

A PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

by Rabbi Yaakov Menken

In this week's Parsha, we read that "The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice; a G-d of faithfulness and without iniquity, he is just and right." (Dvarim 32:4)

But do we believe this? Do we look around us at the world and see that good is being rewarded, and evil is repaid in turn? This is far from clear. So Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, author of the *Chofetz Chaim* and the *Mishna Brura* (see the Gossip and *Halacha-Yomi* lists, respectively, for more info), gave us a story that will help us to understand:

There was once a very rich man, who lived in a big house and had all that he could want in the world. The joy of his life, however, was his only son - and this son was very sick. He flew in doctor after doctor, all in an attempt to find the cure for his son's mysterious illness, but none succeeded. Finally one specialist was found who was capable of curing him. The doctor did so, and warned the father carefully to keep his son away from any meat, because between the illness and the cure the son was now liable to become very sick again if he even tasted it.

After a period of time, the father was called away on business, and the son was left in the care of the hired help. Of course, the father carefully warned them about the doctor's orders... but they were not as careful. With meat in the house, it was inevitable that the little boy (who only knew that he was being denied something he liked very much) would eventually snatch a piece and run off with it when no one was looking.

Of course, the son immediately relapsed, and he was truly close to death when the father was able to find the specialist, cry out his story, and ask that the doctor once again try to save his son. He even swore that should the son live, he would never go out again on business, but that he would personally supervise his son to ensure his health.

With a great effort, the doctor succeeded once again to bring the son back from the the brink of death; and when the son returned to health, the father made a party for all of his close friends and family. However, the father was careful to send his son away from the big hall, where all the guests were sitting and enjoying themselves over a big selection of - you guessed it - meat and chicken dishes for the main course. So all the guests, who knew nothing of the reason for the son's illness or the delicate nature of the cure, were more than a bit amazed that this "cruel father" would send his

son out, even though he was crying to be allowed into the room. Only the father understood the full situation.

Well, the same is true for us - we don't know the full situation. We don't know what is happening in this world, much less the next! And so it is impossible for us to judge for ourselves.

I once heard a Rabbi comment on a verse in Psalm 145, which is part of the daily morning prayers. It reads, "G-d guards all those who love Him, but all the wicked he will destroy." Imagine someone who walks in a bit late (in Hebrew, by the way, the same letter can represent 'but' or 'and'): the latecomer hears that "All those who love him, and all the wicked he will destroy!" And the one who leaves early hears that "G-d guards those who love him and all the wicked!"

We, of course, are only here for a brief moment. We don't know if it's up or down, but it appears to us as if everything is all jumbled in a pile - whether there really is an absolute good or evil is even doubted by many people. Rather, we have to rely on what we know from other sources, rather than from simply looking at the world around us.

Text Copyright © 1996 Rabbi Yaakov Menken and Project Genesis, Inc.
The author is the Director of Project Genesis.