1. And Bildad the Shuhite said:
2. How long will you speak words like these; the words of your mouth are like a mighty wind.
3. Would G-d distort judgment, would G-d distort justice?
4. Your children sinned against Him and He sent them away because of their sins.
5. If you seek out G-d and beseech forgiveness.
6. If you are pure and upright then He will now arouse His mercy upon you and He will repay your righteousness and complete your household.
7. Although your beginning was small, your end will be very great.

Commentary:

The first of Iyov's friends to actually accuse him of sin is Bildad Hashuhite. First he lays down the principle of his argument.

Bildad believes in free will and the absolute perfection of the Creator G-d. His flawless nature precludes the possibility of any shortcomings whatsoever. Iyov also accepts this premise and actually builds his own position upon it. However, Bildad challenges Iyov's conclusion.

Verse 1-3

Iyov argues that since G-d's perfection excludes the possibility of any flaws; his own sorry state of affairs cannot be by Divine directive. It is better to associate the blatant lack of justice with a blind force that cannot distinguish between the righteous and the wicked than to attribute the perversion of justice to the perfect G-d. The blind force Iyov theorizes is an inexplicable force of destiny that randomly leads people. Bildad, on the other hand, claims that the absolute perfection of G-d obviates the possibility of blind destiny.
To accept Iyov's postulation is possible only if we posit one of two things. Either G-d does not have the ability to judge properly, or that despite the fact that He has the ability to judge he has made a conscious decision not to do so because the lowly nature of human beings causes Him to disassociate with His creation. To accept the former would compromise G-d's capabilities. To accept the latter would cast aspersions on the justice of the Creator. Bildad rejects both of these possibilities since they contradict the absolute perfection of G-d. Hence "Would G-d distort judgment, would G-d distort justice?"

Verse 4

With regard to your [Iyov's] children you cannot claim that they died without cause. For even you admit that they must have sinned. (see chapter 1:5) Here Bildad exposes Iyov's inconsistency. Iyov admitted that his children must have deserved punishment. Iyov's children were enjoying their festivities and suddenly the house falls on them and kills them. Their overindulgence must have caused them to sin. This was obvious to Iyov. This is more than an implicit recognition that G-d is the judge of man, scrutinizing his action and behavior.

As far as others are concerned, in this case his own children, Iyov is willing to recognize the justice of G-d. But when it comes to himself he is unwilling to accept G-d's judgment. This is an important lesson for all of us. How often do we apply our theology to others and excuse ourselves?!

From the careful wording of this verse can learn another important idea. Bildad did not say that G-d sent them away as a punishment [for] their sins, rather He sent them away "in the place (b'yad pisham) of their sins". This concept is not an easy one to grasp. We most likely think of punishment as divine retaliation for the offense committed. Bildad describes it differently. The transgression is in and of itself a 'place'. Our freewill choice moves us in the direction that we want to go. The result of those choices bring us to our desired destination. We [are] what we chose; we are where we want to be.

Verse 5-7

Bildad now begins to give advice to Iyov. If you [Iyov] will only turn to G-d and 'discuss' the issue directly with Him you may discover an answer to your confusion. If you have not been as virtuous as you claim you can ask G-d for forgiveness and He will certainly be merciful and redeem you from your present state of anguish. If, in fact, it is true that you are as righteous as you state then your suffering will bring you immense reward in the future.

This advice seems simple enough. In fact, we wonder why Iyov did not think of it himself. Instead of compromising his entire belief system it would be much more logical to retain whatever is salvageable. Iyov should have accepted his own human fallibility, and recognized the possibility that he may have erred in the past thus tarnishing his otherwise sterling performance. Alternatively, he could continue to maintain his absolute righteousness and attribute his present troubles to some future consideration that G-d may have, i.e. a temporary loss for the sake of a much greater future
gain. Iyov, however, takes a hasty leap in his thinking process and comes to the (so far unverifiable) conclusion that G-d has abandoned him. Clearly, the lesson here is that when one is in the thick of emotional and physical turmoil it is not the best time to adopt a new weltanschauung.

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