

The Two Roles of Government in Israel



Timely Torah, June 13th, 2021

1. Talmud Bavli, Brachos 10a-b

אמר רב הוננא: מאי דכתיב "מי פהתכם ומי יודע פשר דבר" — מי פהתכם ומי יודע לעשות פשרה בין שני צדיקים, בין חזקיהו לישעיהו. חזקיהו אמר: לימי ישעיהו גבאי, דהכי אשכחן באלהו דאזל לגבי אחאב, שנאמר: "ויגלה אלהיו להראות אל אחאב". לישעיהו אמר: לימי חזקיהו גבאי דהכי אשכחן ביהורם בן אחאב דאזל לגבי אלישע.

With regard to redemption and prayer, the Gemara tells the story of Hezekiah's illness, his prayer to God, and subsequent recuperation. **Rav Hamnuna said:** What is the meaning of that which is written praising the Holy One, Blessed be He: **"Who is like the wise man, and who knows the interpretation [peshar] of the matter"** (Ecclesiastes 8:1)? This verse means: **Who is like the Holy One, Blessed be He, Who knows how to effect compromise [peshara] between two righteous individuals, between Hezekiah, the king of Judea, and Isaiah the prophet.** They disagreed over which of them should visit the other. **Hezekiah said: Let Isaiah come to me, as that is what we find with regard to Elijah the prophet, who went to Ahab, the king of Israel, as it is stated: "And Elijah went to appear to Ahab"** (I Kings 18:2). This proves that it is the prophet who must seek out the king. **And Isaiah said: Let Hezekiah come to me, as that is what we find with regard to Yehoram ben Ahab, king of Israel, who went to Elisha the prophet, as it is stated: "So the king of Israel, Jehosaphat and the king of Edom went down to him"** (II Kings 3:12).

מה עשה הקדוש ברוך הוא — הביא יסורים על חזקיהו, ואמר לו לישעיהו: לך ובקר את החולה. שנאמר: "בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם חָלָה חֲזַקְיָהוּ לְמוֹת וַיָּבֵא אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּן אֲמוּץ הַנְּבִיא וַיֵּאמֶר אֵלָיו כֹּה אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת צוּ לְבִיתְךָ כִּי מֵת אַתָּה וְלֹא תִחְיֶה וְגו'". מאי "כי מת אתה ולא תחיה": מת אתה — בעולם הזה, ולא תחיה — לעולם הבא.

What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do to effect compromise between Hezekiah and Isaiah? He brought the suffering of illness upon Hezekiah and told Isaiah: Go and visit the sick. Isaiah did as God instructed, as it is stated: **“In those days Hezekiah became deathly ill, and Isaiah ben Amoz the prophet came and said to him: Thus says the Lord of Hosts: Set your house in order, for you will die and you will not live”** (Isaiah 38:1). This seems redundant; **what is the meaning of you will die and you will not live?** This repetition means: **You will die in this world, and you will not live, you will have no share, in the World-to-Come.**

אמר ליה: מאי פולי האי? אמר ליה: משום דלא עסקת בקריה ורבקה. אמר ליה: משום דחזאי לי ברוח הקדש דנפקי מינאי בנין דלא מעלו.

Hezekiah said to him: What is all of this? For what transgression am I being punished?

Isaiah said to him: Because you did not marry and engage in procreation.

Hezekiah apologized and **said: I had no children because I envisaged through divine inspiration that the children that emerge from me will not be virtuous.** Hezekiah meant that he had seen that his children were destined to be evil. In fact, his son Menashe sinned extensively, and he thought it preferable to have no children at all.

אמר ליה: בהדי כבשי דרממנא למה לד? מאי דמפקדת איבעי לך למעבד, ומה דניחא קמיה קודשא בריה הוא — לעבדי.

Isaiah said to him: Why do you involve yourself with the secrets of the Holy One, Blessed be He? That which you have been commanded, the mitzva of procreation, you are required to perform, and that which is acceptable in the eyes of the Holy One, Blessed be He, let Him perform, as He has so decided.

אמר ליה: השתא הב לי ברתה, אפשר דגרמא זכותא דידי ודידה, ונפקי מינאי בנין דמעלו. אמר ליה: פבר נגזרה עליה גזירה. אמר ליה: בן אמוץ, פלה נבואתה וצא!

