

HALACHIC AND HASHKAFIC ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

SERIES 2: 53 - HASHGACHA PRATIT - PART 1

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- In the previous series we looked at the issue of Mazal and the understanding that God runs the world through a complex system of intermediary causes and effects.
- As we mentioned, this intersects the the central hashkafic idea of Divine Providence. It is a core Jewish belief that God runs the world. But is this Providence run in a macro or micro manner? Can we gain any religious understanding of why things happen to us the way they do?

A] GOD'S KNOWLEDGE OF AND INVOLVEMENT IN OUR WORLD - FOUNDATIONS

1. גְּדַל הַעֲצָה וְרַב הָעֲלִילָה אֲשֶׁר-עֵינֶיךָ פְּקוּחוֹת עַל-כָּל-דְּרָכַי בְּנֵי אָדָם לְתֵת לְאִישׁ כְּדַרְכָּיו וּכְפָרִי מֵעֲלָלָיו.

ירמיהו לביט

Yirmiyahu states that God is completely aware of everything that happens in our world - His 'eyes are open'. He also responds to the world in accordance with the actions of humankind.

2. וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵי הָרְאִיתָ בֶּן אָדָם אֲשֶׁר זָקְנֵי בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עֹשִׂים בְּחֹשֶׁךְ אִישׁ בְּחֻדְרֵי מִשְׁכַּבְתּוֹ כִּי אִמְרִים אֵין ה' רֹאֶה אֶתְנוּ עֲזָב ה' אֶת הָאָרֶץ.

יחזקאל ח"ב

Yechezkel is told that people wish to live their lives in denial - saying that God has no interest in their actions.

A1] THE TENTH IKAR

3. וְהִסוּד הָעֵשִׂירִי - שֶׁהוּא יִתְעַלֶּה יוֹדֵעַ מַעֲשֵׂי בְּנֵי אָדָם וְאִינוּ מִזְנִיחִים, וְלֹא כַדְעַת מִי שֶׁאִמְרָ (יחזקאל ח"ב) עֲזָב ה' אֶת הָאָרֶץ, אֲלֵא כִּמוֹ שֶׁאִמְרָ (ירמיהו לביט) גְּדַל הַעֲצָה וְרַב הָעֲלִילָה אֲשֶׁר עֵינֶיךָ פְּקוּחוֹת עַל כָּל דְּרָכַי בְּנֵי אָדָם, וְאִמְרָ (בראשית ו"ה) וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי רָבָה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאָרֶץ, וְאִמְרָ (בראשית יח"ב) זָעַקְתָּ סֹדִם וְעַמְרָה כִּי רָבָה. וְזֶה יוֹרָה עַל זֶה הִיסוּד הָעֵשִׂירִי

רמב"ם - הקדמה לפ' חלק, משנה סנהדרין

The Rambam codifies this belief in the 13 Ikarim - here the 10th Ikar that God is aware of everything in the Universe.

4. ט כָּל הַנִּמְצָאִים חוּץ מִן הַבּוֹרָא מְצוּרָה הָרֵאשׁוֹנָה עַד וְתוֹשׁ קִטָּן שִׁיחִיָּה בְּטַבּוּר הָאָרֶץ הַכֹּל מִכֹּחַ אֲמִתּוֹתָו נִמְצָאוּ. וְלִפִּי שֶׁהוּא יוֹדֵעַ עֲצָמוֹ וּמְכִיר גְּדֻלָּתוֹ וְתַפְאֲרוֹתוֹ וְאֲמִתּוֹתוֹ הוּא יוֹדֵעַ הַכֹּל וְאֵין דָּבָר נֶעְלָם מִמֶּנּוּ. י הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְכִיר אֲמִתּוֹ וְיוֹדֵעַ אוֹתָהּ כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִיא. וְאִינוּ יוֹדֵעַ בְּדַעָה שֶׁהִיא חוּץ מִמֶּנּוּ כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֵנוּ יוֹדְעִין. שְׂאֵין אֵנוּ וְדַעְתָּנוּ אֶחָד אֶבֶל הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרֵךְ הוּא וְדַעְתּוֹ וְחַיּוֹ אֶחָד מִכָּל צֶד וּמִכָּל פְּנֵה וּבְכָל דָּרֶךְ יְחוּד

רמב"ם הלכות יסודי התורה פרק ב ט"י

However, God's 'knowledge' operates entirely differently to human knowledge. God's knowledge is indistinguishable from His essence and cannot be broken into separate awarenesses of different things. God has total intrinsic knowledge of Himself and through that knows every other thing in the Universe.

