נתפס בעון הדור, באשר יש חטא בדור לוקח הקב"ה העקר שבדור שהוא נחשב כמו בל הדור. (עיין המשך של המהר"ל מיד למטה)

⁵מס' שבת לב: אין צדיקים בדור תעוקות של בית רבן נתפסים על הדור

המהר"ל חידושי אגדות (שם): בי העיקר שהוא בדור נתפס בעון הדור ... ובאשר אין צדיקים תעוקות של בית רבן נתפסין, והם עיקר בדור בבבלי הבל פה תורתם שהוא בלא חטא. ודבר זה מבואר בבמה מקומות שהשי"ת לוקח עיקר הדור בעון הדור ואע"ג שלא חטא הלא בבר אמרו (סנהדרין ב: ב) כל ישראל ערובין זה בזה ובאשר נענש העיקר בדור זה הוא בפרתו.

⁶ Artscroll, explaining the above מהר"ל.

neighbors; another, or a higher state, suffers pain because of the whole city; but there is one of a very high state who suffers pain because of the troubles on the whole world.¹

The רמח"ל² explains that the primary purpose of the world is not that each person should do good and get rewarded, or do bad and be punished (תקון הפרט). Rather, the ultimate purpose of the world is the תיקון הכללי - when the whole world comes to realize and reflect of השם. This is achieved, ironically, by evil existing, becoming very strong and then being the cause of the revelation of G-d's Oneness by its demise. צדיקים³ are of this sort of יסורים.⁴ Since at that time the final תיקון הכללי will be made, even צדיקים may suffer for this reason.

Man needs difficulties⁵; they are necessary for health.⁶ Man needs יסורים של אהבה

¹ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov

2-8 דרך השם

יכל עוד שיתעלם ויסתיר פניו האדון ב"ה, ויניח לרע להתגבר עד הגבול האחרון שאפשר להתגבר, דהיינו עד חורבן העולם, ולא עד בבל, הנה זה יהיה טעם יותר להגלות ולהיראות אח"כ אמיתות יחודו ית'. ... וכל זמן תגברת הרע, הנה גם הטובים יצטרכו לעמוד תחת עוני הרע, לא מפני שהדין כך, אלא שהשעה צריכה לכך ... [אדרבה אנשי רע יצליחו... ואחר זה יגלה ממשלתו ... ואז יקבלו הצדיקים שברם ולא קודם לכן. אך אם הוא מנהג לפי השבר ועונש, אז לא יהיה אלא טוב לטובים ורע לרעים, אמנם אין באן מה שיגרום תיקון גמור להנהגה שיבטל מציאות הרע, כי למה יבטל? ... וזה טוב ל[צדיקים] ודאי, שאז יקבלו שבר יותר גדול] לא רק על שקבלו יסורין באהבה אלא ג"כ על שהשתתפו לא רק בתקון עצמם היינו תקון הפרט אלא ג"כ בתקון ושלמות הכללי(ת[

דעת תבונות שם ס' קסח - קצ:

והנה הוא ית"ש יודע שלהשלים הבריאה הזאת צריכים שני דברים: הגברת ההארה, דהיינו הגברת ההשפעה וריבוי, והעלמה ומיעוט. כי יש ענינים שנתקנים בריבוי ההארה וההשפעה, ויש ענינים שנתקנים אדרבא בהעלם ומיעוט, בהניח לרע התגברות הגדול... ואין הדברים האלה תלויים במעשה ובזכות, אלא בתבונת הבריאה ומהותה... ואמנם כלל תיקון הבריאה חילק אותו האדון ב"ה בין כל הנשמות... שיש אדם שיגיע לו מצד שורש ענין להיות מושפע בריבוי השפעה... ויש אדם שיגיע לו מצד שורש ענין להיות מושפע במיעוט ההשפעה... ואמנם כלל ההנהגה הזאת שאינה פונה אל הזכות והחובה, אלא... למה שמצטרך להשלמת הבריאה... קראוה החכמים ז"ל "מזל"... אמנם... אין דבר זה טהר אלא בעולם הזה, אך בעולם הבא אין שם אלא שבר המעשים... (ואפילו בעוה"ז) (הוא ית' מתנהג פעם בדרך השבר ועונש) (שהיא ההנהגה המתגלית) ופעם בדרך המזל... (אף גזירות המזל לא יבואו אלא על ידי ענין מה) (חטא כל שהיה לפי מדריגת האדם) (המתחשק אל השבר ועונש שיוכלו ליתלות בו) (בגון רבי שלא ריחם על הבהמה שהובל לשחיטה) ... אמנם תבונות כל הסדרים והחוקים נקשר בענין התיקון הכללי... בי אינם שתי הנהגות הפכיות ומתנגדות) (ס' קסח - קצ הוצאת הרב פרידלנדר)

ובבלים ראשונים לד:

ובאחרית הגלות הקב"ה משתמש ברוב מזאת (מהנהגת המזל) (בי הבושה אז לתת תקון כללי לכל העולם, ועל בן צריך שיתנהג בהנהגת היחוד, שמן ההעלם הגדול יולד הגילוי הגדול, ויהיה שלימות ענין לעולם. (מבוא בהארה 474 שם) והוסיף הרב פרידלנדר דברים אלה פותחים פתח להבין את הגזירות הקשות שירדו על דורנו

ובבלים ראשונים לד:

בעוה"ב ודאי כל אחד מקבל לפי מעשיו... ואמנם עדיף בוחם של אלו המתקנים בדרך זה, שבמו שמה שקרה אותם אין לפי מעשיהם כי אם לפי מציאות ההנהגה הקבוצה בבל, כך השבר לא יהיה לתת להם לבד טוב, אלא לתקן מציאות ההנהגה הכללית. ואז יהיה להם שבר בפול ומבופל, שגרמו תיקון כללי להנהגה, ותועלת לעולם כולו מבחי מעשיהם, שהנהגה הכללית נתקנה.

⁴ דעת תבונות דף קפו

⁵ מנחות נג:

מה זית אינו מוציא שמן אלא ע"י בתיתה אף ישראל אין חוזרין למוטב אלא ע"י יסורין

⁶ Jung.

This is understood as the need by all of us to be challenged in order to function normally. As Albert Friedlander stated it: "Suffering is preferable to a life of apathy, which remains untouched by the fire of G-d." (*Suffering: A Jewish Perspective*, Pg. 8). The greater the horizons of the person, the more he can be expected to be

remove him from the physicalities of this world and bring him closer to G-d. יסורים של אהבה can effect their purpose only if one accepts the suffering he receives.¹ All this is necessary because it was the whole נשמה which was created to receive טוב השם, and even if someone serves השם with all their heart their whole life but fails to develop one aspect of himself, he still cannot receive all that השם wants to give him. For this it is required that כל הנשמה תהלל - the whole נשמה must relate to בית אלקים.² השם adds that although the מצוות are sufficient to provide that completion, we usually do not have the opportunity to do all the מצוות.³

"Yehuda Bacon, an Israeli artist, stated during the liberation from the concentration camp, "As a boy I thought: 'I will tell them what I saw, in the hope that people will change for the better.' But people didn't change and didn't even want to know. It was much later that I really understood the meaning of suffering. It can have meaning if it changes you for the better."⁴

Rav Hirsch writes in Horeb: They teach you the lasting character of the greatness which you yourself are ... לנסותך ... to elevate you ... the strength of mind and heart grows only through exercise, and the school for such exercise is suffering. ... Israel above all owes to suffering the greatness of its past ... Observe this Galuth-school of suffering in which Israel has been trained and tested for a thousand years and more.⁵

challenge: Those who aim at great deeds must suffer greatly. (Plutarch, *Lives*, Crassus: Ch. 26)

¹נתיב היסורין פ"א:

ופי' יסורין של אהבה כי באשר האדם הוא צדיק וראוי אל המעלה העליונה והאדם מצד הגוף יש בו צד מה שאינו ראוי אל אותה מעלה, שאין האדם ראוי אל אותה מעלה מצד החסרון שהוא דבק בחומר, והקב"ה מביא עליו יסורין כדי למרק הנפש שהוא דבק בחומר ולשלק חומר שלו ממנו... ולפיכך צריך שיקבל אותם מאהבה, כי אם אין מקבל אותם מאהבה אין לו דביקות בו ואין יהיו יסורין של אהבה.

שם, פ"ב:

היסורים זכור הנפש

² יסורים של אהבה, the separate vol. of Rav Elya Meir Bloch, שיעורי דעת

³ שער התשובה, chap 9:

ושם בשיעורי דעת (חלק ג' יסורין של אהבה):

א"א שיהיה האדם מוכן לקבלת הטובה בשלמותה אם לא יתפתחו כל חלקי הנפש בזמן ההבנה... ולכן יש לו לאדם לשמוח בכל מאורעות החיים אם רק יודע הוא להשתמש בראוי ברגש זה שנתעורר אצלו ע"י המאורע הזה... ובאמת... היסורין... הם באמת טובה לקרבות (לה' יותר גדולה מאשר בימי השלום) ע"ש דף קבב - קבד)

רמב"ן בראשית בב:א - ד"ה והאלקים נסה את אברהם:

ענין הנסיון הוא לדעתי בעבור היות מעשה האדם רשות מוחלטת בידו ... המעשה יתבדר יצוה בו להוציא הדבר מן הבח אל הפועל להיות לו שבר מעשה טוב לא שבר לב טוב בלבד

מבית מאלוהי ח"ב דף 225 פ' וישב):

יש יסורין ... שבאין למען יעבד את ה' בשלמות, ע"י שלא ירהר אחר מדותיו ית' וגם יגיע עד מדרגת קבלת היסורין באהבה ולשמוח בהם ... (אלו יסורין של אהבה

ב"ר צד:ה

אין הקב"ה מייחד שמו על בריה בשוהא חי אלא על בעלי יסורין

תנחומא תצא ב: צריך האדם להחזיק טובה להקב"ה בזמן שהיסורין באין עליו למה שהיסורין מושבין את האדם להקב"ה

⁴Viktor Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*, 79

⁵Horeb, 11 Training Through Suffering, pg. 36 – 40

A terminally ill patient writes of her experience: My whole life-style has changed.... It was always happening out there somewhere ... And then [after the onset of the illness] this big change began happening for me. ... Roger would take me to meet people like me, like us, you know who had been diagnosed, and we'd just be with each other. We'd talk to each other and look at each other and say, "How are you doing today?" and listen for the answer, and suddenly whatever I'd always been looking for wasn't out there anymore. ... It sounds really funny to say I'm grateful for this disease but in a way I am. It's taught me how to live. And not just me; my family too.¹

"The cure of a physical illness or condition does not necessarily imply that meaningful healing has taken place. The continuation of a physical condition or illness, even if death eventuates, does not necessarily imply that healing has not taken place. In the emotional realm, the greater the trauma the greater the potential for meaningful healing.² ... "Life on this Earth plane is a classroom ... as one advances through school the tasks become more complicated. Every grade is necessary to our ultimate development. Each is challenging when we are at that level, but as soon as we have mastered one level we must go on to the next. None of us, having learned what second grade has to teach us, would want to stay there forever. Instead, we eagerly embrace the next course study."³

"Man has places in his heart which do not yet exist, and into them enters suffering, in order that they may have existence."⁴

יסורים are also given to test a person and see if he will remain steadfast.⁵ Or, they may be necessary for a person in order for him to fulfill his life's task. Rav Dessler says that someone for whom poverty is not part of his עיקר עבודה can escape poverty, while someone for whom poverty is essential to his תכלית in life cannot escape it.⁶

The חפץ חיים once heard someone respond to a question as to how they were keeping, "ברוך השם, but it wouldn't hurt if השם let me make a little more פרנסה." "And how can you be so sure that it wouldn't hurt you?" challenged the חפץ חיים, "Since this is your lot, it would seem that you are definitely best off as you are."⁷

יסורים help us focus on what is truly important in life. The Gemara tells us that G-d found poverty to be a מדה טובה because poverty breaks bad character traits such as עזות and

¹Why Me Why This Why Now, Robin Norwood pg. 25

²ibid. pg. 30

³

ibid., pg. 48

⁴

Leon Bloy

⁵ב"ב מו:

הביא הקב"ה עליו (על איוב) יסורין והתחיל מחדק ומגדק

(Read first few chapters of איוב)

⁶מבנתב מאליהו ח"ב דף 224 פ' וישב:

חלקו) של יעקב אבינו ע"ה (בעבודה, קידוש השם שלו, היה צריך לבא ע"י יסורין דוקא. ובבב ב'ארת שמה שמבדילין לפעמים קודם יצירת האדם: חולה יהיה, עני יהיה, הוא מפני שלחלקו בעבודה נדרשים הבליים הללו.