Hezekiah said to Isaiah: Now give me your daughter as my wife; perhaps my merit and your merit will cause virtuous children to emerge from me.

Isaiah said to him: The decree has already been decreed against you and this judgment cannot be changed.

Hezekiah said to him: Son of Amoz, cease your prophecy and leave. As long as the prophet spoke as God's emissary, Hezekiah was obligated to listen to him. He was not, however, obligated to accept Isaiah's personal opinion that there was no possibility for mercy and healing.

כך מקובלני מבית אבי אבא, אפילו חרב חדה מונחת על צנארו של אדם, אל ימנע עצמו מן הרחמים.

Hezekiah continued: **I have received a tradition from the house of my father's father, from King David, the founding father of the dynasty of kings of Judea: Even if a sharp sword rests upon a person's neck, he should not prevent himself from praying for mercy.** One may still hold out hope that his prayers will be answered, as was David himself when he saw the Angel of Destruction, but nonetheless prayed for mercy and his prayers were answered.

אתמר נמי, רבי יוחנן ורבי אליעזר דאמרי תרוניהו: אפילו חרב חדה מונחת על צנארו של אדם, אל ימנע עצמו מן הרחמים. שפאמר: "הן יקטלני לו אנהל".

With regard to the fact that one should not despair of God's mercy, the Gemara cites that **it was also said that Rabbi Yohanan and Rabbi Eliezer both said: Even if a sharp sword is resting upon a person's neck, he should not prevent himself from praying for mercy, as it is stated in the words of Job: “Though**

He slay me, I will trust in Him” (Job 13:15). Even though God is about to take his life, he still prays for God’s mercy.

אמר רבי חנן: אפילו בעל החלומות אומר לו לאדם למחר הוא מת — אל ימנע עצמו מן הרחמים. שנאמר: “כי ברב חלמות והבליים ודברים הרבה כי את האלהים ירא”.

Similarly, **Rabbi Hanan said: Even if the master of dreams**, in a true dream, an angel (*Ma’ayan HaBerakhot*) tells a person that tomorrow he will die, he should not prevent himself from praying for mercy, as it is stated: **“For in the multitude of dreams and vanities there are many words; but fear God”** (Ecclesiastes 5:6). Although the dream may seem real to him, that is not necessarily the case, and one must place his trust in God.

מיד “ויסב חזקיהו פניו אל הקיר ויתפלל אל ה'”.

Having heard Isaiah’s harsh prophecy, **immediately “Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall and prayed to the Lord”** (Isaiah 38:2).

מאי “קיר”? אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש: מקירות לבו, שנאמר: “מעיי מעיי אוהילה קירות לבי וגו’”.

The Gemara asks: **What is** meant by the word **“wall [kir]”** in this context? Why did Hezekiah turn his face to a wall? **Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said:** This symbolically alludes to the fact that Hezekiah prayed to God **from the chambers [kirot] of his heart, as it is stated** elsewhere: **“My anguish, my anguish, I am in pain. The chambers of my heart. My heart moans within me”** (Jeremiah 4:19).

רבי לוי אמר: על עסקי הקיר, אמר לפניו: רבוננו של עולם, ומה שונמית שלא עשתה אלא קיר אחת קטנה החיית את בנה, אבי אבא שחפה את ההיכל כולו בכסף ובזהב על אחת כמה וכמה. “זכר נא את אשר התהלכתי לפניך באמת ובלב שלם ונהטוב בעיניך עשיתי”.

Rabbi Levi said: Hezekiah intended to evoke **matters relating to a wall**, and he said before God: **Master of the Universe, and if the woman from Shunem, who made only a single small wall** on the roof for the prophet Elisha, and **you revived her son, all the more so** should you bring life to the descendant of **my father’s father**, King Solomon, **who covered the entire Temple Sanctuary with silver and gold**. In his prayer, Hezekiah said: **“Please, Lord, please remember that I walked before You in truth, and with a complete heart, and what was good in Your eyes I did. And Hezekiah wept sore”** (Isaiah 38:3).

מאי “נהטוב בעיניך עשיתי”? אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: שסמך גאולה לתפלה. רבי לוי אמר: שגנו ספר רפואות.