A2] THE ELEVENTH IKAR

5. וְהִיסוּד הָאֶחָד עֶשֶׂר - שֶׁהוּא יִתְעַלֶּה נוֹתֵן שֶׁכֶר לְמִי שֶׁמְקִיִּים צוּיִי הַתּוֹרָה וְעוֹנֵשׁ לְמִי שֶׁעוֹבֵר עַל אִזְהָרוֹתֶיהָ. וְשֶׁשֶׁכְּרוֹ הַיּוֹתֵר גָּדוֹל הוּא הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא, וְעוֹנֵשׁוֹ הַיּוֹתֵר גָּדוֹל הוּא הַכֶּרֶת. וְכִבְרָ אִמְרָנוּ בְּזֶה הָעֵנִין מֵה שְׂדֵי בּוּ. וְהַכְּתוּב הַמּוֹרָה עַל זֶה הִיסוּד אִמְרָ (שמות לב"ב) אִם-תִּשָּׂא חֲטָאתָם וְאִם-אֵין מִתְנֵי נָא מִסְפָּרָךְ. וְהַשִּׁיבּוֹ יִתְעַלֶּה (שמות לב"ג) מִי אֲשֶׁר חֲטָא-לִי [אֲמַחֲנוּ מִסְפָּרֶיךָ]. רֵאִיָּה עַל יְדִיעַת הַנִּשְׁמַע וְהַמְמַרָה לְתֵת שֶׁכֶר לְזֶה וְעוֹנֵשׁ לְזֶה.

רמב"ם - הקדמה לפ' חלק, משנה סנהדרין

The 11th Ikar is the concept of reward and punishment for our actions. The Rambam emphasizes that the focus of this is the World to Come, which is for the soul only. The ultimate reward is life - ie connection to God - in the World to Come and the ultimate punishment is the lack of that life - karet. This reward and punishment is also individually focused.

B] DIVINE PROVIDENCE - PERSPECTIVES IN CHAZAL

6. ואמר ר' חנינא: אין אדם נוקף אצבעו מלמטה אלא א"כ מכריזין עליו מלמעלה. שנאמר: (תהלים ל"ב) מִה' מִצְעָדֵי גִבְרָה כְּנֹנֵה, (משלי כ"ד) נִמְתָּה מִצְעָדֵי גִבְרָה וְאֵדָם מִה' יִבִּין דְרָפוּ.

חולין ז:

We saw the position of R. Chanina in the previous shiurim. He understands that 'yesh mazal beYisrael' - even within the Jewish nation individuals are locked into their mazal. Here he indicates that Divine Providence is extremely specific. Even if a person hurts their finger, this is product of Divine intervention. Yet we understand almost nothing of how this actually works.

7. א"ר סימון אין לך כל עשב ועשב שאין לו מזל ברקיע שמכה אותו, ואומר לו 'גדל!'. ה"ד (איוב לח"ג) הִיָּדְעָתָּה חֻקֹת שָׁמַיִם אִם-תִּשָּׂא מִשְׁטְרֵךְ בְּאֶרֶץ וּגּוֹ - לִשׁוֹן שׁוֹט.

בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת בראשית פרשה י

Indeed, every blade of grass¹ has its own 'mazal' (force emanating from the heavenly system) which instructs it to grow.

8. It is a well-known fact that the philosophers assume that the existing order of things in this sublunary world of transient beings depends on forces which emanate from the spheres. ... In like manner our Sages say, "There is no single herb below without its corresponding star above, that beats upon it and commands it to grow." ... The term mazal, literally meaning a constellation in the Zodiac, is also used of every star They have thus clearly expressed that even each individual being in this world has its corresponding star. Although the influences of the spheres extend over all beings, there is also the influence of a particular star directed to each particular species; a fact noticed also in reference to the several forces in one organic body, for the whole Universe is like one organic body

Moreh Nevuchim 2:10

9. אמר רב אמי: אין מיתה בלא חטא ואין יסורין בלא עון.

שבת נה:

Chazal state unequivocally that death and suffering come to world as a result of sin. But how direct is the correlation?

10. עד היכן תכלית יסורין? (רש"י - סוף מדת יסורין כלומר יסורין שאין פחותין מהן) אמר רבי אלעזר: כל שארגו לו בגד ללבוש ואין מתקבל עליו גדולה מזו אמרו: אפילו נתכוונו למוזג בחמין ומוזגו לו בצונן, בצונן ומוזגו לו בחמין מר בריה דרבינא אמר: אפילו נהפך לו חלוקן. אפילו הושיט ידו לכיס ליטול שלש ועלו בידו שתים וכל כך למה? דתניא דבי רבי ישמעאל: כל שעברו עליו ארבעים יום בלא יסורין - קיבל עולמו.

ערכין טז:

'Suffering' which comes to our lives may also be seen in the minor irritations of life - if we buy clothing which does not fit properly, pour luke-warm water from an urn into our coffee instead of hot water, or the instant of concern when our wallet is not in the pocket we expect. Even these trivial 'yisurin' are part of the Divine accounting for our actions.

C] DO WE HAVE ANY UNDERSTANDING OF HOW GOD RUNS THE WORLD?

- We saw above from Mishlei that, although the world around us is being run according to hashgacha, we have almost no understanding of how that actually works.

11. רבי ינאי אומר אין בידינו לא משלות הרשעים ואף לא מיסורי הצדיקים.

