

PART 32: CHAPTER 6, VERSES 8- 13

by Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz

8. *Oh that I might have my request; and that G-d would grant me the thing that I long for!*
9. *Even that it would please G-d to trample on me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!*
10. *Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would exalt in pain: let him not spare; for I have not denied the words of the Holy One.*
11. *What is my strength, that I should hope? And what is my end, that I should be patient?*
12. *Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh of brass?*
13. *Is not my help in me? And is sound policy driven quite from me?*

Commentary:

Verse 8

Elifaz claims that if Iyov would only except his suffering with love then Hashem would allow him to live in peace. Iyov's response to this is that his greatest wish is to die. Iyov is not sure that G-d is listening to him or even if He is listening he doubts that G-d will fulfill his prayer and wish. Iyov is in a state of total disbelief in the entire concept of Divine providence. His first request is that G-d should listen secondly that He should put him out of misery through death as quickly as possible.

Verse 9

Up till now it appears to Iyov that G-d is striking him with one hand and sustaining him with the other. Now Iyov asks that G-d should loosen His hand from sustaining him and speed up his death.

Verse 10

Iyov considers it a comfort if G-d would allow him to perish. The common translation of this verse

reads as above but this is another example of how you lose it in a translation. The Hebrew words in question are "v'asalda and b'chila" (wouldn't it be nice to be able to put in Hebrew script). According to Rashi and the Malbim they mean to recoil or reel back [v'asalda] from fear [b'chila]. According to the Metzudos commentary, the word v'asalda means to be burned, in this context, from fear. Accordingly, verse 10 should read something like this: "Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I will reel back [tremble] in fear (compare to the common translation 'I would exalt in pain') let him not spare; for I have not denied the words of the Holy One."

The simple meaning of this verse would be that Iyov asks G-d with trepidation not to pity over the loss of his life rather to end his misery through death... "for I have not denied the words of the Holy One."

The Malbim takes a completely different approach to this verse. Accordingly, Iyov's statement reads something like this: You [Elifaz] say that I [Iyov] should not reject your prophetic advice, and that by doing so I am enraging G-d, who in turn will respond with more severe punishment that could lead to my death. How can you [Elifaz] suggest that I should tremble in fear from G-d and accept His holy decrees in order to avoid a Divine decree of death? That is exactly what I desire the most. Let the execution begin!

This is a great example of two people who are talking with each other but neither have the slightest understanding or appreciation what the other is saying. Iyov tells Elifaz that he is sick and tired and that he has no more will to live. Elifaz responds with an appeal to Iyov's damaged sense of religiosity. Iyov is too exhausted, both physically and emotionally, to give any serious thought to the depth and wisdom of Elifaz's statements. Communication is an art and like any fine art it requires great sensitivity.

Verse 11

Iyov has lost all of his physical strength Intense suffering has emptied his strength and sapped his will to endure. He has been transformed into an empty vessel. His only hope is for the end because the future belongs to the living; a privileged group from which Iyov is about to take leave.

The absurdity of Iyov's despair is starkly contrasted by the incredible bliss that he acquired at the end of his life. Is there a lesson here??? Perhaps predictions are not always self fulfilling prophecies.

Hope and patients are essential for a healthy physical and emotional existence. At times when extreme despair sets in and patients are worn thin the uniquely human capacity for hope may turn into anxious anticipation for death. This quite enigmatic phenomenon can make it very difficult for people who want to give encouragement and solace to victims of suffering and misfortune.

The absurdity of this bent mind set is that in it the victim seeks to escape from the unbearable misery of his present condition. Of course, there is absolutely no reliable evidence that lends credence to this belief. The power of fantasy can lead to grossly unsound conclusion. The Torah

requires all human beings to preserve life. Not only murder, but suicide as well is a severe Torah prohibition. To consciously chose to abandon life in favor of death is not only halachically (Jewish law), impermissible but absolutely irrational. There is nothing glorious or intelligent about opting for death, no matter what sophisticated names or explanations it is given it remains nothing more than a risky gamble on the most invaluable possession of all; life.

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