ב"ר ל"ח

איוב היה מתקן ליסורין

⁷This does not contradict the desirability to pray to have יסורים removed - see Prayer below

¹גאור.

Carl J. Rote, chaplain in a state institution of 4300 mentally retarded patients, said: "The retardates have taught me more than I can ever tell. Theirs is a world where hypocrisy is banished; it is a kingdom where a smile is their passport to your affection and the light in their eyes will melt the coldest heart. Perhaps this is G-d's way of reminding us that the world must rediscover the attributes which the mentally retarded have never lost."²

[Another] way that illness, injury or physical distress serve us occurs when we are attempting to ignore distressing conditions in our lives by being less than honest with ourselves. The body's problems can serve as an indicator of our psychological evasions.³

The Midrash tells us that pain comes to the world to demonstrate that one who sins is punished.⁴ G-d is actively showing His השגחה by helping the enemy overtake us when we sin.⁵

Rav S. R. Hirsch explains צור from the לשון of צור, to press or bind together, to constrict ... to teach the limitations of your power If because much has been given to you, you think that you are much ... then in suffering ... you see the Omnipotence and Sovereignty of G-d.⁶

Furthermore, יסורים that come from G-d's אהבה for us increase our reward in the World to Come.⁷ We know that the purpose of life is קדוש השם; all עבודה ultimately amounts

¹חגיגה ט:

חזר ד' על כל מדות טובות ליתן לישראל ולא מצא לישראל מידה טובה אלא עניות
עון יעקב: לפי שעל ידי עניות מתיש מדות הרעות שבהן והוא מידת העזות והגאוה

²quoted in *The Will to Meaning*, p.139

³Robin Norwood, *Why Me Why This Why Now*, pg. 40

⁴תנחומא מצורע ד':

מפני מה היסורין באין לעולם? מפני הבריות כדי שיראו ויסתכלו ויאמרו מי שחטא לוקה

⁵מבית מאליו ח"א דף 203:

גדר העיסים הוא, שהקב"ה מראה בגילוי את השגחתו, באופן שכל בעל לב יביר כי אין זה מקרה טובע, אלא יד ה' נגלית באן.
ע"ב בשיש נס הבא לטובתו בעה"ז, כך יש נס המתגלה ביסוריו, באשר השם ית' מראה השגחתו בגלוי בשיעור
לשונאיו... ע"ש בהמשך

⁶Horeb, 36/37

נעם מגדים:

...או שהצדיק עדיין לא הגיע לתכלית הענה (האשר שבאמנה דף נ"ג)

⁷ברכות ה.

אם רואה אדם שיסורין באין עליו יפשפש במעשיו... ואם תלה ולא מצא בידוע שיסורין של אהבה הם ... יסורין של אהבה כל
שארין בהן בטול ומורה... או) בטול ומפלה

קידושין מ:

הקב"ה מביא יסורים על צדיקים בעה"ז כדי שיירשו העוה"ב

ש"ע י"ד רסח ב) הל' גרים):

ואומרים לו (לגר...) וזה שתרצה ישראל בצער בעולם הזה טובה היא צפונה להם שאינם יכולים לקבל רוב טובה בעולם הזה
שמה ירום לבם ויתעו ויפסידו שבר עוה"ב... ע"פ יבמות מז. בסוף לפי פירוש רש"י)

מהרש"א (יבמות מז.):

ר"ל דיש לצדיקים חלק בב' עולמות דהיינו עיקר שבתו בעוה"ב אינו אלא לצדיקים וגם בעוה"ז יש להם חלק אלא שאין יכולין
לקבל בעוה"ז לא רוב פורענות ולא רוב טובה בפרש"י משא"ב הרשע מקבל רוב טובה בעוה"ז כדי למורדו מן העוה"ב לגמרי

to this. To quote Rabbi Tauber, "Everything can be taken away from a person, wealth, health, marital harmony, loved ones, parents, teachers, etc. except one thing: the opportunity to make a קדוש השם... To the contrary, the more that is taken away the more opportunity there is to make a קדוש השם... Today, it is not our challenge to die for קדוש השם. Today we have to do something, which is even harder. We have to live for קדוש השם - with our day-to-day hardships.¹ עבודת השם to צדיקים prove the unconditional commitment of נסיון/יסורים.²

iv-Choice

The Gemara in Brachos 60b relates: Rebbe Akiva says that one should always accustom himself to saying *כל מה דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד* - 'whatever the All-Merciful does is for good', as exemplified in the following incident: Rebbe Akiva once came to a certain town and looked for a place to sleep but was refused lodgings by all the residents of the town. He said 'Whatever the All-Merciful does is for good', and he went and spent the night in the open field. He had with him a rooster, a donkey and a lamp. A gust of wind came and blew out the lamp, a weasel came and ate the rooster, and a lion came and ate the donkey. Rebbe Akiva said: 'Whatever the All-Merciful does is for good'. The same night some brigands came and carried off the inhabitants of the town, and Rebbe Akiva's life was spared. Had he been invited in to someone's house, he would have been lost. Had the wind not blown out his lamp, the weasel not eaten the rooster and the lion not eaten the donkey, he would have been discovered

Each time that something else, seemingly negative, happened to Rebbe Akiva, he responded to the local situation by making an appropriate decision as to what to do next based on what had just happened to him. He did not allow his seemingly "accumulative bad luck" to influence his decision (or to overwhelm him), nor did he respond each time something went "bad" by trying to philosophize or saying, "why me, why me?" He simply accepted that he could not understand why this was happening but that it must be for his good if G-d gave it to him, and he then moved on. Too often, it is not the objective distress that consumes us but rather what we do to ourselves. We get caught up in the "unfairness" of what is happening, we compare ourselves to others (who seem to be walking around smiling all day without a care in the world), and we inflict upon ourselves emotional distress that has to do with our perception of the situation rather than the situation itself.

לתמורת הרעה (קשה מהם) שהיתה מעותדת לבא עליו (בבחירתו כמשל הספינה שהזכירו חז"ל) ומעת (היסורין) שנקראים ג"כ יסורין של אהבה (היו סבה שלא באה ולא נגעה בו הרעה) (היותר קשה) (בית אלוקים שער התשובה פ"ט בצירוף 2 מקומות)

Some sources appear to say that השם will not interfere with evil choices which cause

¹As In Heaven, So On Earth, p. 37/38

²נמורה נבוכים ג-בד; This inspires us and removes our excuses. (*The Informed Soul* - 141) According to Chavell, (ד"ה לדעתו) argues - a test is always for yourself not others (See his note there)

suffering to others.¹ This, however, is contradicted by other sources.² The resolution of these conflicting opinions is stated in the הרחב דבר, which explains that protection of humans requires greater merits.³

¹בראשית לז בא:

וישמע ראובן ויצלהו מידם ויאמר לא נבטל נפש
אור החיים: פי' לפי שהאדם בעל בחירה ורצון ויכול להרוג מי שלא נתחייב מיתה משא"ב חיות רעות לא יפגעו באדם אם לא
יתחייב מיתה לשמים (מהזהר וישב דף קפה)

ר"ח חגיגה ה.

ופתרון ויש נספה בלא משפט בגון אדם שהרג את חברו

הרחב דבר בראשית לז יג:

בחירה של האדם למעלה מהשגחה עליונה

Suffering arises out of the complexities of modern existence where men can hide behind machines, send trains to concentration camps while, 'simply performing proper duties', and where the relationship between human beings is forced into artificial structures and conventions which turn fellowmen into objects rather than subjects. (*Suffering: A Jewish Perspective*, Albert Friedlander, pg. 15)

²חולין ז

אין אדם נקף אצבעו מלמטה אא"ב מברזין עליו מלמעלה

ספר החנוך - מצוה רמא: לא תקום (ויקרא יט"ח)

משרשי המצוה, שידע האדם ויתן אל לבו כי בל אשר יקרהו מוטב עד דע- היא סיבה שתבוא אליו מאת השם בדרך הוא;
"ומיד האדם מיד איש אחיו" לא יהיה דבר בלתי רצון השם ב"ה ע"ב בשיערהו או יבאיהו אדם - ידע בנפשו כי עונותיו גרמו,
והשי"ת גזר עליו בדרך ...

ספר החנוך - מצוה תקבד: עדים זוממים (דברים יט: ט"ז-ב"א) ויש לומר קצת טעם לדבר (שאם נהרג אחד על פי העדים
והזנו אח"כ אז אין דין עדים זוממים) כי אלקים נצב בעדת הדין; ולולי שנתחייב הנדון במעשיו הרעים - לא נגמר עליו
מעשה המשפט...

³הרחב דבר על העמק דבר בראשית לז יג:

חלילה לומר שאין ביד ההשגחה העליונה לשמור גם מבחירת האדם אלא ... דלזה בעינן זכות יותר (עין שם בל הענין)

CHAPTER F: RESPONSES

i- Attitude

ii- The Right to Ask Questions

iii- Emotions vs. intellect

iv- Response our choice

v- השתדלות , not Results

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CHAPTER F: RESPONSES

[Note: This section refers to responses to our own suffering. For responses to others' suffering, see **Chapter A.**]

Ultimately, the range of responses to suffering will differ based on the nature of the suffering. Someone with a terminal illness, one with a family member who is ill, addiction, psycho-pathology, mental / physical handicap, dysfunctional family, childlessness, war, anti-Semitism, etc.; each has their own tang of appropriate responses. Many books on suffering (including Jewish ones) focus on situations where the suffering is resolved in the end. However, many situations do not lead to what we, from our limited, earthly perspective would call a successful resolution, an overcoming of or at least an end to the suffering. Part of the correct approach to suffering is to understand that we may not be able to do anything about the objective situation. However, there is always a large range of responses that are available at the subjective level. And since this usually must call upon our deep inner resources, this level represents the real, spiritual realities of the situation.