משנה מסכת אבות פרק ד משנה טו

The Mishna states that we have no way of understanding how Divine Providence works at an individual level.

1. Although this could mean every species of grass. We will see below that this distinction may be very important.

12. גדול העצה - טענותיו גדולות ומטעיו רבים מכשיגם.

רד"ק ירמיהו לביט

The Redak points out that the scale of Providence² is simply too immense for the human brain to take in.

13. How God rules the universe and provides for it is a complete mystery: man is unable to solve it. For, on the one hand, it can be proved that God is separate from the universe, and in no contact whatever with it; but, on the other hand, His rule and Providence can be proved to exist in all parts of the universe, even in the smallest. Praised be He whose perfection is above our comprehension.

Maimonides Moreh Nevuchim 1:72

In the thought of the Rambam, we also have a qualitative void between human and Divine. There is no way that we can understand the true meaning of God's actions in the universe.

(יא) כפירים רשו ורעבו ודרשי ה' לא יחסרו כל טוב: (יט) קרוב ה' לנשברי לב ואת דכאי רוח יושיע: (כא) שמר כל עצמותיו אחת מהנה לא נשברה: (כג) פודה ה' נפש עבדיו ולא יאשמו כל החסים בו:	14. (י) יראו את ה' קדשו כי אין מחסור ליראיו: (טז) עיני ה' אל צדיקים ואינו אל שועתם: (כ) רבות רעות צדיק ומבלם יצילנו ה': (כב) תמותת רשע רעה ושאני צדיק יאשמו:
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תהלים לד

Nevertheless, as a general theme, we do see in Tehillim that God is 'closer' to the certain people than others - specifically those who serve and fear Him, those who are broken hearted and turn earnestly to Him in prayer, and to the tzadik.

D] REWARD AND PUNISHMENT IN THIS WORD AND/OR THE NEXT?

• We saw above in the Rambam's wording of the 11th Ikar that he sees the principle focus of reward/punishment as the NEXT world and not this world? He explains this further in the Mishne Torah in Hilchot Teshuva.

15. א הטובה הצפונה לצדיקים, היא חיי העולם הבא; והם החיים שאין עמהן מות, והטובה שאין עמה רעה. הוא שכתוב בתורה (דברים כב:ז) למען ייטב לך והארכת ימים. מפי השמועה למדו למען ייטב לך - לעולם שכלו טוב, והארכת ימים - לעולם שכלו ארוך - וזה הוא העולם הבא. שכר הצדיקים הוא שיזכו לנעם זה ויהיו בטובה זו; ופרעון הרשעים הוא שלא יזכו לחיים אלו, אלא יכרתו וימותו. וכל מי שאינו זוכה לחיים אלו, הוא המת שאינו חויה לעולם, אלא נכרת ברשעו, ואובד בבהמה. וזה הוא הפרת הכתוב בתורה, שנאמר (במדבר טו:א) הפרת תכרת הנפש ההיא. מפי השמועה למדו הפרת בעולם הזה, תכרת לחיי העולם הבא. כלומר שאותה הנפש שפרשה מן הגוף בעולם הזה אינה זוכה לחיי העולם הבא, אלא גם מן העולם הבא נכרתה

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ח הלכה א

The ultimate Divine reward and punishment is, according to the Rambam, only in the Next World. If so, how does the Rambam understand explicit references in the Torah to reward and punishment in THIS world.

16. בזמן שאדם אחד, או אנשי מדינה חוטאים, ועושה החוטא חטא שעשה מדעתו וברצונו, כמו שהודענו, ראוי להפריע ממנו; והקדוש ברוך הוא יודע היאך יפריע. יש חטא שהדין נותן שנפריעין ממנו על חטאו בעולם הזה, בגופו או בממונו או בבניו הקטנים - שבניו שלאדם הקטנים שאין בהם דעת ולא הגיעו לכלל מצוות, כקנינו הן, כתוב (מלכים ב' יד:י) איש בחטאו יומת (וראה דברים כד,טז) עד שיעשה "איש". ויש חטא שהדין נותן שנפריעין ממנו לעולם הבא, ואין עובר עליו שום נזק בעולם הזה. ויש חטא שנפריעין ממנו עליו בעולם הזה ולעולם הבא

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ו הלכה א

Punishment can come to a nation as a whole or to individuals. The Rambam also clarifies that some punishment comes in this world, some in the Next, and some in both. He does not specifically refer here to reward in this world.

17. ב כמה דברים אמורים, בזמן שלא עשה תשובה; אבל אם עשה תשובה, התשובה כתריס לפני הפריעות. וכשם שאדם חוטא ברצונו ומדעתו, כך הוא עושה תשובה ברצונו ומדעתו

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ו הלכה ב

Nevertheless, punishment is always liable to be set aside in the face of teshuva.

