

SUFFERING IN THIS WORLD LEADS TO REWARD IN THE WORLD TO COME

Rabbi David Pinto Chlita

It is written, "A fire went forth from before Hashem, and it consumed upon the altar the burnt-offerings and the fat. The people saw and sang glad song, and they fell upon their faces" (Vayikra 9:24).

We need to understand why such joy was justified here. It was no doubt a joyous time for all the Jewish people when G-d made His fire descend from heaven to consume their offerings, but what exactly were they rejoicing over? If it was because this was a miracle, G-d had already led them out of Egypt by inflicting ten plagues upon their oppressors, miracles even greater than the heavenly fire which descended to consume their offerings!

Was it this Divine revelation – which the descent of a fire from heaven represented – that impressed them? At the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, they already witnessed a Divine revelation that was without equal!

Other questions arise in the verses that follow: After the death of Nadav and Avihu, who introduced an alien fire without being commanded to, Moshe said to Aaron: "Of this did Hashem speak, saying: 'By those who are near Me will I be sanctified, and before all the people will I be glorified'" (Vayikra 10:3). These words are difficult to understand. In fact the Torah already clearly stated the cause of their death (they had brought an alien fire), so why does Moshe now mention another reason?

To answer these questions, let us examine the sin of the golden calf. After that sin, G-d told Moshe: "And now, leave Me alone, that My anger may flare up against them, and that I may consume them" (Shemot 32:10). However Moshe beseeched G-d and prayed incessantly, until He finally reversed the decision to strike His people.

Nevertheless, Hashem did not completely forgive His people on that day, and since that time He stopped conducting Himself as in the past. Instead He sent an angel that went before them, as it is written: "I will send an angel before you...for I will not go up in the midst of you" (ibid. 33:2-3). He also commanded that they take off their ornaments (meaning the crowns that had been placed on each person's head at Mount Sinai), and so "the Children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horev" (v.6).

Nevertheless, although G-d deprived the Children of Israel of spiritual revelations, meaning that He removed their crowns and the Divine Presence from their midst, He still showed them physical revelations, such as the Cloud of Glory that led them along the way, flattening mountains and hills before them, as well as Miriam's well and the manna that fed them. Likewise, their garments did not wear out, nor did

their feet swell. We clearly see that physical revelations were still provided to them, even if spiritual revelations were not.

This situation profoundly worried the Children of Israel, who feared that it meant that G-d held them in contempt. In other words, they worried that He had decided to reward them for their good deeds in this world, while reserving their punishment for the World to Come, as it is written: "When the wicked bloom like grass and all the doers of iniquity blossom, it is to destroy them until eternity" (Tehillim 92:8). Our Sages say that if rain falls before we ask for it, it is a bad sign for everyone concerned, for G-d desires the prayers of the righteous, and we may worry that He holds our prayers in contempt.

Yet during the inauguration of the Sanctuary, when G-d brought down His fire from heaven, it constituted a clear spiritual revelation that irrefutably proved to the Children of Israel that He had not forsaken them. Likewise, in seeing Nadav and Avihu dying for having brought an alien fire, they had another proof that G-d punishes them in this world, meaning that He has no intention of condemning them in the World to Come.

It is for this reason that the verse states, "The people saw and sang glad song, and they fell upon their faces." What joy could they have experienced on the day that Nadav and Avihu died? As we have said, it is the joy that comes from a certainty that G-d no longer holds them in contempt, and that He punishes them in this world while reserving their reward for the World to Come.

It is also for this reason that it is written, "By those who are near Me will I be sanctified, and before all the people will I be glorified." Because G-d would be sanctified by those who draw near to Him, all the people would know that He still resides among them, and that He punishes them for their sins in this world in order to shower them with their reward in the World to Come.

This constitutes an ethical teaching for us all: If G-d grants every person all that he needs in abundance, without difficulty or trials, he may fear that he is among "the evildoer who dwells at ease." His benefits may constitute a reward for his small deeds of goodness, thereby depriving him of a reward in the World to Come. However if a person endures some pain and suffering in this world, it means that he is cherished and beloved by G-d, Who tries him when the need arises because of a small deficiency in the fulfillment of a mitzvah, so as to reward him with a perfect World to Come.

We find the same concept with Jacob, who was afraid of his brother Esav. Despite Hashem's explicit promise to Jacob ("Behold, I am with you. I will guard



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you wherever you go” [Bereshith 28:15]), he was still afraid that the kindnesses which G-d had bestowed upon him when he lived with Lavan were deducted from his merits, as it is written: “I have been diminished by all the kindnesses... that You have done for Your servant” (ibid 32:11). How much more should simple men such as ourselves strive not to be among evildoers who dwell in ease, but to be among the righteous who suffer.