The recognition that we cannot always do something about the objective situation does not mean that Judaism is a fatalistic religion, asking us to resign ourselves to whatever comes our way. On the contrary, we are enjoined to do whatever is practically feasible. More than that, Judaism always celebrates life. Even the mourner is required to eat an egg that symbolizes of renewal of the life cycles immediately after the קבורה. Too much mourning is not permitted¹ and the mourning process itself is meant to guide the person back into life. When we come out of a cemetery we wash our hands נטילת ידיים, which symbolizes the טהרה of the whole body from טומאת מת - again stressing our concern with life.

The idea, though, is to recognize that while we try to avoid יסורים, they can nevertheless be included in our overall positive attitude to life. In order to do this we need to recognize that our יסורים are tailor-made for us and the growth that we need.

To illustrate this point, a Chassidic Rebbe in a Polish village who was constantly subject to the complaints of his Chassidim about their lot announced that everyone should assemble in the marketplace and bring their suffering packed in a bundle with them. Once there, he told the people to choose whichever *peckel* would suit them better. One by one the Chassidim began to go home, each one with the original *peckel* he came with.

The primary response to suffering is the attitude we have toward it. Much suffering is caused by the sense of outrage and injustice rather than the actual pain. There is the sense of "This should not be happening to me."²

The following essay appeared on August 26 in www.haaretzdaily.com: "...our attitude toward the ultra-Orthodox and ... their strength in times of distress. I've been thinking about this since the day the bus exploded in Jerusalem. The bus was packed with Haredim. Most of the casualties - the dead and the wounded, some of them critically – were Haredim or their children. If this type of tragedy had happened to [other sectors] their cries of grief would have immediately sought out the guilty parties: the government, the bus company, the lack of security guards. And, of course, the usual cries of "Death to the Arabs" and the terrible and justified anger against the human agent that brought the tragedy down upon them.

יציין רמב"ן על הפסוק לא תתגדדו

²See for example, **Chapter B iii & iv**

"But the Ashkenazi Haredim do not hold anyone to blame. With a sort of nobility devoid of pathos, they live in a world that lies outside of history. What is true in our world is not real truth for them. They live in a world in which the Blessed be He loves the Jewish people and whatever befalls a person is God's handiwork. God instructed His chosen people to fulfill His commandments and to do what is good in His eyes. God does not need to explain what this good is.

"The Haredim do not believe that calamities occur at random. God runs this world and He knows what He's doing."

A man once asked Rabbi Dov Ber, the Magid of Mezeritch, how he could deal with all his suffering. The Magid referred him to Reb Zusya of Anipoli who had lived in great poverty and suffering all his life. The man went to Reb Zusya's broken down house and asked him his question. "I cannot answer you," said Reb Zusya, "Nor do I understand why the Magid sent you to me. I have never had a bad day in my life."

Someone who has lost a loved one could easily be angry; even angry with G-d. This, however, has nothing to do with the objective situation and everything to do with the subjective perception of the situation.¹ Consider an alternative response by Alan A. Kaye in A Jewish Book of Comfort: "That I had prayed to G-d and that my grandmother still died did not mean that G-d had not heard me but that I had someone other than my parents (who had their own grief) with whom I could share my desire to have my grandmother live, to whom I could express myself without fear of judgment, or of being patronized, or of being dismissed. ... That she was not healed did not mean that I had not been heard. ..."

"Faith seeks to strip away the ultimacy of death," Rabbi Wolpe writes in the Healer of Shattered Hearts. "Given a perfect remembrance, a place where all who have lived remain unforgotten, a master memory in the universe, death is not the final editor of human aspiration. ..."²

"It is never the event but rather how it is handled and defined that determines its ultimate effect on us."³

"Those who know how close the connection is between the state of mind of a man - his courage and hope, or lack of them - and the state of immunity of his body will understand that the sudden loss of hope and courage can have a deadly effect. The ultimate cause of my friend's death was that the expected result did not come and he was severely disappointed. This suddenly lowered his body's resistance against a latent typhus infection. His faith in the future and his will to live had become paralyzed and his body fell victim to illness..."⁴

"Noble deeds are the best cure for depression."⁵

יִבְתֵּם הַפֶּלֶא יוֹצֵר (אֱלֹהִים) מִשְׁלַל לֹאֵב שְׂרָוּאָה אֶת בֶּטַח בְּשִׁהוּא תִּינוּק שְׂבוּעָה בֵּית מַעֲצִים קִטְנִים וְקֵשׁ וְשִׁמְחָה בּוֹ, וְבֹא אָדָם וְסוֹתֵר בִּיעָט. וְהוֹלֵךְ אֶל אֲבִיו וְקוֹבֵל עָלָיו וְצוֹעֵק מֵרָחֵק, וְחוֹשֵׁב שֶׁהִיָּה רִאשׁוֹ לֹאֲבִיו לְהַרְגוֹ לְאִישׁ הַהוּא. אֲבָל אֲבִיו אֵינוֹ חוֹשֵׁשׁ בִּלְלִי, שִׂידֵעַ בְּאֵמֶת שֶׁצָּעֵד בֶּטַח עַל הַבֵּל וְדִיק אֲלֵא שִׁלְפִי דַעְתּוֹ וְקוֹצֵר הַשִּׁגְלוֹת מִצָּמֶדֶר הַרְבֵּה. בֶּן הַדִּבְרֵי הַזֶּה, הַצָּעֵד שֶׁמִּצָּמֶדֶר הָאָדָם עַל עֲנֵנֵי הַצֹּהֵר? הַבֵּל הַבֵּל וְרַעוּת רֹחַ.

²pg. 9

³Why Me Why This Why Now by Robin Norwood, pg. 11

⁴Man's Search for Meaning, Victor Frankel pp. 120-122

⁵Dodie Smith, 1948

An essential part of forming the right attitude is in understanding the purpose of suffering, which is that ultimately what is happening is the best possible thing that could be happening to me.¹ The Sfas Emes says that through Yesurim we come closer to G-d; Yesurim help one serve G-d in a more elevated, fitting manner.² Moreover, the actual purpose of יסורים is to bring us closer to G-d:

“If G-d does not speak to suffering, to the shattered hearts of the Psalmist’s plea, He must remain peripheral to our lives. That which does not touch my pain leaves me as I was. Even joy lasts and changes us only when it deepens our understanding and endurance of the pain that is part of living in an unredeemed world.”³

There is a famous letter written by Rav Hutner in response to someone who asked why G-d gives people so many trials.⁴ The Rav explained to him that people mistakenly think that great people are born great and have calm, serene lives and grow to be greater and greater. But in reality, all great people work extremely hard to get to where they are. Our chachamim say, “Seven times a tzaddik will fall, and seven times he will get up.”⁵ A smart person understands that it is *through* those seven falls that he becomes great. He should know that tribulations are to be expected.⁶ There is a famous American quote: “*No Pain, No Gain.*”⁷ Without the suffering that G-d gives us, we get nowhere. Only a G-d that knows everything, can do anything, and is just, would be the One to give us suffering.⁸

We can question our suffering. Having questions about G-d doesn't mean that we can't believe in Him. When King David suffered, as he did throughout his life, he felt like complaining against G-d,⁹ yet ... he knew that not believing in a G-d who runs this world offered fewer solutions to his question than believing did.

Avraham asked how a perfect Judge could destroy the people of Sodom and Gemorrah.¹⁰ Our foremother Rivka questioned why G-d gave her an evil son.¹¹ Our forefather Yaakov wanted to have an easy life, and felt bitter that he had to endure one tragedy after

¹See in particular B ii - iv above

²שפת אמת ספר דברים - פרשת תבא - שנת [תרס"ד] וב' צדור המור דודי לי דרשו חז"ל אע"פ שמצד ומימר לי בין שדי ילין. שגם מתוך היסורים והגלות יבולין להתקרב אל ה'. ואיתא בגמ' ב' ברית במלח ובירית ב'יסורים' מה המלח ממתיק את הבשר [ובילקוט גורס ממתיק את הקרבן] כך יסורים ממתיקים את הגוף. פי' בשעבודין את הבורא מתוך היסורים. היסורים משייעין לעבודת הבורא בנזיבה והמלח בנזיבה מ"ק הי' משייעין להתקרב:

³Rabbi Wolpe, The Healer of Shattered Hearts in Kaye pgs. 9-10

⁴Iggeres Rav Yitzchok Hutner

⁵Mishlei 24:16

⁶Sefer HaYashar, Gate VI

⁷Rav Eichenstien, audio cassette

⁸Adapted from Russy Weingarden, Moresheet Essay

⁹Psalms 39: 2

¹⁰Genesis 18: 23-32

¹¹Genesis 25: 22

another.¹ Even Moshe asked G-d why He let the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. Each resolved his or her conflicts about G-d's ways and so we can as well.²

... G-d is sensitive to our religious tensions. ... [For example, He required] Jewish women to bring Temple sacrifices after they gave birth. These offerings atoned for their having sworn, in the midst of excruciating labor pains, that they would never again have sexual relations with their husbands. Since G-d knew that women in labor would say things that they would later regret, He gave them a way to rectify their actions.³

Similarly, G-d accepts that we may act one way when we are in pain and another way when we feel better. This is why the תלמוד⁴ says that we are not held accountable for what we say in the throes of pain.⁵

Throughout אליפז, איוב, and his two friends try to convince איוב of the justness of השם's ways. איוב appears to be irreconcilable, rejecting their arguments one by one. It appears that Elifaz and his two friends are the true believers and Iyov has a crisis of faith. Then, at the end of the book, we see that surprisingly G-d praises Iyov and criticizes his friends. Iyov now declares that G-d is Omnipotent and that none of His plans can be thwarted. In fact, G-d recognizes that Iyov believed this all along; Iyov's rejection of Elifaz's arguments were rooted in his desire not to accept a superficial explanation that did not ring true. Iyov's deep belief in G-d allowed for a brutal honesty about his lack of understanding as to why he was suffering. Elifaz, on the other hand, was giving all the *right* comments but deep down really didn't believe what he was saying. God therefore gets angry at אליפז "for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Iyov has."⁶

Elie Wiesel writes:⁷ "Gregor was angry. 'After what has happened to us, how can you believe in G-d?' With an understanding smile on his lips the Rebbe answered, 'How can you not believe in G-d after what has happened?'"