2. Leaving aside our total lack of access to understanding of the World to Come, even in this world - with the interactions of billions of people and generations past and future - there is simply no way that we could hope to gain any understanding of the actual 'reason' for a micro-event in our lives. We can however how we wish to interpret from the perspective of our own limited understanding and we have a choice as to how to react to it.

18. יג והיה אם-שמע תשמעו אל-מצותי אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום לאהבה את-ה' אלקיכם ולעבדו בכל-לבבכם ובכל-נפשכם: יד ונתתי מטר-ארצכם בעתו יורה ומלקוש ואספת דגנך ותרשף ויצהרה: טו ונתתי עשב בשדה לבהמתך ואכלת ושבעת: טז השמר לךם פריפתה ללבבכם וסרתם ועבדתם אלהים אחרים והשתחיתם להם: יז וחלה אף-ה' בכם ועצר את-השמים ולא-יהיה מטר והאדמה לא תתן את-יבולה ואבדתם מהרה מעל הארץ הטבה אשר ה' נתן לכם.

דברים יא-ג יז

The second paragraph of the Shema directly refers to the 'reward and punishment' in Eretz Yisrael for keeping mitzvot.

19. א מאחר שנודע שמתן שכרן של מצוות והטובה שנוזפה לה אם שמרנו דרך ה' הפתוב בתורה היא חיי העולם הבא.... והנקמה שנוקמין מן הרשעים שעזבו ארחות הצדק הפתובות בתורה היא הפרת מה הוא זה שפתוב בכל התורה כלה - אם תשמעו יגיע לכם, ואם לא תשמעו יקרא אתכם. וכל אותן הדברים בעולם הזה כגון שבע ורעב, ומלחמה ושלום, ומלכות ושללות, ושיבת הארץ וגלות, והצלחת מעשה והפסדו ושאר כל דברי הפרת. כל אותן הדברים אמת - היו ויהיו, ובזמן שאנו עושין כל מצוות התורה יגיעו אלינו טובות העולם הזה בלבד. ובזמן שאנו עוברין עליהן, ותקרא אותנו הרעות הפתובות. ואף על פי כן אין אותן הטובות, הן סוף מתן שכרן של מצוות. ולא אותן הרעות, הן סוף הנקמה שנוקמין מעובר על כל המצוות.

אלא כך הוא הסע הדברים. הקדוש ברוך הוא נתן לנו תורה זו, עץ חיים, וכל העושה כל הפתוב בה, ויודעו דעה גמורה וכוונה זוכה בה לחיי העולם הבא; ולפי גדל מעשיו וגדל חכמתו, הוא זוכה. והבטיחנו בתורה שאם נעשה אותה בשמחה ובטובת נפש, ונהגה בחכמה תמיד שישיר ממנו כל הדברים המונעים אותנו מלעשותה, כגון חלי ומלחמה ורעב וכיוצא בהן. ונשפיע לנו כל הטובות המחזקים את ידינו לעשות את התורה, כגון שבע ושלום ורבות כסף וזהב כדי שלא נעסק כל ימינו בדברים שהגוף צריך להן, אלא נשב פנויים ללמד בחכמה ולעשות המצוה, כדי שנוזפה לחיי העולם הבא. וכן הוא אומר בתורה אחר שהבטיח בטובות העולם הזה (דברים ויח) ויצדקה, תהיה לנו. וכן הודיענו בתורה שאם נעזב התורה מדעתנו ונעסק בהבלי הזמן, כענין שנאמר (דברים לב:טו) וישמון ישרון ויבעט. שדיון האמת יסיר מן העוזבים כל טובות העולם הזה, שהן חזקו ידיהם לבעט, ומביא עליהן כל הרעות המונעים אותן מלקנות העולם הבא כדי שלאבדו ברשעים. הוא שכתוב בתורה (דברים כח:מח) ועבדת את איביך אשר ישלחנו ה' בך (דברים כח:מח) תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה'. שבזמן שאדם טרוד בעולם הזה בחלי ובמלחמה ורעבון אינו מתעסק לא בחכמה ולא במצוה שבהן זוכין לחיי העולם הבא.

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ט הלכה א

The Rambam explains that the 'reward' of peace and prosperity promised in the Shema is NOT the reward for our mitzvot but the OPPORTUNITY to be able to use this world appropriately to gain more real reward in the Next World.

E] HASHGACHA KLALIT AND PRATIT - THE RAMBAM

20. THERE are five different theories concerning Divine Providence

First Theory - that there is NO Divine Providence

There is no Providence at all for anything in the Universe. All parts of the Universe, the heavens and what they contain, owe their origin to accident and chance. There exists no being that rules and governs them or provides for them. This is the theory of Epicurus³, who assumes also that the Universe consists of atoms, that these have combined by chance, and have received their various forms by mere accident. There have been atheists among the Israelites who have expressed the same view; it is reported of them: 'They have denied the Lord, and said He is not' (Jer 5:12). Aristotle has proved the absurdity of the theory - that the whole Universe could have originated by chance. He has shown that, on the contrary, there is a being that rules and governs the Universe.