Similarly King David said, “Happy is the man whom You discipline, Hashem” (Tehillim 94:12) – happy is the man whom G-d tries, for in this

he feels the greatness of G-d’s love for him and His desire to remember him today in order to do good for him in the World to Come. Indeed, our Sages have explained this verse as follows: “If a man sees that painful sufferings visit him, let him examine his conduct. ... If he examines and finds nothing, let him attribute it to neglect in the study of Torah, for it is said: ‘Happy is the man whom You discipline, Hashem, and whom You teach from Your Torah’ ” (Berachot 5a). In fact it is through suffering that we can perfect ourselves in Torah.

Real Life Stories

Proof from Heaven

It is written, “Do not make yourselves abominable with any creeping creature that creeps, and do not defile yourselves with them, that you become unclean through them” (Vayikra 11:43).

The Rebbe of Sanz-Klausenburg, Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam Zatzal, was saved by a miracle during the Holocaust, after having lost his wife and his eleven children. Even during the darkest of times, he demonstrated powerful faith and incredible clarity of mind in order to encourage those around him, especially in pushing them to strengthen their observance of Torah and mitzvot.

As German forces invaded Europe, tremendous fear arose in regards to the fate of spiritual men and public leaders. The Rebbe was thus forced to escape to a secret location. At first he hid in an open grave at a cemetery, and then crossed the border for the town of Banya. However he was caught and transferred to a forced-labor camp with about 5,000 other Jews.

An eyewitness who was with him recounted that the Nazis discovered tefillin in the camp during one of their searches. Like wild animals, they broke apart the batim [boxes] and threw the parshiot to the ground, but returned the empty boxes to the Jews.

The Rebbe picked the parshiot from off the ground and asked this Jew to go to the kitchen in order to find animal tendons with which to stitch the tefillin back together. Incredibly enough, he was actually able to find some tendons. After the Rebbe dried them, he found a suitable needle and re-stitched the tefillin. How great his joy was when he finished this work and found himself in possession of kosher tefillin!

On the eve of Shavuot 5704, the Rebbe was sent to Auschwitz along with thousands of other Jews. Divine providence decreed that he was deemed fit for work at the selection process, and thus his life was spared.

In Auschwitz, many of the living were already no longer alive. In this setting, the presence of a Rebbe was an extraordinary phenomenon, both by his exemplary conduct and his sanctified behavior. He made every possible effort to observe even the smallest of mitzvot, and even to embellish mitzvot. All his vibrant energy was concentrated on finding a way to wear tefillin, to ritually wash his hands, to pray, to recite Kiddush Levanah, and so on. Every Shabbat, he spoke words of Torah in honor of Shabbat. At the same time, he didn’t allow anyone to do the work that was imposed to him.

All this infuriated the Germans and their collaborators, who persecuted the Rebbe and struck him with murderous blows. When he was subjected to their cruelty, his lips murmured the words: “Hashem is righteous, for I have disobeyed His word” (Eicha 1:18). Little by little, the leaders of the camp began to have a change of attitude towards him when they saw that he was a holy man who remained strongly attached to his principles.

Later on, the Rebbe recounted a sad episode from this time:

“[In the camp] I walked with wooden shoes on my feet. One day I found a shoe that was covered with a piece of leather. I picked it up and realized that it was a piece of parchment with which the parshiot of tefillin are made. I looked at what was written on it, and I was incensed: ‘Beware lest

your heart be lured away.’ I burst into tears, for I was overwhelmed by the contempt shown to something sacred. I also trembled at the allusion that Heaven was sending me.”

A Holocaust survivor who was in the same group as the Rebbe recounted an incredible story: The Rebbe suffered more than anyone else. With tremendous obstinacy, he held firm to his principles, put on tefillin, did not allow forbidden food into his mouth, and organized public prayers. While most of the prisoners were unable to observe any part of Shabbat, he avoided transgressing Shabbat by resorting to all kinds of subterfuge.

Upon his arrival in Auschwitz, the Rebbe announced to all the Jews around him that the Torah commanded them to protect their strength and health, and to eat everything that was given to them. Yet he himself had firmly decided not to let anything non-kosher enter his mouth.

The inmates living in the same hut began to harass him because he was putting their lives in danger, saying that he should eat as they did. When the Rebbe did not answer them, they began to “threaten him” that they too would not eat anything if he did not listen to them. It was a threat that he took very seriously, for he greatly feared for their lives. He wanted to give them some time to think about it.