"Let the blasphemy of our time not become the eternal scandal. Let future generations not loathe us for having failed to preserve what prophets and saints, martyrs and scholars have created for thousands of years. The apostles of force have shown that they are great in evil. Let us reveal that we are as great in goodness."⁸

Many times the question of G-d's presence in the Holocaust is raised. Yet it is said about the leaders of the Jewish people that "their loyalty to G-d did not waver, because they

¹Genesis 37: 22

²Lisa Aiken

³Meam Loez Leviticus 12: 6-8

⁴בבבא בתרא נז

⁵Why me, G-d pg. xxii

⁶פרק מב

(א) ויפן איוב את ד' ויאמר (ב) ידעתי כי כל תובל ולא יבצר ממך מזמנה (ג) ויהי אחר דבר ד' את הדברים האלה אל איוב ויאמר ד' אך אליפז התימני חרה אפי בד ובשני רעים כי לא דברת אלי נבונה בעבדי איוב מלבים: חרה אפי בד: כי לא דברתם אלי נבונה בעבדי איוב שבפיהם התנבחו בעד ד', אבל לבם לא היה משבים אל פיהם ...

⁷The Gates of the Forest pg. 179

⁸A. H. Heschel – Note: Heschel would have done well to listen more closely to his own words

saw His hand everywhere, whether or not they understood it They saw no accident; only Divine judgment and they accepted it.”¹

Evil is not a theoretical problem but remains an emotional problem. One should not expect emotional tranquility in the face of suffering.²

G-d answered משה's request³ to understand suffering, but later צדיקים raise this question again⁴, as the emotional pain overcomes intellect.

Man's emotions rule in this world.⁵ Were we to go deep enough we would clearly see that all of G-d's actions are totally for the good. In this world, however, we distinguish between blessing that is delivered through a positive package and blessing that is delivered through pain; hence although we bless G-d for both we have two distinct blessings for them.

We see other expressions of this. For example, if we do not cry at the death of a relative this is seen as an act of cruelty even though we may know that the person is going to Olam Haba and is in a very good place.⁶

We also see that even though the Tzaddikim truly realize that they grow tremendously from Yisurim, their attitude is לא הם ולא שכרם: they would prefer not to have the Yisurim and its benefits to begin with.⁷ צדיקים realize the battle and do not want it.

Man chooses his response to the circumstances surrounding him. "Man's freedom is not freedom from conditions but rather freedom to take a stand on whatever conditions might confront him."⁸ When one responds positively and learns from his pain, his יסורים become rather than a punishment for him.⁹

"Attitudinal values are subdivided into ... pain, guilt and death."¹⁰

In Treblinka, the Germans hung a פרוכת over the entrance to the gas chamber which read זה השער לה' צדיקים יבאו בו, wanting to get the Jews to spend their last moments cursing G-d. In practice, however, religious Jews as well as many assimilated Jews responded by waking up, dancing and singing as they entered the chambers.¹¹

¹A Path through the Ashes, quoted by Z. Hauptman, Moreshet

²Rabbi Beryl Gershenfeld

³ברבות ז

⁴e.g. ומהילים עג, רמב"ן שער הגמול

⁵פסחים ג

⁶יורה דעה שצד:

⁷ברבות הלב: אמר ליה חבובין עליך יסורין אמר ליה לא הן ולא שברן

⁸Viktor Frankl, The Will to Meaning p. 16

⁹ובשעור דעת (חלק ג' יסורין של אהבה): האדם בעצמו יכול לקבוע במדה מרובה את אופי יסוריו אם יהיה יסורין של אהבה או של עונש כי אם הוא לומד מיסורין ועוסק במורה ביסוריו הרי הם יסורין של אהבה

¹⁰ibid., p. 73

¹¹Rabbi Tauber, p. 40

The truth is that among those who went through the experience of Auschwitz, the number of those whose religious life was deepened...by far exceeds the number of those who gave up their belief. ... Just as the small fire is extinguished by the storm whereas a large fire is enhanced by it - likewise a weak faith is weakened by predicaments and catastrophes whereas a strong faith is strengthened by them.¹

A number of years ago, a man wrote a letter that was printed in the Jewish Press, asking how a loving G-d could give so much suffering. The following article was sent in response to his letter:

"Four years ago in April 1985, *Hashem* blessed my husband and me with a beautiful baby boy who had a severe congenital heart defect. Our other children had all been born, thank G-d, healthy, and during my pregnancy there had been no hint of a problem: so you can imagine the tremendous shock and numerous questions that went through our minds at that time. However, after much soul searching, we decided that since *Hashem* chose us to take care of this child, it must be that we were fit for the task. Our son was not destined to be with us for too long. Shortly after his third birthday, he died in the hospital, on the night following his third heart operation. Please though, don't think of my family with only sadness and pity. You do not know the tremendous growth that has occurred within every member of our family because of our little boy. The deep understanding and sensitivities as well as the tremendous closeness to *Hashem* that we now feel, have come only because of our son. Happiness is a wonderful feeling that we all strive for, after all, we are supposed to serve *Hashem* with happiness. Yet, real happiness comes only from true closeness to *Hashem*. Sometimes we can attain this closeness through the very tragedies that we fear so much. However, should we complain and blame *Hashem* for our suffering, then we have completely lost the value of our experiences. Yes, tragedy is a blessing from *Hashem*; it causes us to look for and discover so many things that would otherwise slip right past us. The pain of losing our child is still very strong, but the terrible anguish is gone. Not a day goes by that I don't think of my son; on some days I don't even cry because I think of him with a smile. ... *Hashem* has given me strength that I never realized that I had, and because of my son, I am still growing as I continue to realize more and more things that I did not realize before. Can I say that it was good that my son lived and died as he did? As a mother, I must answer that I wish he could have been healthy and lived to 120 years. Yet, deep in my soul, I know that it really was good that we had the privilege of having him, and even more than that, it was a true kindness from *Hashem*. Tragedy is so difficult for us to bear because of our human emotions, and *Hashem* surely expects that. Yet, we can use these very same emotions to turn to *Hashem* and bring our souls even closer to Him in this world. Is *Hashem* good and loving and compassionate? Does He care for us? Absolutely! Can I serve Him with happiness? More so than I ever did before, because now I feel so much closer to Him! Yes, I am still zealous to do a *mitzvah*, to serve *Hashem* and rejoice at being part of His Jewish people. I know that HE feels my pain with me and He is given me the strength to grow from that pain. Could *Hashem* have achieved His goal for us without suffering? I can only answer that if suffering were to serve no special purpose of its own in this world, *Hashem* would not have created it for us. Happiness has its place, but so does sadness; and each in its own unique way helps us to achieve our task in this world- to serve *Hashem*, to sanctify our souls through His *Torah* and *Mitzvos*, and to rejoice in all His splendor."²

¹Viktor Frankl: The Unconscious G-d, p. 17

² The Jewish Press, Feb. 24, 1989, p. 25

Kirk Douglas writes: "I have come to understand that there is a universal principle at work for each of us – whether we grow up in a mill town or Beverly Hills. Sometime in childhood you are 'dealt a card' and often the person who deals the card is your parent. The card usually represent a childhood trauma of some sort - your parents are poor, your parents are rich, your parents get divorced, your parents stay together when they should have divorced, your parents neglect you, your parents overpower you with attention, your parents died, your parents are perfect, your home life is perfect but then war breaks out in your country, and on and on it goes.

"It is guaranteed that something happened in your childhood which has imprinted you for life, and chances are it is linked your main fear in life - fear of abandonment, fear of intimacy, fear of being controlled ... you fill it in.

"The point of all this is that we are stuck with the card dealt to us in childhood, and everything in life depends on how we play it. The credit or the blame for how the game turns out is all ours."¹

Man is required to put in השתדלות; G-d takes care of the results.² If, for instance, everything goes well, a pregnant woman lives through nine months of morning sickness, discomfort and mood swings which finally culminate in excruciating labor pains. Despite all the discomfort, in the end she looks at the newborn and says that it was all worth it. What if, however, she was pregnant for a few months and then, G-d forbid, miscarried? How devastating! Or what if the child is born crippled or retarded? Or what if it is a healthy child who grows up into a real problem child? What will the mother think then? That all the pain and effort was for nothing. It does not have to be so, however. Our mission is to perform קדוש השם - to do whatever G-d demands of us at that moment. If one performs the responsibility of that moment, then - mission accomplished! Consider the pregnant woman who miscarried. If she can say to herself: "G-d, You commanded me to have children. It is my business to try and fulfill that commandment. However, I have no guarantee about the end result. I know that as long as I am taking all the necessary steps to fulfill this mission, then I am a success - mission accomplished" and mean it, she will never be devastated. In fact, every second she is pregnant it is as if she is giving birth to a child. Her feeling of accomplishment is not dependent on the final outcome, which really is in G-d's hands anyhow.³

¹Kirk Douglas, Climbing the Mountain – My Search for Meaning (Simon & Schuster 1997) pg. 64

²Rabbi Tauber

³p. 46-47

We cannot ask for יסורים.¹ However, this does not contradict our understanding that when השם does bring upon us יסורים we appreciate their value.² We do not go into denial about the יסורים, intending to belittle them; rather we relate to them and try to understand their value. Hence Dovid HaMelech writes that "fortunate is one to whom G-d gives suffering"³ and the Gemara adds that one who rejoices in his pain brings salvation to the world.⁴ The Shiurei Daas says that if one recognizes that the suffering he has is for a reason and he tries to take lessons from it, he has some שמחה even within his יסורים regardless of the pain that is there.⁵

"We are healed of suffering only by experiencing it to the full."⁶

One can attempt to locate the specific reasons for his יסורים.⁷ However, even if he

ידוד המלך:
בחגי ד' וגשני (תהלים ב:ב)

ברבות ה.
ר' חייא בר אבא חלש; על לגביה ר"י א"ל חביבין עליך יסורין א"ל לא הן ולא שברן

was not expressing himself about the יסורים that he had experienced or was currently experiencing at that moment. His concern was that, however well he had handled his יסורים up to that moment, there was no knowing how he would respond in the future.