Second Theory of Divine Providence

Whilst one part of the Universe owes its existence to Providence, and is under the control of a ruler and governor, another part is abandoned and left to chance. This is the view of Aristotle about Providence, and I will now explain to you his theory. He holds that God controls the spheres⁴ and what they contain.

3. [I am grateful to R. Netanel Wiederblank for the following footnotes, which are taken from his source book on Hashgacha. His excellent shiurim on Machshevet Yisrael can be found on YU Torah]. The theory of the Greek philosopher Epicurus, who lived in the fourth century BCE, states that everything that happens in the world is the result of chance. This does not necessarily mean there is no God. Thus 'deism', which maintains that God created the world and set it in motion, but He takes no interest in what happens, would fall under this category. However, Chazal viewed Epicurus's position as so counter to Torah they named heresy after him. [Rambam, however, in his commentary to the first Mishna in Chelek says *apikores* comes from the word *hefker*.]

4. The **celestial spheres**, or celestial orbs, were the fundamental entities of the cosmological models developed by Plato, Eudoxus, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Copernicus and others. In these celestial models the stars and planets are carried around by being embedded in rotating spheres made of an aetherial transparent fifth element. [The four earthly elements are earth, water, air, and fire. Aristotle proposed a fifth element, aether, which is the divine substance that makes up the heavenly spheres and heavenly bodies (stars and planets).] In the geocentric model adopted in the Middle Ages, the planetary spheres (i.e. those that contained planets) were arranged outwards from the spherical, stationary Earth at the center of the universe in this order: the spheres of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Thus, according to Aristotle, there is no hashgacha in the sublunar realm.

From the existence of the spheres other beings derive existence, which are constant in their species but not in their individuals: in the same manner it is said that Providence sends forth [from the spheres to the earth] sufficient influence to secure the immortality and constancy of the species, without securing at the same time permanence for the individual beings of the species.

All other movements, however, which are made by the individual members of each species are due to accident; they are not, according to Aristotle, the result of rule and management; e.g., when a storm or gale blows, it causes undoubtedly some leaves of a tree to drop, breaks off some branches of another tree, tears away a stone from a heap of stones, raises dust over herbs and spoils them, and stirs up the sea so that a ship goes down with the whole or part of her contents. Aristotle sees no difference between the falling of a leaf or a stone and the death of the good and noble people in the ship; nor does he distinguish between the destruction of a multitude of ants caused by an ox depositing on them his excrement and the death of worshippers killed by the fall of the house when its foundations give way; nor does he discriminate between the case of a cat killing a mouse that happens to come in her way, or that of a spider catching a fly, and that of a hungry lion meeting a prophet and tearing him.

In short, the opinion of Aristotle is this: Everything is the result of management which is constant, which does not come to an end and does not change any of its properties, as e.g., the heavenly beings, and everything which continues according to a certain rule, and deviates from it only rarely and exceptionally, as is the case in objects of Nature. All these are the result of management, i.e., in a close relation to Divine Providence. But that which is not constant, and does not follow a certain rule, as e.g., incidents in the existence of the individual beings in each species of plants or animals, whether rational or irrational, is due to chance and not to management; it is in no relation to Divine Providence. Aristotle holds that it is even impossible to ascribe to Providence the management of these things.

This view is closely connected with his theory of the Eternity, of the Universe, and with his opinion that everything different from the existing order of things in Nature is impossible. It is the belief of those who turned away from our Law, and said: "*God has forsaken the earth*" (Ezek. 9:9)

Third Theory of Divine Providence

This theory is the reverse of the second. According to this theory, there is nothing in the whole Universe, neither a class nor an individual being, that is due to chance; everything is the result of will, intention, and rule. It is a matter of course that he who rules must know [that which is under his control].

The Islamic Ashariyah⁵ adhere to this theory, notwithstanding evident absurdities implied in it; for they admit that Aristotle is correct in assuming one and the same cause [viz., the wind] for the fall of leaves [from the tree] and for the death of a man [drowned in the sea]. But they hold at the same time that the wind did not blow by chance; it is God that caused it to move; it is not therefore the wind that caused the leaves to fall; each leaf falls according to the Divine decree; it is God who caused it to fall at a certain time and in a certain place; it could not have fallen before or after that time or in another place, as this has previously been decreed. The Ashariyah were therefore compelled to assume that motion and rest of living beings are predestined, and that it is not in the power of man to do a certain thing or to leave it undone.

It follows also from this theory, that precepts are perfectly useless, since the people to whom any law is given are unable to do anything: they can neither do what they are commanded nor abstain from what they are forbidden. The supporters of this theory hold that it was the will of God to send prophets, to command, to forbid, to promise, and to threaten, although we have no power [over our actions]. A duty would thus be imposed upon us which is impossible for us to carry out, and it is even possible that we may suffer punishment when obeying the command and receive reward when disobeying it.

