

PART 14B: CHAPTER 3, VERSES 1-26

by Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz

Verse 1. "After this Iyov opened his mouth and cursed his day."

Verse 2. "And Iyov spoke, and said."

Verse 3. "Oh that the day had perished wherein I was born, and the night which said, there is a man child conceived."

Verse 4. "Let that day be darkness; let not G-d inquire after it from above, nor let the light shine upon it."

Verse 5. "Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it."

Verse 6. "As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not rejoice among the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months."

Verse 7. "Lo, let that night be solitary, let not joyful cry be heard in it."

Verse 8. "Let them curse it who curse the day, who are ready to arouse livyatan."

Verse 9. "Let the stars of its dusk be dark; let it look for light, but have none; and let it not see the eyelids of morn:"

Verse 10. "Because it did not shut up the doors of my mother's womb nor hide trouble from my eyes."

Verse 11. "Why did I not die from the womb? Why did I not perish when I came out of the belly?"

Verse 12. "Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts that I should suck?"

Verse 13. "For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest,"

Verse 14. "With kings and counsellors of the earth, who built desolate places for themselves;"

Verse 15. "Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver:"

Verse 16. "Or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants that never saw light."

Verse 17. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest."

Verse 18. "There the prisoners are at ease together; they hear not the voice of the slave driver."

Verse 19. "The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master."

Verse 20. "Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul;"

Verse 21. "Who long for death, but it does not come; and dig for it more than hidden treasures;"

Verse 22. "Who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find a grave?"

Verse 23. "Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, and from whom G-d has screened himself?"

Verse 24. "For my sighing comes before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters."

Verse 25. "For the thing which I had feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come to me."

Verse 26. "I had no repose, nor had I rest, nor was I quiet; yet trouble came."

Commentary

Iyov curses the day he was born and the night that he was conceived. The result of Iyov's suffering drives him to the conclusion that man's fate is preordained. He has little or no control over the events that will shape his life. Iyov is well aware of his own righteousness and regards himself to be innocent of any sin.

Although he believes that G-d knows everything he cannot accept that his bitter lot is a Divine decree. Furthermore his tragedies cannot be attributed to chance. The bizarre nature and rapid succession of his misfortunes cannot be explained as mere coincidence.

The only possible conclusion in Iyov's mind is that G-d does not involve Himself with the affairs of man. Human beings are far too lowly and G-d too exalted for Him to be concerned with their affairs. We are the victims, or at times beneficiaries, of forces beyond our control and can do little to change our destiny.

This ideology puts serious constraints on the notion of free will and limits the accountability for our deeds. Although we like to think of ourselves as the masters of our own destiny, Iyov's present line of thought relegates such notions to the realm of delusion.

Summary

Based on this *weltanschauung* (world view), *Iyov* would have been better off had he not been created. Therefore he cursed the day of his ill-fated creation. The occasional joys and pleasures of life can hardly compensate for the overwhelming amount of pain, stress, suffering and ultimate death that is every man's destiny.

In the following verses *Iyov* goes on to curse the light and darkness, the clouds, sun and stars; as if to say that both time and space conspired together to create his bitter life. Bitter, bitter, bitter... it is clear where *Iyov* is coming from.

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The author is the Rosh Hayeshiva (Dean) of [Orchos Chaim Yeshiva](#) in Jerusalem.