

PART 1: CHAPTER 1, VERSES 1-5

by Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz

Verse 1. "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. He was an entirely upright and G-d-fearing man who stayed away from evil." Verse 2. "He had seven sons and three daughters."

Verse 3. "He owned 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, and 500 heads of oxen, 500 donkeys, and many, many servants. Job was the greatest man in the entire East."

Verse 4. "And his sons would go and feast in each other's home and they would call their three sisters to eat and drink with them".

Verse 5. "And when their feasting days ended, Job went to sanctify them. He would get up early in the morning and bring offerings to G-d, according to how many participated in the feast. Because, as Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned, and despised G-d in their hearts.' Job did this regularly."

Commentary

Verse 1

"There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. He was an entirely upright and G-d-fearing man who stayed away from evil."

The first five verses of this chapter serve as an introduction and key to understanding the entire book of Job. Whenever a person experiences a tragedy it is human nature to seek the reason or purpose of his suffering. The verse introduces *Iyov* as a "man" (in Hebrew -- "*Ish*" as opposed to "*Adam*") meaning that he was of extraordinary stature. Human suffering is always difficult to accept, but when it strikes the righteous we are profoundly disturbed. According to the commentary of the Vilna Gaon, he (*Iyov*) was the greatest man of his generation.

The land of Uz was originally settled by the son of *Nachor*. *Nachor* was the brother of Abraham our forefather (as mentioned in the book of Genesis 22: 21). Accordingly, *Iyov* was a descendant of this family. He lived around the time that Jacob and his children descended to Egypt (*Biur Ha'Gra*). Other commentators are of the opinion that *Iyov* was a descendant of *Eisav* the brother of Jacob. In fact, all

of *Iyov's* "friends" were members of the same distinguished family from which Abraham our forefather descended.

Iyov is described here as being "entirely upright" meaning that he maintained a steadfastness in his faith and service of G-d in addition to his outstanding treatment of his fellow man. The Ramban (Nachmanides) goes so far as to say that *Iyov* was a great sage who knew the innermost secrets of Divine wisdom. (*Ramban* 23:13)

Therefore, clearly *Iyov's* plight cannot be attributed to ignorance, wrong doing or any weakness of character. He was a "G-d-fearing man who stayed away from evil".

Verse 2

"He had seven sons and three daughters."

Often disaster descends because a person has no family or friends to support them at times of distress. However,

Iyov's downfall could not have been caused by this deficiency since he was blessed with ten wonderful children. The number ten symbolizes completion and perfection which seems to indicate that *Iyov* was blessed with the ultimate level of worldly fulfillment. (*Biur HaGra*)

Verse 3

"He owned 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, and 500 heads of oxen, 500 donkeys, and many, many servants. Job was the greatest man in the entire East." Poverty can be a major factor in sparking off a personal crisis or tragedy. *Iyov's* troubles could not be linked with a lack of financial power. In fact, at that time, he was the wealthiest man in the entire world.

Verse 4

"And his sons would go and feast in each other's home and they would call their three sisters to eat and drink with them".

Jealousy and sibling rivalry exists in the best of families, especially if great wealth is at stake. The devastating effects of family turmoil can wreck havoc on one emotionally. Yet this too was absent from *Iyov's* life as his children were a paradigm of brotherly love and togetherness. *Iyov's* household was a bastion of strength and solidarity.

Verse 5

"And when their feasting days ended, Job went to sanctify them. He would get up early in the

morning and bring offerings to G-d, according to how many participated in the feast. Because, as Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned, and despised G-d in their hearts.' Job did this regularly."

Iyov did not suspect his children of any overt wrong doing. His only concern was that they may have harbored blasphemous thoughts. Although we have the ability to channel and direct our thoughts, for the most part we cannot fully control their flow. Additionally, there are events and circumstances which can significantly effect the type of thoughts which we entertain. Those who live lives of wealth, fame and glory are particularly vulnerable to thoughts of inflated self-worth. These ideas can eventually penetrate a person's heart and become ingrained in one's character ultimately producing an arrogant person.

Being the wealthiest, wisest and most righteous man of his generation, Iyov had good reason to suspect that his children may have deviated from thoughts of virtue and declined into haughtiness. Our sages ob"m (of blessed memory), explain that arrogance is considered tantamount to blasphemy. An arrogant person spares little room for anyone (including G-d) or anything beyond his own egocentric self in his concerns. Recognizing this, Iyov was accustomed to bring "*ohlot*" offerings. In the biblical sacrificial system only "*ohlot*" offerings can bring atonement for iniquitous thoughts.

Summary

In first five verses of Chapter 1 in the Book of Iyov, the author has clearly established that there can be no circumstantial cause, or logical explanation for Iyov's suffering. From the sixth verse and onward the events of the book begin to unfold.

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