ברבות יג.
ומה שחטאתי לפניך מחק אבל לא ע"י יסורין

שבת יג:
ת"ד מי בתב מגילת תענית אמרו חנניה בן חזקיה וסיעתו שהיו מחביבין את הצרות מהרש"א:

... במ"ש בשם שמעריבין על הטובה בך מברכים על הרעה (דאיתא בערבין דף יז בל מי שעבדי עליו מיום בלא יסורים קבל צולמנו) ולזה נקרא ספר מגילת תענית דהיום טוב הנזכרים בו עיקרן לא נתייחדו אלא ע"ש התענית שהיה להם בעת צרה

אשרי הגבר אשר תיסרטוה ומתורתך תלמדנו (תהלים צד:ב)

תענית ח.
בל השמח ב'יסורין שבאין עליו מביא ישועה לעולם

זבשעורי דעת) חלק ג' יסורין של אהבה):
אם הוא מבין שלתועלתו באו היסורים והוא משתדל להפיק מהן את התועלת הרצויה, הרי למרות כל צער ויגון הוא מוצא איזה ספוק ב'יסורין והרי בבר הוא באיזה מדה בבחינת שמח ב'יסורין... והלא זהו יתרון של האדם על המלאכים ששני רגשות הפונים יכולים לחיות בלב ובבית אחת ע"ן שמ"ק ה

שבת יג:
ת"ד מי בתב מגילת תענית אמרו חנניה בן חזקיה וסיעתו שהיו מחביבין את הצרות מהרש"א:

... במ"ש בשם שמעריבין על הטובה בך מברכים על הרעה (דאיתא בערבין דף יז בל מי שעבדי עליו מיום בלא יסורים קבל צולמנו) ולזה נקרא ספר מגילת תענית דהיום טוב הנזכרים בו עיקרן לא נתייחדו אלא ע"ש התענית שהיה להם בעת צרה
Therefore, he may not say about his situation רע, רע although he may say מר, מר just as there are bitter medicines, which he knows are going to heal him. (The Maggid of Mezeritch)

⁶Marcel Proust, Remembrances of Things Past

ברבות ה.
רואה אדם שיסורין באין עליו יפשפש במעשיו
רש"י: ... עבירה ... שבשבילה ראוי יסורין הללו לבא

בית אלוקים) שער התשובה פ"נ):
שנראה שצריך לידע ולהביר שאותם היסורים באים עליו בדיון ובשורה על מה שעבד ... (היינו) ידיעת החטא המסוים שעליו באו אליו היסורים... וידע השגחת האל יתברך עליו שמעניש אותו מדה בנגד מדה

cannot do so, if he intends for his *יסורים* to be a *כפרה* for his transgressions, this works.¹ Also, one can know in general what all the sources of *יסורים* are and know that ultimately *משפטי ד'* *אמת צדקו יחדיו*² and as such he does not look for justice in a this-worldly sense.³ According to the *(סמ"ק)* *עשן י* and the *(סמ"ק)* *ה* it is a *מצות עשה* to look for the righteousness in all of G-d's actions.⁴

"The unbeliever is silent because he has *no answers*. Unable to make sense of this world—of the seeming injustice that strikes down the innocent, the suffering that seems to overwhelm good and bad alike—he concludes that there is indeed no rhyme or reason. In the words of Kayin, '*Leit din, veleit Dayan*.'... Equally, of course, it follows that there are no questions. Tsunamis happen because tsunamis happen. There is no point asking why, because 'why' implies purpose and meaning, and there is—in this view—no purpose or meaning.... [In contrast, t]he *ma'amin* finds, on the whole, clear meaning, design, plan and purpose in his existence, despite his inability to find meaning in the tragedies of this world.... The *ma'amin* ... is silent because he has *no questions*. That is not to say that he is not troubled by the apparent contradictions in this world: by the difficulty of reconciling Hashem's goodness with His power. ... But he comes to recognize that there are some things that are simply too difficult, too overwhelming, too incomprehensible for the human mind to contend with. His is the silence that says, although I cannot understand everything I nonetheless affirm that everything has meaning.... '*Lecha dumiyah tehillah*,' says David Hamelech. Sometimes the greatest praise of Hashem, the highest expression of song to Him, is silence. ... It is, rather, the silence and equanimity—the *shalvat hanefesh* and calmness—of someone who does not voice the challenge because he accepts that man is but man, and Hashem is the Almighty ..."⁵

We need to appreciate that our *יסורים* are tailor-made for us. As illustrated above, a Chassidic Rebbe in a Polish village was constantly subject to the complaints of his Chassidim about their lot. One day he announced that everyone should assemble in the marketplace and bring their suffering packed in a bundle with them. Once there, he told the people to choose whichever *peckel* suited them best. One by one the Chassidim begin to go home, each one with the original *peckel* he came with.

"This is what G-d wants me to have in order for me to become me."⁶ Acceptance of the *יסורים* in this way is already cause for lessening them. When a person accepts his suffering with joy and love he joins body and soul...as a result, judgment is nullified.⁷

Nevertheless, one should daven that *השם* should remove the *יסורים*. Often that is the whole purpose to begin with (childlessness of the *אמהות* and of *חנה*; lack of rain at beginning

¹ *there בית אלקים*

² *יתהלים יט'*

³ *האומר שלע זא לצדקה בשביל שיחיו בני... הרי זה צדיק גמור. (פירוש רש"י: אם רגיל בדרך)*
(That is to say that he continues to give to צדקה even when his conditions are not fulfilled)

⁴ *סמ"ק*:

לצדק את הדין על כל המאורע בדבתי (דברים ח) וידעת עם לבבך כי באשר ישר איש את בע' ה' אלו קיד גמ' סדר

⁵ Reflections on the Tsunami, R' Beryl Berkovits: Jewish Action, Summer 2005

⁶ G. Elevitzky

⁷ Toldos Yaakov Yosef, Ekev

of גאולה and bring the יסורים is one of the essential ways to remove בריאה¹. תפילה. The redemption of the Jewish nation from Egypt only began once the Jews cried out to ה'.

The reason תפילה takes away יסורים is because גאולה creates a tremendous incompatibility between חסד's and the recipient of that יסורים. חסד remove the גאולה. תפילה then reconnects the person to השם: i.e. תפילה changes the person.⁴ Additionally, תפילה reaches to places where the גזירה doesn't exist.⁵

One should use the יסורים as a springboard for growth.⁶

"Jacob-Israel wrestles with the Angel in the darkest of the night but will not let the experience go until a blessing has been taken from it."⁷

"An illness or an injury can provide a great way to a transformation, as was the case with Joanna and her family due to her sprained ankle. Her injury effectively nullified her habitual role in her parents' relationship [where her mother used her support to remain independent of and distanced from her father] and along with the pressure provided by the mother's terminal illness, created an opportunity for the healing of that relationship. Gary's knee gave him the time and opportunity to explore a painful aspect of his life, the first step to beginning to heal it. Darren, diagnosed with AIDS, changed both his lifestyle and values as a result of that diagnosis. His grandmother was changed as well, into a condition of greater love and compassion."⁸

Suffering, challenges and tests all give us an opportunity to grow. This can be likened to people who go to a gym and put themselves under tremendous physical pain and stress in order to walk away with a stronger physique⁹. Furthermore, by using יסורים as a growth-opportunity, one can even replace the יסורים.¹⁰

¹יבמות סד

מפני מה היו אבותינו עקורים מפני שהקב"ה מתאוה לתפלתן של צדיקים
אויב ששתק עידון בייסורין (סוטה יא).

²שמות ב בג:

ותעל שועתם אל ה' מן העבודה
רבינו בחיי:

בי אע"פ שהגיע הקץ בבד לא היו ראויים לגאולה אלא מרוב שצעקו אל ה' מן העבודה ויאנחו בג"י מן העבודה ותעל שועתם אל
הא' מן העבודה

³ incompatibility between חסד and recipient. (See פחד יצחק above) = יסורים

⁴based on ספר העקרים

⁵נעם אלימלך: וישלח

⁶See F i a Growth, General, where we discussed this at length

⁷Suffering: A Jewish View, Albert Friedlander, pg. 5

⁸Why Me Why This Why Now, Robin Norwood, pg. 40

⁹ Rabbi Orlofsky, quoted by Esther Stulberger, Moreshet Essay

¹⁰חפץ חיים:

אך טוב וחסד ירדפוני כל ימי חיי
תולדות יעקב יוסף, נשא:

המצמצם בצרת חבירו במו מצדותיו נפטר מיסורין

הצווק ובבב על עסקי שמים - רוחניות, חוסר מעצמו צעקות על עסקי הגוף ויסורי הגוף (האשר שבאמונה - ג נפילי דף ג"ו)
משפט צדק (בהאשר שבאמונה דף ג"ז):

The definition of a נסיון is to test the faith of the one receiving the נסיון¹. A נסיון is a situation of הסתר פנים, and therefore it cannot be used as the starting point for an observer (i.e. one not affected by the נסיון) as the source of belief. Nevertheless, it can be used by the person experiencing the נסיון as a source of belief.²

The truth is that among those who went through the experience of Auschwitz, the number of those whose religious life was deepened...by far exceeds the number of those who gave up their belief. ... Just as the small fire is distinguished by the storm whereas a large fire is enhanced by it - likewise a weak faith is weakened by predicaments and catastrophes whereas a strong faith is strengthened by them.³

"Faith is not a means to life; the purpose of life is to develop faith."⁴ Therefore, even if השם appears hidden to us at such times, the appropriate reaction on our part is to keep turning to Him until He responds. To quote Elie Weisel⁵, "And I prayed to the G-d in whom I no longer believed".

Rabbi Tauber writes that having faith does not mean that one is numb to pain. It is like giving birth to a child; the woman about to give birth is experiencing very real labor pains, yet she knows that after the baby is born she will feel that it was all worth it. That faith in the ultimate outcome gives her the strength to withstand the present pain. In truth, every person who goes through pain is delivering a "baby" - that "baby" is himself. It is the accomplishment that he has remained true to the Higher reality - that G-d is behind everything, all for his ultimate good - in the face of extreme hardship....⁶ Somebody who has really internalized the purpose of יסורים will actually have הכרת הטוב to השם just as a patient will thank his doctor for a painful procedure. Therefore, some say that the ברכה of לי שעשה לי כל צרכי includes יסורים. We appreciate, without necessarily understanding the details, that this is all for our good. It appears from the ממהרה"ל that this good is intrinsic, i.e. is not dependent on our response (even if we do not do תשובה).⁷

היגע במוח

Even expressing appropriate self-restraint (e.g. vis-a-vis food) (באר מים חיים, פרשת חקת brought by ראב"ד)

¹For those who believe there are no questions and for those who don't believe there are no answers" - חזון איש on the Holocaust quoting the חפץ חיים

²See דין above

³Viktor Frankl The Unconscious G-d, p. 17

⁴Rabbi Tauber

⁵Night

⁶pg. 87:

דברים יד א: א"ע) מובא ג"כ בדמב"ן):
אחר שתדעו שאתם בעים לה' והוא אוהב אתכם יותר מן האב לבטל לא תתגודדו על בל מה שיעשה בי בל מה שיעשה לטוב הוא ואם לא תביעוהו באשר לא יביע הבנים הקטנים מעשה אבותם רק יסמכו עליו בי עם קדוש אתה ואיך בשאר בל הגוים ע"ב לא תעשו במעשיהם

⁷see פחד יצחק above:

בל דעבד רחמנא, לטוב עבד) ברבות ס:
גם זו לטובה (תענית בא).

There are three levels of the realization that suffering is something positive. The first level is that suffering is a נסיון that needs to be overcome.¹ The second level is that suffering is a challenge to be boldly faced, and the third level is that it can be viewed as a wonderful opportunity to grow. To quote Frank Tiger, "Opportunity's favorite disguise is trouble."