All these absurdities are admitted by the Ashariyah for the purpose of saving this theory. When we see a person born blind or leprosy, who could not have merited a punishment for previous sins, they say, 'it is the will of God'; when a pious worshipper is tortured and slain, it is likewise the will of God; and no injustice can be asserted to Him for that, for according to their opinion it is proper that God should afflict the innocent and do good to the sinner. Their views on these matters are well known.

5. The Islamic Asharites maintain that the divine will rules everything – this is equivalent to individual providence extended to include all beings, animate and inanimate. The Ash'ariyah were an Islamic philosophical sect who argued that there is no such thing as natural law; every movement in the world occurs through the direct will of God. "Natural laws" reflect the way that God generally runs the world. This position may have parallels in Jewish philosophy. Compare the position of the Rav Dessler that nature is a mirage. See also the Chazon Ish (Igrot 1:35): "...כי מה שאנו קורין 'טבע', המכוון בזה רצון היות מתמיד של המהרה על היות יתברך: (Igrot 1:35). However, Asharites went further. Because they felt that God has absolute control over the world there cannot be free will. This leads to yet another problem—if there is no free will, why do people suffer. (And they could not answer chance.) They were forced to maintain that God is not subject to the laws of morality; He can do good or evil as He pleases. This is totally against the Torah (see Devarim 32:4).

Fifth Theory of Divine Providence

This is our theory, or that of our Law. I will show you [first] the view expressed on this subject in our prophetic books, and generally accepted by our Sages. I will then give the opinion of some later authors among us, and lastly, I will explain my own belief.⁶

The theory of man's perfectly free will is one of the fundamental principles of the Law of our Teacher Moses, and of those who follow the Law. According to this principle man does what is in his power to do, by his nature, his choice, and his will; and his action is not due to any faculty created for the purpose. All species of irrational animals likewise move by their own free will. This is the Will of God; that is to say, it is due to the eternal divine will that all living beings should move freely, and that man should have power to act according to his will or choice within the limits of his capacity. Against this principle we hear, thank God, no opposition on the part of our nation.

Another fundamental principle taught by the Law of Moses is this: Wrong cannot be ascribed to God in any way whatever; all evils and afflictions as well as all kinds of happiness of man, whether they concern one individual person or a community, are distributed according to justice; they are the result of strict judgment that admits no wrong whatever. Even when a person suffers pain in consequence of a thorn having entered into his hand, although it is at once drawn out, it is a punishment that has been inflicted on him [for sin], and the least pleasure he enjoys is a reward [for some good action]; all this is meted out by strict justice; as is said in Scripture, "*all his ways are judgment*" (Deut. 32:4); we are only ignorant of the working of that judgment.

We, however, believe that all these human affairs are managed with justice; far be it from God to do wrong, to punish any one unless the punishment is necessary and merited. It is distinctly stated in the Law, that all is done in accordance with justice; and the words of our Sages generally express the same idea. They clearly say: "*There is no death without sin, no sufferings without transgression.*" (B. T. Shabbath, 55a.) Again, "*The deserts of man are meted out to him in the same measure which he himself employs.*" (Mish. Sotah, i. 7.) These are the words of the Mishnah. Our Sages declare it wherever opportunity is given, that the idea of God necessarily implies justice; that He will reward the most pious for all their pure and upright actions, although no direct commandment was given them through a prophet; and that He will punish all the evil deeds of men, although they have not been prohibited by a prophet, if common sense warns against them, as e.g., injustice and violence.

..... The same principle is expressed in all sayings of our Sages. But they contain an additional doctrine which is not found in the Law; viz., the doctrine of "afflictions of love," as taught by some of our Sages. According to this doctrine it is possible that a person be afflicted without having previously committed any sin, in order that his future reward may be increased; a view which is held by the Mu'tazilites, but is not supported by any Scriptural text. Be not misled by the accounts of trials, such as "*God tried Abraham*" (Gen. xxii. 1); "*He afflicted you and made you hungry,*" etc. (Deut. viii. 3); for you will hear more on this subject later on (chap. xxiv.)

My opinion on this principle of Divine Providence I will now explain to you. The principle which I accept is far less open to objections, and is more reasonable than the opinions mentioned before. It is this: In the lower or sublunary portion of the Universe Divine Providence does not extend to the individual members of species except in the case of mankind. It is only in this species that the incidents in the existence of the individual beings, their good and evil fortunes, are the result of justice, in accordance with the words, "*For all His ways are judgment.*"

But I agree with Aristotle as regards all other living beings, and a fortiori as regards plants and all the rest of earthly creatures. For I do not believe that it is through the interference of Divine Providence that a certain leaf drops [from a tree], nor do I hold that when a certain spider catches a certain fly, that this is the direct result of a special decree and will of God in that moment; it is not by a particular Divine decree that the spittle of a certain person moved, fell on a certain gnat in a certain place, and killed it; nor is it by the direct will of God that a certain fish catches and swallows a certain worm on the surface of the water. In all these cases the action is, according to my opinion, entirely due to chance, as taught by Aristotle.

