

## PART 36: CHAPTER 7, VERSES 7 - 16

by Rabbi Yitzchak Schwartz

- 7. Remember that my life is a breath: my eye shall no more see good.*
- 8. The eye of him who sees me shall see me no more: while your eyes are upon me, I am gone.*
- 9. As the cloud is consumed and vanishes away: so he who goes down to the grave shall come up no more.*
- 10. He shall return no more to his house, nor shall his place know him anymore.*
- 11. As for me, I will express myself in the bitterness of my soul!*
- 12. Am I the sea, or a sea-giant that You put me under guard?*
- 13 If I say, 'My bed will console me; my couch will ease my pain,'*
- 14. You shatter me with dreams, and terrify me with visions.*
- 15. My soul would prefer strangulation, death over [survival of] my bones.*
- 16. I am disgusted; I shall not live forever, leave me alone, for my days are as nothing!*

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### Commentary:

#### Verse 7-8

Elifaz claims that Iyov's suffering is an act of Divine kindness because worldly afflictions will stave off the greater tragedy of death. Clearly it is better to suffer in this world than to lose out on a portion of eternal life.

Iyov continues his refutation of Elifaz's theories. "Life is [but] a breath... my eye shall no more...." For Iyov the future is blank. He denies the possibility of resurrection and life after death. [See commentary on verses 9-10] Iyov maintains that if life is given for us to fulfill our personal self perfection (with no chance of a post- death experience) then it is better to die than to continue living

in a state of inadequacy.

The debilitating force of his suffering precludes any possibility of continued self perfection. "The eye of him who sees me shall see me no more..." Death holds out greater promise [than life] in that it would spare him the humiliation of ["...while your eyes are upon me..."] facing the pitiful looks of well-meaning individuals [like Elifaz] who see me in languishing decline ["I am gone"]. Furthermore, Iyov claims that it would be better to punish him by bringing upon him an early death [before his preordained time] rather than interrupting his productive years with crippling suffering that obviates the possibility of meaningful life.

### **Verses 9-10**

The human soul will separate and vanish after death just as the clouds vanish with the wind. The body will decay in the earth, never to return to its original state. Instead, it is broken down to its elementary parts and integrated into the organisms of other living creatures [ "He (the soul) shall return no more to his house (the body), nor shall his place know him anymore."]

Iyov's denial of physical life after death does not seem to be supported by the misfortune of his condition. Nor does he give any philosophical proofs or support for his belief. It seems that Iyov has fallen into the erroneous thought pattern only too common amongst us mortals. We often project our insecurities in ways that are not entirely relevant.

Iyov is in pain, his faith in a just G-d is weakened. The thought of life after death, hence a G-d who punishes and rewards, is incongruous with Iyov's perception of his own condition. He is 'forced' to conclude that there is no life after death because to accept that would mean that Iyov will need to suffer more and that G-d [the Judge] is demonstrating disapproval of Iyov's past conduct. The thought of further suffering and the awareness that he has not lived up to G-d's expectations are too uncomfortable for Iyov to retain.

### **Verse 11-13**

Iyov now turns to G-d with bitter rhetoric. Why should I [Iyov] remain silent since it accomplishes nothing. Rather, I will speak the bitterness of my soul for I have nothing to lose since my life is already hopeless. G-d, why have you stifled my speech with the pain of my suffering like you blocked the raging effects of the pounding seas with the sandy beaches? Am I a destructive force like the giant sea creatures; that you must use anguish to muzzle my mouth? Until now I have kept quiet because I hoped that the comfort of bed rest would soothe my aching soul and body. You have afflicted me with such intensity that I my bed gave me no comfort. I thought that my friends would sit with me [ "my couch will ease..."] and solace me with words of relief and support.

### **Verses 14-16**

But none of this has happened. My bed gives me no comfort in the day time and the night is filled with horrific dreams of the future suffering awaiting me. I would rather die a painful death like

strangulation than remain inside of my broken body. In the past my greatest desire was to live forever. The thought of death was repulsive to me. Now all of that has changed. My loathing of death has turned into my greatest desire. G-d, take away my life; it has lost all of its value.

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