Another response to suffering is to realize that this world is a פרוזדור, an entranceway, to עולם הבא.² Rabbi Tauber writes, "Hitler said, 'I am going to show you that you do not represent G-d. You are going to deny G-d ... You are going to get angry with G-d.' What happened, however? Under circumstances where people had the most opportunity to become angry with G-d Jews snuck away and said ויתגדל ויתקדש שמה רבא.³

Rav Dessler brings the following analogy:⁴ A savage once saved the life of a visiting king. Although the king and his savior spoke different languages, the king motioned to the savage to follow him to the palace. He then led him to the treasure room. He gave the savage a sack and indicated that it should be filled with gems. The savage, not fully understanding the king's intentions, thought it was a strange reward to carry stones for the king. Unenthusiastically, he slowly dropped stones into his sack until the king allowed him to leave. The savage was overjoyed at not having to carry a heavy bag all the way back to his home. When he told this story to his friends, they yelled at him, "Fool! Those were jewels which could have made you rich for the rest of your life, and you worried about a few hours' labor lugging a heavy sack?!" Similarly, our suffering will be infinitely compensated in the World to Come. The suffering that we undergo in this world are jewels and we do not realize how rich our suffering will make us in the next world. As it says in the Ethics of our Fathers, "According to the pain is the reward."⁵

However, despite that, "We are not supposed to wait for the next world until we can be happy. There is a way to find joy even amidst the suffering of this world - through belief in the World to Come. The stronger our belief in it ... the more we can accept and rejoice in the

"You'll never find a better sparring partner than adversity" (Zalt Schmidt in La Parklabrea News)

² אבות ד' יז:

העה"ז דומה לפרוזדור בפני העוה"ב התקן עצמך בפרוזדור כדי שתבגש לטורקלין (עין רמב"ם הל' תשובה ח' א'; דרך ד' א-ג-ד)

בל שעברו עליו מ' יום בלא יסורין קבל עולמו (ערבין נז:)

הרשעים ע"י שתחלתן שלווה וסופן יסורין פותחין בברכה וחותרמין בקללה אבל הצדיקים ע"י שתחלתן יסורין וסופן שלווה פותחין בקללה (ב"ר סו:ד) כך אמר יעקב מי שעתיד לומר ליסורים די הוא יאמר ליסורי די (ב"ר צב:א)

³ בדעת תבטות:

שבזמן תקף עקבות משיחא, לא יקשה עליו אם הצדיקים נשפלים השפלה גדולה, ואם בני האדם צועקים ולא נענים ... בי בל זה נלד לפי שאין הצדיקים יבולים אפילו בזכותם לתקן הקלקולים (של הברואה בבבלה) (ס' קצ הוצאת הרב פרידלנדר דף קצג)

ובבבלים ראשונים: ובאחרית הגלות הקב"ה משתמש הרוב מזאת, (מהנהגת המזל) בי הבוטה אז לתת תקון כללי לבל העולם, ועל בן צריך שיתענה בהנהגת היחוד, שמן ההעלם הגדול יולד הגילוי הגדול, ויהיה שלמות ניתן לעולם. (מובא בהארה 474 שם) והוסיף הרב פרידלנדר דדברים אלה פותחים פתח להבין את הגזירות הקשות שירדו על דורנו

⁴ Michtav MeEliyahu v.1 p.19-23

⁵ Pirkei Avot 5:23

trials of this world - because we believe, we know, that their ultimate purpose is good.¹

"Our own personal tragedy ... precipitates a deepened comprehension of the true meaning and purpose of individual existence."²

Practically, our own personal suffering heightens our sensitivity to others. When we use whatever difficulties we have to help others, then all our suffering and struggles are raised up and given purpose and dignity beyond ourselves.³

¹Garden of the Souls - Rebbe Nachman on Suffering - pg. 14

²Why Me Why This Why Now, pg. 11

³Why Me Why This Why Now, pg. 11

APPENDIX A: READING LIST

APPENDIX A: READING LIST

The deepest insights into suffering and our responses to them can be gained from a study of תהלים and מפרשים (see especially the מלבי"ם). See for example:

כב: ב יו
כג
נה: ב ט
עז: ב י

מהר"ל נתיבות עולם, נתיב היסורין

דרך השם חלק ב פ"ו

השוואה, הרב יואל שוורץ והרב יצחק גולדשטיין (ליבוניץ)

Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb

Lisa Aiken, Why me, G-d? (Jason Aaronson)

Rabbi Nachman Bullman

Other:

George N. Schlesinger, The Problem of Suffering

Rabbi Yissocher Frand, In Print, pg. 225, A Jewish Perspective on Suffering (Artscroll)

Chana Willner, Neve Yerushalayim, 1981: Suffering

Garden of the Souls - Rebbe Nachman on Suffering, translated and edited by Avraham Greenbaum (Breslov Research Institute)

Rabbi Maurice Lamm – The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning

Alan Kay – A Jewish Book of Comfort (Jason Aronson)

Rabbi Ezriel Tauber deals with suffering in many of his books (see especially his book on the Holocaust)

The Hiding G-d of History, Eliezer Berkowitz

The Will To Meaning, Victor Frankl

Man's Search for Meaning, Victor Frankl

The Unconscious G-d, Victor Frankl

The Informed Soul, R. Dovid Gottlieb

On Death and Dying, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross

People in Pain, Mark Zbrowski

Suffering: A Jewish Perspective, Albert Friedlander

Horeb, 11 Training Through Suffering, R.S.R. Hirsch

As In Heaven, So On Earth

The Healer of Shattered Hearts, Rabbi Wolpe (in Kaye)

Night, Elie Wiesel

רמב"ם: מורה נבוכים: ג-י

Extra Notes

Suffering helps even without תשובה

ספורנו שמות ב כג:

ותעל שועתם אל האלוקים מן העבודה: לא בשביל תשובתם ותפלתם אבל בשביל צרותם כאמרו וגם ראיתי את הלחץ עיין ר' בחיי

APPENDIX B: CONDOLENCE AND OTHER LETTERS

- i- Condolence letter to traditional couple on the loss of a 21 year old adopted son to cancer**
- ii- To a middle-aged giyores (recent) who made aliyah. Everything went wrong and was just advised to go back**
- iii- Letter to a middle-aged woman suffering from cancer**
- iv- Condolence Poem to Family of the small town Reverend**
- v- Letter to couple – the wife has cancer**
- vi- Condolence letters to family on loss of parent/spouse**
- vii- Letter to someone suffering from Mono**
- viii- Poem for donor who was killed**
- ix – Letter to 40 year old Baalas Tshuvah who has not found her Shidduch**
- x – Part of a correspondence with a person whose life has suddenly become very difficult**

APPENDIX B: CONDOLENCE AND OTHER LETTERS

I – Condolence letter to traditional couple on the loss of a 21 year old adopted son to cancer

Names of people and places have been changed

Dear Phil and Jody,

My father has told me of the untimely passing away of your son Harold. The news of this tragic event saddened us all. Although I did not know Harold well, I had met him on more than one occasion and my memory of his delightful presence is strong enough to have an inkling of what a terrible loss this must be for you. ברוך דיין האמת.

Harold was an adopted child – I have always stood in awe and admiration of your taking such a giving and caring step. You took Harold as your own, and you gave him life, a full and rich life, for the short years of his life. Now the Almighty is His wisdom has decreed that Harold has done what he needed to do on this earth, and He has taken him back. But Harold only succeeded on earth because he had you as parents, because he was surrounded by a warm and loving family. Your merit is eternally tied up with his in ways earthly humans cannot fathom.

Certainly these thoughts won't bring Harold back; they won't ease the pain of your beloved son gone forever. I cannot imagine a parent's pain at such a loss. But if Harold's purpose for being on earth was to leave it a better place, then he succeeded. He succeeded not only because of his own contribution, but because of all the giving he brought out of you.

May the Almighty comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Sincerely,
Rabbi Moishe Levenson

ii- To a middle-aged giyores (recent) who made aliyah. Everything went wrong and was just advised to go back.

Names of people and places have been changed

Dear Rabbi Levenson,

<The message I'm getting out of all this is I can't rely on davening and trusting in my prayers when I have requested / "begged" G-d NOT to let me proceed if it is not His Will.>

Who said it wasn't your will to come here and go through all of this? What makes you so sure that this wasn't the best thing in the world that could have happened to you?

<I sold a house, a business, and left everything established I had worked for and built up over the past 15 years.>

We all agree that you were supposed to leave Harrisburg anyhow. Maybe you would have held on to Harrisburg forever if not for this.

<I was perfectly willing to withdraw "my" desire to move to Israel if it was not in HaShem's timing. I had that firmly ingrained in my heart and I am confident that I was being "real" with myself on that. Therefore, I know since I was genuine in this quest for a true "sign" from G-d to direct me and for me to be only in His Will, I am completely at a loss now how to feel or understand or trust in any future step I take in life.>

Again, what makes you so sure that this wasn't in your best interests in the long run? Are you so sure that you have such a complete overview of your life and all the things that are going to happen to you? Are you sure you know exactly what challenges your soul needs in life; indeed what potential the world needed from your soul? This may, in retrospect, be seen by you as a turning point in translating a previously immature relationship with Him (not unauthentic or lacking in passion and commitment – just immature) into something much deeper.

<I have no confidence now that I can hear or know that HaShem is with me and/or guiding me.>

You are saying that if you like the result then you will believe in Him – but if you can't see what He is getting at then He's out.

<I want to stress that I did not just go forward on all these plans without seeking G-d. And not just lightly seeking Him on this huge endeavor, but seeking Him with all that was in me!!

You were looking for a cookie – the right answer – instead of an ongoing relationship.

<I've been through so much in my life and have learned the hard way so many times to not rely on my decisions but to trust in G-d and to stay in His Will even if it is disappointing to me. I feel I accept that disappointment with understanding that it is the best thing for me.>

Now you are talking.

<I based everything in the past several years on the fact to only rely on G-d. I so relied on that hashkafa that in any thing I did, but most certainly this major decision to make aliyah, I sought Him long and hard. I knew that as much as I loved Israel this would be a horrible thing for me to do if it wasn't His Will and timing.>

Yes – but horrible for the soul is not always noticed by the body and vice-versa.

<I can honestly tell you I truly felt that way and was prepared to accept whatever He lead me to do. A "No-don't go" would have been accepted by me, I have full confidence in that. Since so many, many things fell into a perfect rhythm and even then with each thing I still sought after Him, saying "You are in this – right, HaShem?" This is You allowing all this to come

about?" I just kept getting a "go-ahead" type of signal. No one or nothing seemed to stand in the way. Or advise me differently.>

Well, it doesn't sound like you ever discussed the facts in depth with any level-headed person familiar with conditions in Israel. But even if you are right – even if you did get the go ahead – who says you were not supposed to come for this time and then go back? Who says that this isn't what you were supposed to go through? Why do you think you should see G-d's yes as an "And therefore I will make things go smoothly for you" signal?

<But the thing in this that has me and I fear no recovery from is the sheer abandonment and mislead in this.>

If you trusted a doctor to be a great lawyer and he let you down – it is because you misunderstood the nature of the trust you should have had – not because he is not to be trusted. This is good – you have now – as a result of this experience – a fabulous opportunity to explore real trust.

<All He had to do was tell me NO. I would have accepted that and been obedient – I truly would have. Why then did I go through all this in a time in my life when this could drive me over the edge? Given the previous year of anxiety with family matters this was really no time to allow me to face this kind of tsores.>

Oh – there was someone else who once said that – Yaakov – and just when he did G-d piled it on – Yosef disappeared, famine, Shimon got tied up, Binyamin had to go to Egypt, Dina got raped. You underestimate yourself. But why are you reducing G-d's expectations of you to your own expectations of yourself? G-d obviously thinks that you have a giant soul. So do I. And so should you.

