

## When Friends Cannot Believe

R' Mordechai Torczyner – torczyner@torontotorah.com



### Job's View of Gd

#### 1. Job 9:2-5 – The Bully

In truth, I know it is so; how could a man win against Gd? Should he wish to battle with Him, he could not answer [Gd] for one of one thousand [claims]. He is of wise heart, and mighty strength; who has hardened himself against Him and emerged whole? He moves mountains and they are unaware, when He overturns them in His rage!

#### 2. Job 12:14-15 – Source of all destruction

He destroys and does not build; He locks in a man and it will not be opened. He halts waters and they dry up; He sends them forth, and they overturn the earth.

#### 3. Job 14:7-10 – This world and the next

For the tree has hope; should it be cut, it will still renew, and its shoot will not cease. Should its root age in the earth, and its trunk die in the dirt, it will flower from the scent of water, and produce growth like a sapling. A man dies and becomes weak; a man expires, and where is he?

#### 4. Job 21:7-9 - Injustice

Why do wicked people live, become tough, and grow in strength and might? Their children are arrayed before them, and their descendants before their eyes. Their homes are peaceful, without fear, and the rod of Gd is not upon them.

#### 5. Job 27:2 – My own experience

By the life of Gd, who warped my judgment, and Shakkai, who has embittered my soul!

### The Conversation

#### 6. Job 2:9 – Job's wife

And his wife said to him: You still maintain your unblemished state? Bless Gd, and die!

#### 7. Job 5:17-18, 8:18-19, 11:7-9, 22:5-7

Eliphaz: Fortunate is the man whom Gd rebukes; do not reject the rebuke of Shakkai! For He causes pain and bandages; He strikes, and His hands heal.

Bildad: If He will swallow the tree from its place, and deny it, saying, "I have not seen you," this will be the joy of its ways, and from other dirt it will sprout.

Tzofar: Can you investigate Gd? Can you know the purpose of Shakkai? What can you do in the heights of the heavens? What do you know of that which is deeper than the depths? Its measure is longer than the land, and wider than the sea.

Eliphaz: Is your evil not great? There is no end to your sin! For you take security from your brothers for nothing, and you strip the clothes of those who are bare. You do not give water to the tired, and you withhold bread from the hungry...

#### 8. Job 6:15 - Job

My brothers betrayed me like a wadi; like a channel passing through wadis.

#### 9. Job 12:2-3 - Job

True, you are the many – and with you, wisdom dies. I have a heart like yours, too; I am no lesser than you; and who does not possess words like yours?

#### 10. Job 7:17-19 - Job

What is Man, that You elevate him, and that You pay attention to him? You count him in the mornings; from moment to moment You assess him. How long will You fail to turn away from me? You will not release me to swallow my spit!

#### 11. Job 13:24 - Job

Why do You hide Your face, and consider me Your enemy?

#### 12. Job 9:17-18 - Job

In the storm You shove me; You have increased my wounds for no reason. You do not give me an opportunity to settle my breath, for You fill me with bitterness.

13. Job 12:9-10 - Job

Who does not know all of this, that the Hand of Gd has done this? In His hand is the life of all who live, and the breath of all human flesh.

14. Job 13:7-10 - Job

Will you speak wickedly for Gd, and speak deceitfully for Him? Will you gain His favour, will you fight for Gd? Will it be good should He seek you? Or as one man deceives another, will you deceive Him? He will surely rebuke you...

What is the right way?

15. Carol Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations*, pp. 118-125

This claim about reality [that justice exists - MT], however unobvious it may appear to modern readers, was one of the most widespread and fundamental beliefs in the ancient Near East, attested to in many literary forms, though given its most articulate expression in wisdom literature. Restated in conceptual terms [as opposed to metaphor or example - MT], this belief is that good and evil have a different relation to reality. The resilient, enduring quality of good derives from its participation in the structures of creation itself, whereas evil, no matter how powerful and vital it appears, is actually fragile and subject to disintegration because it has no root in that order of creation (e.g., Psalm 1)...

One cannot convince another of the truth of this perception by means of argument, for the issue is fundamentally one of perception itself. Rather, as [Raphael] Demos says, one can only "evoke" a world, a vivid pattern of a whole... The persuasive power of an iconic narrative does not derive from a simple empiricism. Although it cannot be wholly disconfirmed by experience and remain plausible, the story remains surprisingly resilient in the face of a mixture of conforming and nonconforming experience...

16. Talmud, Bava Batra 16b

"איוב לא בדעת ידבר ודבריו לא בהשכל" אמר רבא, מכאן שאין אדם נתפס בשעת צער.

"Job does not speak wisely, and his words are not [presented] with insight." Rava said: From here we learn that a person is not held responsible for his time of pain.

17. Talmud, Bava Metzia 58b

"[ו]לא תונו איש את עמיתו" (ויקרא כה:יז) באונאת דברים. הא כיצד? אם היה בעל תשובה אל יאמר לו "זכור מעשיך הראשונים", אם היה בן גרים אל יאמר לו "זכור מעשה אבותיך", אם היה גר ובא ללמוד תורה אל יאמר לו "פה שאכל נבילות וטריפות, שקצים ורמשים בא ללמוד תורה שנאמרה מפי הגבורה." אם היו יסורין באין עליו, אם היו חלאים באין עליו, או שהיה מקבר את בניו, אל יאמר לו כדרך שאמרו לו חביריו לאיוב, "הלא יראתך כסלתך, תקותך ותם דרכיך זכר נא מי הוא נקי אבד."

"And you shall not abuse each other (Vayikra 25:17)" – This is verbal abuse. How? If he had repented, he should not say to him, "Remember your first deeds." If he was descended from people who had converted, he should not say to him, "Remember your parents' deeds." If he had converted, and he had now come to learn Torah, he should not say to him, "The mouth that ate non-kosher will now learn the Torah spoken by the mouth of Gd!" If he is suffering, if he is ill, or he buries his children, one should not say to him as his friends said to Job, "Your reverence is your confidence [or: foolishness], your hope and the end of your path. Remember: Who is innocent and is destroyed?"

18. Job 16:4-5 - Job

I could speak like you, too. If you were in my place, I would join with you with words, and I would shake my head upon you. I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the movement of my lips would spare you.

19. Rashi to 42:7, based on Talmud, Bava Batra 16b

הוא לא פשע בי כי אם על אשר אמר "תם ורשע הוא מכלה", ואם הוסיף לדבר מפני קושי יסורין אשר כבדו וחזקו עליו דבר. אבל אתם פשעתם על אשר הרשעתם אותו... והתחזקתם אותו ורשע ולבסוף הייתם משותקים ומנוצחים לפניו, והיה לכם לנחמו כאשר עשה אליהוא. ולא די לאיוב בצרתו ויסוריו, כי גם הוספתם על חטאתיכם פשע להקניטו.

He did not sin against Me other than by saying, "He destroys the complete and the wicked"... And if he added words, he spoke because of the harsh suffering which weighed on him and overpowered him. But you sinned when you declared him wicked... And you strengthened him in his wickedness, and in the end you were silenced and defeated before him, and you should have comforted him as Elihu did. And not only did Job experience pain and suffering, but you added iniquity to your sin by angering him.