

PART 15C: CHAPTER 3, VERSES 17 - 19

by Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz

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."

Commentary

If we examine the different forms of pain and anguish we can identify two categories.

1. Difficulties that are caused by our own physical condition. This can be further divided into two sub categories:

- The self induced and self inflicted pain cause by bad character traits and over indulgent life styles.
- The painful results of the pursuit of our never ending physical needs.

2. Difficulties inflicted upon us by other human beings.

In verse 17 *Iyov* relates to the first category and its first sub division. The "wicked" referred to in this verse represent man's insatiable drive for the material. They are preoccupied with a relentless chase after wealth, fame and fun. They never "...cease from troubling..." This never ending pursuit gives them no rest.

"... and there the weary are at rest" is a metaphor for the second sub category. Man's pursuit of a livelihood leaves him exhausted and vulnerable to a multitude of stress related illnesses, and needless to say with little energy for pleasure. The dead and are free from this constant hustle. In *Iyov's* view life is a vexation, non-existence is a blessing.

In verse 18-19 *Iyov* relates to the second category. "... the prisoners... hear not the voice of the slave driver... the servant is free from his master." Man possesses the destructive drive to oppress his fellow man. Unfortunately we are quite familiar with this phenomenon and the tragedies it creates. It seems that as long as human life continues oppression and suffering will persist. How much sorrow is spared from the dead!

Again we can see *Iyov's* destructive thought pattern. He allows himself to enter a stage of delusion. How wonderful would it be had he not been born or died immediately after birth. Life itself is the source of his problems. Rather than deal directly with his problems he fantasizes his own death. Since life is the problem death must be the solution. *Iyov's* approach borders on the absurd but in his mind that is fine because it allows him to shirk all responsibility for his future.

The bitter state of his affairs is not his fault and therefore the solution to them is not his responsibility. "Damn them...." and make believe that they will go away.

Summary

How often do we condemn those 'nasty' forces as the cause our frustrations? By deluding ourselves to believe that the problem is 'out there' we seek to vindicate ourselves and shirk responsibility for our future. Ironically, this only serves to perpetuate and aggravate our problems. In reality even if you 'damn them' they do not go away.

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