The Gemara asks: To **what** specific action was he referring when he said: **“And what was good in your sight I did”**? Various opinions are offered: Mentioning Hezekiah’s merits, **Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav that he juxtaposed redemption and prayer** at sunrise instead of sleeping late, as was the custom of most kings (*Iyyun Ya’akov*). **Rabbi Levi said: He suppressed the Book of Remedies** upon which everyone relied.

2. II Divrei Hayamim 33:1-20

<p>א בן-שָׁתַיִם עָשָׂה שָׁנָה, מְנַשֶּׁה בְּמַלְכוֹ; וְחַמְשִׁים וְחָמֵשׁ שָׁנָה, מֶלֶךְ בִּירוּשָׁלַם.</p>	<p>1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem.</p>
<p>ב וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע, בְּעֵינֵי ה': כְּתוֹעֲבוֹת, הַגּוֹיִם, אֲשֶׁר הוֹרִישׁ ה', מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.</p>	<p>2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the nations, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.</p>
<p>ג וַיִּשָּׁב, וַיִּבֶן אֶת-הַבְּמוֹת, אֲשֶׁר נָתַץ, יְהִזְקִיָּהוּ אָבִיו; וַיִּקַּם מִזְבְּחוֹת לְבַעַלִּים, וַיַּעַשׂ אֲשֶׁרוֹת, וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לְכָל-צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם, וַיַּעֲבֹד אֹתָם.</p>	<p>3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down; and he reared up altars for the Baalim, and made Asheroth, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.</p>
<p>ד וּבְנָה מִזְבְּחוֹת, בְּבַיִת ה', אֲשֶׁר אָמַר ה', בִּירוּשָׁלַם יְהִי-שְׁמִי לְעוֹלָם.</p>	<p>4 And he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD said: 'In Jerusalem shall My name be for ever.'</p>
<p>ה וַיִּבֶן מִזְבְּחוֹת, לְכָל-צְבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם, בְּשַׁתֵּי, חֲצָרוֹת בַּיִת-ה'.</p>	<p>5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.</p>
<p>ו וְהוּא הֶעֱבִיר אֶת-בָּנָיו בְּאֵשׁ, בְּגִי בֶן-הַנֶּסֶם, וְעוֹנָן וְנַחֲשׁ וְכַשְׁף, וְעִשָּׂה אוֹב וַיְדַעוּנִי: הַרְבָּה, לַעֲשׂוֹת הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי ה'--לְהַכְעִיסוֹ.</p>	<p>6 He also made his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom; and he practised soothsaying, and used enchantments, and practised sorcery, and appointed them that divined by a ghost or a familiar spirit; he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him.</p>
<p>ז וַיִּשֶׂם, אֶת-פֶּסֶל הַסָּמֶל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה--בְּבַיִת הָאֱלֹהִים, אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-דָּוִד וְאֶל-שְׁלֹמֹה בְנוֹ, בְּבַיִת הַזֶּה וּבִירוּשָׁלַם אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתִּי מִכָּל שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲשִׁים אֶת-שְׁמִי לְעוֹלָם.</p>	<p>7 And he set the graven image of the idol, which he had made, in the house of God, of which God said to David and to Solomon his son: 'In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name for ever;</p>
<p>ח וְלֹא אֲסִיף, לְהַסִּיר אֶת-רַגְלֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מֵעַל הָאָדָמָה, אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱמַדְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם: רַק אִם-יִשְׁמְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת, אֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִים, לְכָל-הַתּוֹרָה וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים, בְּיַד-מֹשֶׁה.</p>	<p>8 neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from off the land which I have appointed for your fathers; if only they will observe to do all that I have commanded them, even all the law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses.'</p>
<p>ט וַיַּתַּע מְנַשֶּׁה, אֶת-יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע--מִן-הַגּוֹיִם, אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁמִיד ה' מִפְּנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. {פ}</p>	<p>9 And Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, so that they did evil more than did the nations, whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel. {P}</p>
<p>י וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מְנַשֶּׁה וְאֶל-עַמּוֹ, וְלֹא הִקְשִׁיבוּ.</p>	<p>10 And the LORD spoke to Manasseh, and to his people; but they gave no heed.</p>
<p>יא וַיָּבֵא ה' עֲלֵיהֶם, אֶת-שָׂרֵי הַצָּבָא אֲשֶׁר לְמֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּר, וַיִּלְכְּדוּ אֶת-מְנַשֶּׁה, בַּחֲחִים; וַיֹּאסְרוּהוּ, בְּנַחֲשָׁתִים, וַיּוֹלִיכֵהוּ, בְּבָבֶלָה.</p>	<p>11 Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.</p>
<p>יב וּכְהָצַר לוֹ--חָלָה, אֶת-פָּנָיו ה' אֱלֹהָיו; וַיִּכְנַע מְאֹד, מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָיו.</p>	<p>12 And when he was in distress, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.</p>