Then something extraordinary happened, as the Rebbe himself recounted years later: “It was a Friday, and in the morning people were given soup that contained meat. Everyone hurried to receive a portion, and they pressured me into coming as well. However I explained that in no way would I eat something treif among these evildoers, who had taken everything I had. I therefore fasted all that day, and at night I was extremely hungry and exhausted.

“On the following day, which was Shabbat, people once again were called to eat, but I did not go. I remained alone, isolated, with no one else in the hut. I burst into uncontrolled weeping and said, ‘Sovereign of the universe! I’ve remained alone, deprived of everything. You’ve taken everything from me, and now will I go and eat treif? I don’t want to eat – and I won’t eat – anything treif!’

“And so it was, as I remained sitting alone, a Jew suddenly entered the hut and said: ‘Are you the Rav of Klausenburg?’ The question itself filled me with fear, for those murderers usually brought ‘rabbis’ and ‘holy men’ to the ovens first. Yet when another Jew came inside and told me that someone was waiting for me by the door, I had no choice.

“Standing there was a relatively old Jew, and he asked me: ‘Was the Rabbi of Kishanov your uncle?’ I was stunned. How did this man know that the Rabbi of Kishanov was my uncle? I replied that he was.

“The man then took out a piece of bread and a pot filled with jam from inside his coat, and he said to me: ‘I brought you this so you have something to eat.’ He gave me the bread and jam, and then he disappeared. I never saw him again.

“This served as proof, both for me and those around me, that by the merit of my decision not to eat treif, the Holy One, blessed be He, sent me my meal. I recited kiddush over the bread and began to eat my Shabbat meal.”

Ten Reasons

It is written, “A fire came forth from before Hashem and consumed them, and they died” (Vayikra 10:2).

In his book *Eden MiKedem*, Rabbi Raphael Moshe Elbaz Zatzal lists ten different opinions from the works of our Sages as to why Nadav and Avihu died:

1) They approached too closely and entered the Holy of Holies; 2) they offered an alien fire; 3) they were intoxicated; 4) they were not wearing the sacred garments; 5) they were not married; 6) they did not take each other’s advice; 7) they taught a Halachah before their teachers; 8) they said, “When will these two old men [Moshe and Aaron] die?”; 9) they rejoiced in the splendor of the Shechinah; and 10) Hashem said, “By those who are near Me will I be sanctified.”

The Rebbe’s Part

It is written, “By those who are near Me will I be sanctified” (Vayikra 10:3).

Rabbi Aharon Rokeach Zatzal, the Rebbe of Belz, received terrible news during the Holocaust (in which 6 million Jews of Europe were killed) regarding his firstborn son, Rabbi Moshe Rokeach. He was told that the Nazis had caught him and thrown him alive into a burning synagogue, where he was burned at the same time as its Torah scrolls.

Overwhelmed, the Rebbe exclaimed: “It is a chesed on behalf of the Creator, that I too was able to give an offering from my part.”

Not Ever

It is written, “The hyrax, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof lo yafris [will not be split]” (Vayikra 11:5).

Why does this verse modify the expression used to describe hooves, for in regards to the camel we read: “The camel, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof eynenu mafris [is not split]” (v.4)?

The gaon Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin Zatzal explains that the nature of the hyrax is such that the more it grows, the more its hooves split. Hence some people may say that, just as in regards to fish, even if signs of cleanliness do not yet appear, they are still kosher because these signs will develop later on.

Hence the Torah underlines that the hooves of a hyrax “will not be split.” Even though these hooves are still splitting, the hyrax will never have completely split hooves, and therefore it is unclean.

In the Name

It is written, “The hare, for it brings up its cud...” (Vayikra 11:6).

The book *Nahar Shalom* explains this passage as follows:

In Hebrew, the term “hare” is written in the feminine (arnevet), for among this species there are no individuals that are completely male, but rather androgynous, as researchers have noted.

The “hawk” (v.16) is called netz because it goes out at the rising of the sun (hanetz hachama).

The “swan” (v.18) is called tinshemet possibly because it breathes excessively (mitnashem) when exerting itself.

The “stork” (v.19) is called chasidah because it performs acts of piety (chasidut), for it usually immerses in water after relations with its partner, as the author of *Shevet Mussar* writes.

No Power Over Jews

It is written, “You shall not defile yourselves through any creeping thing that creeps upon the earth” (Vayikra 11:44).

The holy Rabbi Haim ben Attar used to say, “By the merit of observing this mitzvah, non-Jews will not control Jews, for they are called reptiles that creep upon the earth.”

When Jews are careful not to eat forbidden food, no people have power over them, and they defeat their enemies.