<Not when I so desperately was trying to be in His Will. I didn't just ask to be – I begged to be! Now I'm left with no confidence for the future and being connected to Him. This, in my opinion, is the worse place a person can possible be—totally lost.>

Good. Now that you realize that you cannot impose your ideas of a relationship on Him. Now that you have to dig much deeper to see what faith is all about – now you are really going to grow.

<I am groping desperately to understand before giving up entirely. So I bought the book you referred to, The Knowing Heart.>

There is another, maybe easier, book as well – Worldmask, by Rabbi Akiva Tatz.

<You have been wonderful in all your help. I will never forget how much you helped me and were, in a sense, my only lifeline. That overwhelms my heart. Words would never do justice to the immense feeling of gratitude I have for your kindness.>

So some good things are happening that you do recognize. Now let's look together for some more.

Looking forward to hearing your responses,
Rabbi Moishe Levenson

In a subsequent conversation the following was said:

Do not look at your stay here as an all-or-nothing, as "either I was successful and I managed to stay; or I was a failure and had to leave." You did come to Israel and stay for a while (about four months). Who's to say that you were not supposed to come for that period of time; that there were not certain things that you were meant to learn and that you needed to be here, under these circumstances to learn them? The question is not whether your trip to Israel was a failure or not. The question is what you are able to take out of this experience.

The dialogue continued, but, sensing that some of her trust issues had to do with her relationship with other people and not with G-d, she was referred to a Torah counselor to work through general trust issues.

iii-Letter to a middle-aged woman suffering from cancer

Names of people and places have been changed

Dear Suzanne,

The news that the terrible disease (referred to in Yiddish only as the unmentionable 'yenem machala') has spread in your body again must be extremely traumatic for both you and Roland. The cure, radiation treatment and chemotherapy are almost as horrible as the disease. In addition, there is always that deep fear and foreboding that one doesn't know the outcome for certain. You have been through this twice before and must be very emotionally and physically tired. In addition, as I well know, there are other blocks of sadness and trauma which weigh heavily on yours and Roland's hearts. I am writing first and foremost to tell you that although I only recently met you both, I am with you and thinking about you in this difficult, difficult time. I am planning, on completion of this letter, to go down to the Western Wall and daven for you, Shulamis bas Devora.

I would like to attempt to impart a little strengthening, a little inspiration, to share a little faith and hope at a time when despair and despondence are wont to shout all other voices down. Forgive me the arrogance of the attempt, for it really requires a deeper soul than mine to share insight into G-d's hidden plan behind the suffering and pain that you must be going through.

The Bluzhever Rebbe was in a group that was once ordered by the Nazis to take a huge leap, at night, over a pit. Any person falling into the pit was shot and killed. The Rebbe was standing next to a non-observant Jew and the former encouraged the latter to make the attempt together with him. Somehow, they both took that impossible leap and somehow landed on the other side. Said the non-observant Jew to the Rebbe, "Tell me, Rebbe, what were you thinking when you made that impossible leap. What inspired you to even make the attempt?" Said the Rebbe, "I was thinking of 3000 years of Jewish history, a history where the hand of the Almighty was clearly there throughout. I thought to myself, 'Surely I could hold on to the shirt tails of all those great Jews that came before me and just get over one more hole in the ground.' But tell me," the Rebbe said to the non-observant Jew, "What were you holding onto?" "I", said the other, "I was holding on to your shirt tails."

Suzanne, you have a huge pit ahead of you, but you also have a Jewish נשמה capable of making that huge leap. You are the culmination of thousands of years of G-d's special nurturing and caring for His children. No one will be able to tell you for sure why you and those who love you must go through all this pain. But we can understand a little of how G-d runs His world. The sages say, "Bereishisa Chishucha, VeHadar Nehura," literally Aramaic for "in the beginning darkness, followed by light" i.e. just as in the beginning of the physical world He created darkness (not just the absence of light – light hadn't been created yet that it could be called absent), so too in the spiritual world the pattern is to have times of darkness as a preparation for light. Sometimes the darkness is simply intellectual ("Katnus DeMochin – smallness or contraction of the mind), sometimes it is inbuilt into emotional cycles, inadequacies and psychological disorders, and sometimes it is life-threatening physical illness. While in the dark, one does not see the light and is enveloped and consumed by the pitch black. Yet, though one cannot see the light he can believe in the light. Our Holy Torah, so total in its guidance, dealt with this situation too in the description of Yaakov's reaction to the loss of Yosef. Yaakov Avinu could not see where his pain at the loss of Yosef would end – there was no light he could see at the end of the tunnel. The pain went on and on and on. (The Sages tell us that, because Yosef was still alive, and his נשמה could see this at some high level, there was no possibility of his being comforted.) And in fact, he could never have anticipated the way in which that pain was finally resolved. It came from a totally unexpected direction. Yaakov's pain and the way he dealt with it brought into the world the spiritual energy that allows us all to clutch onto a deep faith when we are faced with life-threatening situations to ourselves or others. (Before this, in his confrontation with Eisav, his own life was at stake, but he saw the loss of Yosef as even more painful.) Darkness, loneliness, that depressing lump in our stomachs – all have their place. All are part of the darkness which השם Himself created at the outset. But know that as a Jewess you have, as a natural gift, those huge reservoirs of faith to believe that He who created the darkness followed it with the light. The Rebbe believed – but that wasn't enough. He had to take a leap to other side. He knew that a leap in the dark is a leap forward, a step towards. At some point השם will say, "Let there be light." He must first command. It is not always obviously there at the outset. But he has promised us that He will, for He set up the creation that way. How long? What must you go through first? No one can tell. Faith can and will comfort – it does not promise a clear vision at all times. Faith can be lonely, though with it we are never actually alone. Daven with that faith – not just the words of the siddur – really cry your heart out, as "He is close to all who cry to him BeEmet" (Ashrei). When you've reached the bottom and nothing else holds the promise of salvation, then you can cry to him BeEmet, in absolute truth. There will be good doctors, but not in the doctors lie salvation (though they may be *shlichim* – the tools G-d uses for healing); there will be treatments, and you must endure them, but not in those treatments lie salvation. Only in the fathomless love and mercies of He who beckons: "Turn to Me, I will help, save and protect you. Your pain is Mine – and therefore I will not allow it to continue a second longer than absolutely necessary. Come, snuggle up to Me, and find comfort."

Suzanne, I am deeply distressed by your pain. I am sure that Roland, your sister, your children, your friends (I amongst them) all feel that if only they could bear it all for you, they gladly would. They cannot. But those who love you will follow you with your load, wherever you will be. And right next to you, holding your emotionally weary heart and limbs up, ready to take you by the hand to take that impossible leap, is the Almighty, mysterious in his ways, but warm and comforting to experience.

May the Almighty grant you a speedy recovery. Please feel free to be in touch at any time, for any reason, either you or Roland.

Sincerely,
Rabbi Moishe Levenson

iv- Condolence poem to family of the small town Reverend

To members of the Klitzner family,

המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

I shall remember him;
I shall remember that man who was always so full of life;
Of life and fortitude and patience and wisdom;
A man who changed my life.

I shall remember his love for each one of us;
Always full of encouragement and nurturing;
Such a giving man;
That man who changed my life.

Oh Reverend Klitzner – your legacy lives on;
It lives on in Jerusalem and Cape Town;
It thrives in Melbourne and Ra'anana;
It grows in the hearts of your children;
And we were all your children;
The man who changed our lives.

I remember the glowing pride;
When I would come back from Yeshiva;
And you made me feel so proud;
You gave me so much –
You, the man who changed my life.

I remember your sweet, sincere voice;
I cherish those Friday nights
When your loving praises to HaShem
Drifted outwards and upwards,
Like incense in the air.

I remember your way with all;
You crossed all ages; all intellects;
Male and female alike,
Oh dear man who changed my life.

You were our link with Judaism
With the Holy Torah and the Holy Tongue
With love for Israel and love for the Jewish people

Oh dear man I am so sad that now you are gone.

And so – my beloved man,
It is time to say farewell
But we will carry – we all will carry
All your precious lessons in the bosom of our souls.

v-Letter to couple – the wife has cancer

Names of people and places have been changed

Dear Jeremy and Jane,

I am writing at this time because I know, without knowing details, that you are facing a very difficult situation, and I thought to provide a little strength and encouragement. Jeremy, you have assured me that you have every type of resource at your disposal – from Rabbis to super-specialized doctors, and therefore I do not imagine I will add anything but a rather share a little of the pain if such a thing is possible.

Judaism is not short on things to say about difficult situations. My gosh, the Jewish nation has been through every hell and back. And we Jews lack neither the brains nor the sensitivity to give content and meaning to these situations. I myself have written up a source book compiling the wisdom of the ages on this issue of suffering.

But that is great for the comfortable reality of intellectual wisdom. What does one actually say to someone going through all of this? What can anyone say to anyone else in pain unless they have been through that pain or worse themselves? How dare I utter platitudes of wisdom when I haven't a clue (probably) what you and Jane, are going through? And yet, how can I be silent, a deaf and dumb mute to what is all-consuming to someone whom I have come to like dearly and respect greatly?

Oh! If you could hear the language of my silence, you would hear the poetry of care, the prose of deep concern – it is not an empty silence mine. It screams with helplessness, it yells to the Almighty to take care of His loved ones, it searches for a way to give some little thing to help an inch or two.

Questions; of course there are questions. If we did not have questions we would limit G-d's unfathomable wisdom to the limits of our minds. But there will be time enough for questions. At a time like this there is only one real, legitimate question – what can I do to get as close as I possibly can to the Almighty, Blessed Be He? How close does He want me, before he says enough to the pain. “Away with ye and your barbs. You have done your trusty work.” Does Judaism believe in heroes? It sure does. They are the hidden greats who in the hour of their anguish rose ever purer in their expression of the little act. It is the tiny deed which finally makes greatness. We want to know whether Napoleon smiled to make an orphan happy, whether Alexander the Great worried whether his wife was warm enough – failing which they are as nothing compared with the shtetel cobbler who gave his care with a wink and a kopek. We want to know whether people, when the going got tough, were able to repeat those mundane sensitivities that make up our lives. Those are our Jewish heroes, those whose response to great distress was to take their Yiddishkeit that tiny step further – a little drop of

Shabbos, a teaspoon of davening, a thimble more of keeping kosher, of loving one's family – these were the greats who would live a whole decade in one hour.

Where there is pain, the mundane is trivial no longer – it becomes the stuff of great holiness, of cosmic spiritual things. Who on earth down here will know who made the real difference to our existence? We can never really tell. Jacob was all alone when he fought his angel of evil and emerged in pain; limping but victorious. All the great victories over Jacob's angel are done by generals of the heart and soul in hidden, holy chambers. So often their souls were made pure by the agony of the moment. There must be an easier way, we say to ourselves, a fairer and more just way. Indeed were we not to feel that way we would be doubly accountable – for our insensitivity and for our presuming to understand the Mind of God. Yet as we kick, we direct our foot downwards – and pressed against the earth, our kick pushes us on high – another inch, and then just one more.