<p>יג וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אֵלָיו, וַיַּעֲתָר לוֹ וַיִּשְׁמַע תְּחִנָּתוֹ, וַיְשִׁיבֵהוּ יְרוּשָׁלַם, לְמַלְכוּתוֹ; וַיַּדַּע מְנַשֶּׁה, כִּי ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים.</p>	<p>13 And he prayed unto Him; and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD He was God.</p>
<p>יד וְאַחֲרֵי-כֵן בָּנָה חוֹמָה חִיצוֹנָה לְעִיר-דָּוִד מֵעֶרְבָה לְגִיחוֹן בְּנַחַל וְלְבוֹא בְּשַׁעַר הַדְּגִים, וְסָבַב לְעֵפְלָה, וַיִּגְבְּהֶנָּה, מְאֹד; וַיִּשֶׂם שְׂרֵי-חַיִל בְּכָל-הָעָרִים הַבְּצֻרוֹת, בִּיהוּדָה.</p>	<p>14 Now after this he built an outer wall to the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entrance at the fish gate; and he compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height; and he put captains of the army in all the fortified cities of Judah.</p>
<p>טו וַיִּסַּר אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי הַנֹּכַח וְאֶת-הַסְּמָל, מִבַּיִת ה', וְכָל-הַמְזֻבְחוֹת אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה בְּהַר בֵּית-ה', וּבִירוּשָׁלַם; וַיִּשְׁלֹךְ, חוּצָה לְעִיר.</p>	<p>15 And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.</p>
<p>טז וַיִּבֶן (וַיִּבְּן), אֶת-מִזְבַּח ה', וַיִּזְבַּח עָלָיו, זִבְחֵי שְׁלָמִים וְתוֹדָה; וַיֹּאמֶר, לַיהוָה, לְעֲבֹד, אֶת-ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.</p>	<p>16 And he built up the altar of the LORD, and offered thereon sacrifices of peace-offerings and of thanksgiving, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel.</p>
<p>יז אָבָל עוֹד הָעָם, זִבְחִים בְּבָמוֹת: רַק, לַה' אֱלֹהֵיהֶם.</p>	<p>17 Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, but only unto the LORD their God.</p>
<p>יח וַיִּתֵּר דְּבָרֵי מְנַשֶּׁה, וַתִּפְּלְתוּ אֵל-אֱלֹהָיו, וְדְבָרֵי הַחֹזִים, הַמְדַבְּרִים אֵלָיו בְּשֵׁם ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל--הֵנָּם, עַל-דְּבָרֵי מַלְכֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.</p>	<p>18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, behold, they are written among the acts of the kings of Israel.</p>
<p>יט וַתִּפְּלְתוּ וְהָעֵתֶר-לוֹ, וְכָל-חַטָּאתוֹ וּמַעֲלוֹ, וְהַמְקֻמּוֹת אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה בְּהֵם בָּמוֹת וְהָעִמּוּד, הָאֲשֵׁרִים וְהַפְּסָלִים, לְפָנָי הַכְּנָעוּ--הֵנָּם כְּתוּבִים, עַל דְּבָרֵי חוֹזֵי.</p>	<p>19 His prayer also, and how [God] was entreated of him, and all his sin and his transgression, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up the Asherim and the graven images, before he humbled himself; behold, they are written in the history of the seers.</p>
<p>כ וַיִּשְׁכַּב מְנַשֶּׁה עִם-אֲבֹתָיו, וַיִּקְבְּרוּהוּ בֵּיתוֹ; וַיִּמְלֹךְ אָמוֹן בְּנוֹ, תַּחְתָּיו. {פ}</p>	<p>20 So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house; and Amon his son reigned in his stead. {P}</p>