The Mitzvah of the Red Heifer Leads to Complete Teshuvah

It is written, “This is the decree of the Torah, which Hashem has commanded, saying...and they shall take to you a completely red heifer.... Someone shall burn the heifer before his eyes.... The one who burns it shall immerse his clothing and immerse himself in water.... This is the law: A man who dies in a tent, everyone who comes into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean for seven days. ... And everyone who touches...a dead body, or a human bone, or a grave shall be unclean for seven days” (Bamidbar 19:2-16).

We need to think about this mitzvah, about what these things allude to, and what they are really dealing with. What is the meaning behind the heifer, behind the fact that it must be red, that it must be burned, and that its ashes are sprinkled upon a sinner? We also need to explain why the Torah rules that one who touches a corpse is impure for seven days, and that the ashes of this red heifer must be sprinkled upon him for purification.

We may cite the words of the Sages, who say that if a person experiences misfortune, he should reflect upon his conduct. If he has reflected upon his conduct and found nothing objectionable, he should attribute his misfortune to a neglect in Torah study (Berachot 5a). Since the Torah states that a person who touches a corpse becomes impure, in the times when the Temple stood, anyone who touched a corpse would become impure and reflect upon his conduct. He would ask himself why this had happened to him, and what sin he had committed such that the Holy One, blessed be He, had brought impurity upon him, for we are commanded to be holy and pure (Vayikra 19:2). There was therefore some sin in him, and the Holy One, blessed be He, probably wanted to push him to repent. This person would then search his soul, discover his sin, and completely repent.

A person’s teshuvah must be complete, and half measures in repenting are not teshuvah at all. Since many people fail by not doing complete teshuvah, the Torah commands us to burn a red heifer and throw its ashes on an impure person. This hints to him that he comes from dust and to dust he returns, a thought that will lead him to complete teshuvah. As the Sages have said, “Let him remind himself of the day of death” (Berachot 5a), which is how to be saved from the evil inclination.

With regards to the red heifer, we may say that the term parah (“heifer”) is formed by the same letters as the term rafeh (“weak”). This means that if a person has become impure, it happened because he has weakened in his Torah study, as the Sages have said on the verse, “Amalek came and battled Israel in Rephidim” (Shemot 17:8) – “Rephidim implies that they had weakened [rafu] in Torah. Hence Amalek came upon them” (Tanchuma, Beshalach 25). The term adumah (“red”) evokes din (“judgment”), meaning that judgment will arise against a person who has weakened in Torah study.

Thus the Sages have said, “If a man sees that painful sufferings visit him, let him examine his conduct. ... If he examines and finds nothing, let him attribute it to a neglect in the study of Torah” (Berachot 5a). This means that when something happens to a person that renders him impure, he should examine his conduct and look for what sin caused it. If he finds nothing, he should attribute it to a neglect in study, for he has certainly weakened in his Torah study and justice has awakened against him. This is the meaning behind the red heifer, rafeh and din (parah adumah). Ashes from the cow are sprinkled upon him, reminding him of the day of death and leading him to complete teshuvah before Hashem.

Signs of Purity

A rare and surprising natural phenomenon is revealed in this week's parsha, in which Moshe describes the signs of kosher wild and domestic animals, fish, and birds. These signs have served as a clear index for which animals may appear on the table of Jews, without which no food would enter the mouth of a Jew.

In this week's parsha we read, "Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Aaron, saying to them: Speak to the Children of Israel, saying: These are the creatures that you may eat from among all the animals that are upon the earth. Everything among the animals that has a split hoof, which is completely separated into double hooves, and that brings up its cud – that you may eat" (Vayikra 11:1). This means that someone who wants to eat a domestic or wild land animal must first check to see if it actually has these two signs of purity, specifically mentioned in the Torah: 1) Split hooves, meaning that its nail does not consist of a single block, but is split to its entire depth; and 2) rumination, meaning that it chews food in its mouth a second time once it has been swallowed.

The Torah continues by giving the names of animals among which we find a single one of these two signs of purity, be it an animal which is just a ruminant, or an animal with just split hooves. Thus we read in the verses that follow:

"But this is what you shall not eat from among those that bring up their cud or that have split hooves: The camel, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof is not split – it is unclean to you; the hyrax, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof is not split – it is unclean to you; and the hare, for it brings up its cud, but its hoof is not split – it is unclean to you; and the pig, for its hoof is split and its hoof is complete separated, but it does not chew its cud – it is unclean to you" (Vayikra 11:4-7).

There are just four animals listed here, and they constitute the secret contained in this week's parsha, like a natural law that the Creator infused into the world: There are thousands of species of domestic and wild land animals, and yet there are only four that have a single sign of purity. Four and no others!