Divine Providence is connected with Divine intellectual influence, and the same beings which are benefited by the latter so as to become intellectual, and to comprehend things comprehensible to rational beings, are also under the control of Divine Providence, which examines all their deeds in order to reward or punish them. It may be by mere chance that a ship goes down with all her contents, as in the above-mentioned instance, or the roof of a house falls upon those within; but it is not due to chance, according to our view, that in the one instance the men went into the ship, or remained in the house in the other instance: it is due to the will of God, and is in accordance with the justice of His judgments, the method of which our mind is incapable of understanding.

6. Rambam does not simply present the Torah's view in a straight forward manner – rather, he presents different positions to explain the Torah, culminating with his own. He rejects certain aspects, like *yisurin shel ahava*, although these were accepted by some opinions in the Talmud and Geonim.

I have been induced to accept this theory by the circumstance that I have not met in any of the prophetic books with a description of God's Providence otherwise than in relation to human beings. The prophets even express their surprise that God should take notice of man, who is too little and too unimportant to be worthy of the attention of the Creator: how, then, should other living creatures be considered as proper objects for Divine Providence!

All that is mentioned of the history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a perfect proof that Divine Providence extends to every man individually. But the condition of the individual beings of other living creatures is undoubtedly the same as has been stated by Aristotle. On that account it is allowed, even commanded, to kill animals⁷; we are permitted to use them according to our pleasure. The view that other living beings are only governed by Divine Providence in the way described by Aristotle, is supported by the words of the Prophet Habakkuk.

There are many similar sayings extant in the writings of our Sages, but they imply nothing that is contrary to my view. All these passages refer to Providence in relation to species, and not to Providence in relation to individual animals. There is a rule laid down by our Sages that it is directly prohibited in the Law to cause pain to an animal but the object of this rule is to make us perfect; that we should not assume cruel habits: and that we should not uselessly cause pain to others: that, on the contrary, we should be prepared to show pity and mercy to all living creatures, except when necessity demands the contrary.....

Understand thoroughly my theory, that I do not ascribe to God ignorance of anything or any kind of weakness; I hold that Divine Providence is related and closely connected with the intellect, because Providence can only proceed from an intelligent being, from a being that is itself the most perfect Intellect. Those creatures, therefore, which receive part of that intellectual influence will become subject to the action of Providence in the same proportion as they are acted upon by the Intellect.

This theory is in accordance with reason and with the teaching of Scripture, whilst the other theories previously mentioned either exaggerate Divine Providence or detract from it. In the former case they lead to confusion and entire nonsense, and cause us to deny reason and to contradict that which is perceived with the senses. The latter case, viz., the theory that Divine Providence does not extend to man, and that there is no difference between man and other animals, implies very bad notions about God; it disturbs all social order, removes and destroys all the moral and intellectual virtues of man.

Maimonides Moreh Nevuchim 3:17

21. HAVING shown in the preceding chapter that of all living beings mankind alone is directly under the control of Divine Providence, I will now add the following remarks. Hence it follows, in accordance with what I have mentioned in the preceding chapter, that the greater the share is which a person has obtained of this Divine influence, on account of both his physical predisposition and his training, the greater must also be the effect of Divine Providence upon him, for the action of Divine Providence is proportional to the endowment of intellect, as has been mentioned above. The relation of Divine Providence is therefore not the same to all men; the greater the human perfection a person has attained, the greater the benefit he derives from Divine Providence. This benefit is very great in the case of prophets, and varies according to the degree of their prophetic faculty: as it varies in the case of pious and good men according to their piety and uprightness. For it is the intensity of the Divine intellectual influence that has inspired the prophets, guided the good in their actions, and perfected the wisdom of the pious.⁸

In the same proportion as ignorant and disobedient persons are deficient in that Divine influence, their condition is inferior, and their rank equal to that of irrational beings: and they are "like the beasts" (Ps. xlix. 21). This belief that God provides for every individual human being in accordance with his merits is one of the fundamental principles on which the Law is founded.

.... Now consider how by this method of reasoning we have arrived at the truth taught by the Prophets, that every person has his individual share of Divine Providence in proportion to his perfection. For philosophical research leads to this conclusion, if we assume, as has been mentioned above, that Divine Providence is in each case proportional to the person's intellectual development. It is wrong to say that Divine Providence extends only to the species, and not to individual beings, as some of the philosophers teach. For only individual beings have real existence, and individual beings are endowed with Divine Intellect; Divine Providence acts, therefore, upon these individual beings.

7. R. Wiederblank quotes R. Shalom Carmy who suggests that this is what the Rambam means - insofar as people are people, they have hashgacha. A person who is a total tzadik will be totally human in the most perfected human manner, and thus deserve constant providence. A person who has imperfections, insofar as he is animalistic he will sometimes be treated with general rather than personal providence.