Jane, may the Almighty grant you a speedy recovery. May you merit to do on earth all that was yours to do – a full life, with all of your potential fulfilled and with much *nachas* from your children and grandchildren.

With fondest regards to you both,
Rabbi Moishe Levenson

vi-Condolence letters to family on loss of parent/spouse

Names of people and places have been changed

LETTER ONE:

Dear Rozanne,

I have just heard of Gary's passing from my parents. Gary's passing leaves me with feelings of intense sadness and loss, and I can imagine the great pain that you and the kids are experiencing right now.

Gary was an exceptional human being. G-d brings souls like Gary's into the world to the benefit of all of us. We are all enriched by his kindly, gently ways; we are all inspired by knowing what an outstanding husband and what a wonderful father he was. The lessons of life that Gary brought into the world will be a permanent legacy; all of us who knew him well carry those lessons in our hearts and minds.

May the Almighty comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Yours truly,

Rabbi Moishe Levenson

LETTER TWO:

Dear members of the Cooper family,

I was saddened to hear of the death of Dr. Jerry Cooper. I have many pleasant memories of my childhood years in Jacksonville. But of all my memories of the many wonderful people I came into contact there, my memory of Jerry is the fondest. Here was a man whose kindness and gentleness knew no bounds. His gentle, calm air affected any room he walked into – the whole atmosphere seemed to become softer and more mellow.

Oh, were there more Jerry Coopers in this world it would be a much better place; and indeed, the world is a better place because of his having been here. All of us who had contact with him have been as if touched by some kind of angel whose magic spell tells us all to be a little more caring, a little more patient, a little gentler.

Somehow, he was able to connect with anyone no matter what their age. I remember having many conversations with him. I was but a little boy – he was an adult, a very clever and well-informed adult at that. And yet he made me feel as if I was having a conversation with an equal.

Here was a man, Jewish to the core, loved by all and loving all, an exemplary member of the community and an exemplary husband and father. Oh, if only there were more Jerry Coopers in this world.

May the Almighty comfort you amongst the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Chaim Ostrofsky.

LETTER THREE:

Dear Aunt Sarah and all members of the family,

I have heard from Louis of the death of Uncle Philip, that precious soul who brought so much joy and goodness in the world. Even in recent years, when things were more difficult, whenever I visited he always had a twinkle in his eye and always produced a smile, no matter how difficult this was for him.

When I will remember Philip over the years to come the outstanding image that will come to mind will be kindness and gentleness, a man whose tone of voice and content in communication soothed and inspired those around him. I will remember Philip as someone of great culture, but without airs, someone whom a 5 year old as well as 95 year old would feel just as comfortable talking to.

Of course there was the humor, always used to make people feel better about themselves and others; and there was the deep love and caring, for his wife, for his children and grandchildren, for his extended family and for all those around him.

In Philip the world was shown an example of how this earth could become a better place. I shall miss the man and all his fine qualities; but I will also strive to emulate the example he set for us all.

May the Almighty comfort you all.

LETTER FOUR:

Dear Jeremy,

A mighty pillar has fallen - you, the family, we all have lost a great, great person. How can you be reconciled? Your partner for life is gone; how can you be comforted? She will never share with you again. Here was this giant of the soul - so cultured and refined, so caring and giving, so gentle, sensitive and loving - who went through so, so much suffering until the end. Deep down I know that all that suffering has purified her soul seventy fold, that together with her outstanding character and many, many mitzvos she will now find rest close to the Almighty, a rest without pain, a rest full of the basking in the Almighty's radiant light.

May the Almighty comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem; may he give you the strength to go on, to perpetuate Jane's wonderful contribution to this world.

Please feel free to call upon me for anything whatsoever, day or night.

LETTER FIVE:

Dear Reb Yosef,

I have been informed of the petirah of your Mother, the beloved Aunt Bettie, as I knew her. I was unfortunately not able to make it to the Shiva due to a nasty flu. Therefore, I want to take the opportunity to say that "Hamakom Yenachem Oschem Besoch Shear Evlei Tzion V' Yerushalayim."

I have fond memories of your Mother. She was someone who symbolized the archetype of Jewish motherhood and grandmotherhood – loving, warm, giving – relating to everyone as if they were her own children or grandchildren. And even when it was clear that things had become physically difficult for her, she still communicated this connecting with all Jewish souls – motherhood going into her very bones.

Your Mother gave me an inkling of how Jewish Mothers ought to, and once certainly did, transmit the Mesorah – through the very naturalness of their being. In an era of shrinking maternal wisdom, her legacy is one of those who helped keep the eternal Jewish heritage of women's Torah alive.

B'Vracha.

vii- Letter to someone suffering from Mono

Names of people and places have been changed

Dear Ephraim,

Just another quick note to tell you that we are all thinking about you and missing you around here.

I am enclosing a little insight that may help you relate to the difficult challenge you are facing right now:

In last week's פרשה, we read of Avraham Avinu's נסיון to take his beloved יצחק and offer him up to HaSh-m. The name for G-d which is used there is אלוקים (not השם). It is אלוקים, the מדת הדין, who comes to test אלוקים. אברהם is used throughout (at least another two times) until after the נסיון when it is the מלאך השם who tells אברהם to use an איל instead. We, בני אברהם, have an easy relationship with השם, but we all have a tough time developing a relationship with אלוקים, of reaching an understanding that השם - that same השם who we may connect with as a merciful, giving G-d - הוא אלוקינו. He is exactly the same G-d who tries and tests us. Only if we reach that understanding will we be able to say השם אחד - that all components of His Hashgacha comes from the same source.

הקב"ה assures us that as בני אברהם אבינו we are capable of a לך לך, of going into ourselves and discovering the miraculous hidden resources which each נסיון is perfectly sculptured to bring out (נס from נסיון - the נס of our inner selves). The miracle lies in the fact that at the time it doesn't seem really reasonable that we should go through the נסיון successfully. The reasonable man would claim that we are "אנוס" and would leave the situation at that. Even a מאמין may make the mistake of thinking that השם sets up the נסיון and that now it is up to him to handle it (or to fail). But that is not what happens. Clearly, the only way the עקידה could resolve itself as it should have was by an act of השגחה by the עולם של רבונו, an act totally unanticipated by אברהם אבינו. Up until that point, אברהם truly did not see how השם was going to fulfill His promise to him. There simply seemed no way out.

Faced with this, the reasonable man would make himself comfortable and face the ride. But the man of faith realizes that the point of every נסיון is not just to face it with fortitude and good cheer. The point is that at some point of the נסיון we have to take a leap of faith - one that seems to be demanded by the situation even though it doesn't really make sense. The real נס of the נסיון is that we have it within us to take that leap.

We leap without knowing where we are going to land. In fact, we jump knowing that reasonably our jump is not big enough to carry us to the other side of the crevice. But G-d tells us to jump nevertheless, and it is only faith that carries us forward.

So jump Ephraim, jump all the way to the other side of the crevice. You cannot of course do that. But the נסיון tells you to jump anyhow. The rest is up to Him. Jump, and He will carry you to the other side. At that point you will see that the שם אלוקים and the שם השם truly are one.

May רפואה שלימה במהרה grant you a הקדוש ברוך הוא.

viii- Poem for donor who was killed

A donor of mine was killed in a car crash. This is what I sent his partner. (He was a doctor in S.A.):

Gary your sweet smile is no more,
your sweet smile that showed so much love and care
Gone is your gentle warm voice,
the Ribono shel Olam has taken that too
Gone is your giving, giving giving
to your patients, your family,
Gone is the line of Roshei Yeshivah
whose needs you always tried to meet
All back to the Almighty all to him

Your dream was to live in Israel
Indeed, 25 who lived that dream gave their lives within hours of yours
Your spiritual aspirations were always the highest

I want you back, He said, I want you home
Your work is finished there - come on home to Me.
I need you close, closer than Israel,
Closer than anything on earth
I'll take you at your greatest, the ideal time,
I'll take you in the middle of the night,
in the middle of your holy work.
Come on home to Me.

And so this Tzur - this mighty Rock, HaShem,
said no to earthlings all,
No more sharing your beautiful soul
No more of your chein, your eidelkeit, your shining, sharing eyes,
Come on home to Me

I'll snatch him back - bear the pain
I need him close, he's done his all
He deserves Me now - he deserves the joy,
The pleasure of My rays
Come on home to Me

But don't despair I'll leave for you
oh earthlings all a treasure true
Not one thing's lost - all his good deeds
I'll make them yours - take them for you
His soul by me - his deeds by you
Snatch them now - each quality true
Oh diamond diggers of the soul

He'll live on there - through you he'll live
His memory blessed, through us it's blessed
Come on home to Me.

ix. Letter to 40 year old Baalas Tshuvah who has not found her Shidduch

Names of people and places have been changed

She writes: It seems that Hashem is backing me into a corner these days. One by one (and in quick succession - interesting that the word "success" is in there) my close friends are getting engaged, all of them younger than I. The ones who aren't are imminently so. At the home I go to most Shabbosos, my place of refuge, one of the daughters (20 yrs. old) is now a kallah. ... I understand in my head that this is all very good news and I feel like not such a nice person for my lingering pain over these events. What do you think Hashem wants from me?

Dear Ruchi,

I do not know what G-d wants from you and I am reluctant to try and guess. I do know that He does back us into a corner from time to time so that we realized that there is absolutely no hope except through Him. It is often just at the point that we say, "Okay, you win. I give up - I give myself totally over to You. Just tell me what You want," that He answers us. And the source of the answer may come from a totally unexpected source. When Joseph's brothers were standing in front of him and were feeling trapped, the last place in the world from which they expected a redemption was from the man standing in front of them. He, after all, was the source of the problem. So how could he be the solution? And it was just at that hopeless point - when they jumped into the abyss of faith - trapped into total faith one might say - that the solution yielded its sweet fruit. So too at Kriyas Yam Suf - the sea was what was trapping them, so how could it be the solution? And yet it was - just at the point of absolute hopelessness and despair.

So, I do not know what HaSh-m wants from you - but I do know that He wants you - all of you. He wants you because He loves you - deeply and passionately (as we humans would have it). And I am grateful that out of this great pain I too was privileged to be let in on some of your special neshama.

x. Part of a correspondence with a person whose life has suddenly become very difficult

...Maybe HaShem wanted to show you that nothing in Olam HaZeh can ultimately help you. That only by turning to Him can you do anything at all.

<And boy, has He shown me in numerous ways that nothing on earth has any permanence. So I got that one too! Without a doubt! >

Good – you are really growing from this whole thing.

<And I realize what you say about my anger with Him just shows I still have a relationship with Him. But my, have things changed in that area from what it was. That's what puzzles me probably the most ~ why He has orchestrated such a drastic change in me and "my faith," to travel down "this road" rather than the one I was on! It is such a deep mystery and one so

perplexing that it is getting the "best of me" for sure! But for the next "30 years" I guess I will have to let it rest and just try to find my way in the forest.>

Your question is currently unanswerable. But is it the only question? Is it the best question you could be asking right now? Should you not be asking, "How do I get close to Him now that He saw fit to put me in this situation? How do use my freedom of choice in this situation?"

Chag Sameyach,
Chaim Goldstein

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