This is specific to these four species, which the Torah describes by name: The camel, the hyrax, the hare, and the pig. None of these animals have or don't have both signs of purity, as do all other animals – which either have split hooves and ruminate, or don't have split hooves and don't ruminate – for these two signs go together. Yet as the holy Torah says, the camel, the hyrax, and the hare all ruminate, but do not have split hooves. On the other hand, the pig "boasts" of a sign of purity with its split hooves, but it lacks the other sign of purity, for it does not ruminate.

Furthermore, our Sages have revealed the hypocrisy of the pig, which lies down and stretches out its hooves, as if to tell the whole world: "Look, I'm clean!" Likewise, Rashi comments on the behavior of the wicked Esav: "Esav is compared to a pig, as it is said: 'The boar of the forest ravages it' [Tehillim 80:14]. When the pig lies down, it stretches out its hooves, as if to say: 'Look, I'm a clean animal.' Likewise these as well, the descendants of Esav, rob and extort and claim to be honorable. For 40 years, Esav would kidnap wives from their husbands and forcibly take them. Upon turning 40 he said, 'Father was 40 when he married, and I will do likewise'" (Rashi on Bereshith 26:34).

The Proof

For thousands of years, this natural law has served as a solid proof for the veracity of the holy Torah (for those who need such a proof). It is not only in seminars conducted by Arachim [a Jewish outreach group] that the question is raised of how Moshe Rabbeinu could have known that only these animals possessed just one sign of purity. Could there not have been

others like them? During the time of the Talmud, this question also served as proof that the Torah comes from G-d. Thus the Midrash states, "But this is what you shall not eat [Vayikra 11:4]. Rabbi Akiva said, 'Was Moshe a hunter or an archer?' This refutes those who maintain that the Torah was not Divinely revealed" (Sifre, Re'eh 102).

Who would have the audacity to formulate an unequivocal principle if he did not have the means to verify that there was no exception to it anywhere in the world? How could he be certain that in the following generations – in the depths of the Australian outback, or on the American continent that was only discovered a few centuries ago – no other land animal would have only one sign of purity? Only the One Who gave the Torah, the Creator and Sovereign of the universe, Who knows all creatures, is the One Who could fix the laws at Creation and allow His creations to benefit from the wisdom of Creation and the laws of His holy Torah.

It is interesting to cite the instructive words of the gaon Rabbi Baruch Epstein Zatzal in his Torah commentary entitled Torah Temimah. He writes the following:

"This comes to teach us the greatness of the Torah, the contents of which demonstrate that it was given by G-d, by a superior Divine force. In fact it is impossible for a man of flesh and blood to assert that only these [four animals], no others, carry the signs in question. Perhaps there are other creatures on earth that possess signs similar to those of the camel, hyrax, hare, and pig? Perhaps over the course of time, over the course of the centuries, someone would seek out and discover other such animals? However the Holy One, blessed be He, is the only One Who knows that there are no other such species besides the ones mentioned here. In fact, we see that since the Torah was given, nobody has ever found such a species of animal! This is among the wonders of the Torah."

Over the course of the last century, research and analysis have been conducted in every part of the globe. The best researchers in modern science have worked and traveled to the deepest forests and jungles in order to gather information and uncover new species of animals that people were not yet aware of. During the more than 3,000 years that have passed since the giving of the Torah, various astounding discoveries have shown us that, while we have already discovered most of all the domestic and wild animals found on earth, there is no exception among any of them. That is, not a single species has been found that only ruminates or that only has a split hoof, besides the four species named by the Torah in this week's parsha: The camel, hyrax, hare, and pig. Apart from these four, of all the hundreds of thousands of species of animals, all of them without exception have either both signs of purity or none of them.

Another surprising fact, which deserves to be mentioned (and which appears in the booklet Torah uMadda by Rav Zamir Cohen Zatzal), is that in recent years, people have discovered that even when animals have been crossbred (needless to say, without the permission of the Sages of Israel), it has been impossible to create a new species of animal that is characterized by only one of these two signs.

Guard Your Tongue

Plugging Your Ears

If a person finds himself among a group of people who have started to say forbidden things, and he believes that reprimanding them will prove completely useless, then if it is possible to leave or put his fingers in his ears, he will have performed a great mitzvah.

If it is impossible to leave their presence, and if he feels that placing his fingers in his ears is also very difficult because those in the group will ridicule him, he should still gather all his strength at such an oppressive time and wage Hashem's war against his evil inclination, so as not to succumb to the prohibition of listening to and believing Lashon Harah.