8. We see here the reason why greater people experience more hashgacha is not simply that as a result of their piety that God rewards them with providence, but Providence is a natural outgrowth of their perfection. Moreover, God will protect the chassid by helping him make good decisions. This emerges beautifully from the Yad as well:

דרך בעלי דעה שיקבע לו אדם מלאכה המפרנסת אותו ותחילה, ואחר כך יקנה בית דירה, ואחר כך ישא אשה, שנאמר מי האיש אשר נטע כרם ולא חללו, מי האיש אשר בנה בית חדש ולא חנכו, מי האיש אשר ארש אשה ולא לקחה, אבל הטפשין מתחילין לישא אשה ואחר כך אם תמצא ידו יקנה בית ואחר כך בסוף ימיו יחזור לבקש אומנות או יתפרנס מן הצדקה, וכן הוא אומר בקללות אשה תארש בית תבנה כרם תטע, כלומר יהיו מעשיך הפוכין כדי שלא תצליח את דרכיך, ובברכה הוא אומר ויהי דוד לכל דרכיו משכיל וה' עמו. רמב"ם הלכות דעות פרק ה הלכה יא

The klala is carried out by people making bad decisions. It is not just that supernaturally the house a person builds will be destroyed ...

Study this chapter as it ought to be studied; you will find in it all the fundamental principles of the Law; you will see that these are in conformity with philosophical speculation, and all difficulties will be removed; you will have a clear idea of Divine Providence.

Maimonides Moreh Nevuchim 3:18

22. For it is known from statements made in Scripture that these four i.e. the Patriarchs and Moses, had their minds exclusively filled with the name of God - that is, with His knowledge and love, and that in the same measure Divine Providence was attached to them and their descendants.

..... We have already stated in the chapters which deal with Divine Providence that Providence watches over every rational being according to the amount of intellect which that being possesses. Those who are perfect in their perception of God, whose mind is never separated from Him, always enjoy the influence of Providence. But those who, perfect in their knowledge of God, sometimes turn their mind away from God, enjoy the presence of Divine Providence only when they meditate on God. When their thoughts are engaged in other matters, divine Providence departs from them.

..... If man frees his thoughts from worldly matters, obtains knowledge of God in the right way, and rejoices in that knowledge, it is impossible that any kind of evil should befall him while he is with God and God with him. When he does not meditate on God, when he is separated from God, then God is also separated from him. Then he is exposed to any evil that might befall him. For it is only that intellectual link with God that secures the presence of Providence and protection from evil accidents.

..... It is now clearly established that the cause of our being exposed to chance, and abandoned to destruction like cattle, is to be found in our separation from God For if we prepare ourselves, and attain the influence of the Divine Intellect, Providence is joined to us, and we are guarded against all evils.

Moreh Nevuchim 3:51

23. All ... sects of the philosophers, which maintain that everything is made by means of the spheres and the stars, also maintain that whatever happens to each and every human being is due to chance. It is not due to any cause coming from above, and neither the constellation under which one is born nor nature will avail against it. There is no difference for them between this individual who was torn to pieces by a lion that happened upon him, or this mouse that was torn to pieces by a cat, or this fly that was torn to pieces by a spider. Neither is there a difference between a roof's falling upon and killing someone, or a rock's breaking loose from a mountain and falling upon a tree or upon another rock and breaking it. All this, they maintain, is simply fortuitous. Furthermore, this one being poor and that one rich, this one having children and that one being childless—all the philosophers maintain that this is due to chance. The summary of the matter is that they maintain that what happens to each and every thing—be it man or beast or trees and minerals—is all due to chance.

.... The controversy lies in this - that the true religionists, and that is the religion of Moses our Teacher, maintain that what happens to individuals is not due to chance, but rather to judgment—as the Torah says: “For all His ways are judgment” (Deut. 32:4). The prophet explained: “Whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jer. 32:19). It is regarding this that the Torah warned and bore witness and told Israel: “But if you will not listen to Me” (Lev. 26:14), I shall bring hardship upon you. If you maintain that that hardship is not an affliction brought on by your sins, but rather due to chance and one of those things that happen by chance, why then I Myself shall heap more of that chance upon you—as it is written: “And if you walk with Me in (the way of) chance, I too shall walk with you in the wrath of chance” (Lev. 26:27-28). This is a root of the religion of Moses our Teacher, that everything happening to human beings is a (just) decree and judgment. Hence, the sages maintained: “There is no death without sin and no affliction without transgression” (Shabbat 55a).

Maimonides' Letter on Astrology

In summary:

- For the Rambam, the world is run according to hashgacha klalit, which governs the fate of each species.
- Humans are governed by BOTH hashgacha klalit and hashgacha pratit but the latter depends, for each person, on the extent of their intellectual connection to God.
- Individuals with significant connection to God will be subject to a higher degree of hashgacha pratit, which in turn will impact the lives of other individuals who are drawn into their 'hashgacha vortex'.
- We will also see in Part 2 be'H that the Rambam ascribes many of the bad things that happen to us in the world to our own bad decision making!
- We will also examine the impact of other people's decisions on our lives. Are the negative consequences of those decisions also part of God's hashgacha or are we the undeserving victims of human free will?