

18FORTY KSY

TRAUMA AND GOD: HOW DOES ONE CONFRONT GOD DURING SUFFERING?

ספר קהלת, פרק ג

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| 1 Everything has an appointed season, and there is a time for every matter under the heaven. | א לכל זמן ועת לכל-חפץ תחת השמים |
| 2 A time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot that which is planted. | ב עת ללדת ועת למות עת לטעט ועת לעקור נטוע |
| 3 A time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break and a time to build. | ג עת להרוג ועת לרפוא עת לפרוץ ועת לבנות |
| 4 A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time of wailing and a time of dancing. | ד עת לבכות ועת לשחוק עת ספוד ועת רקוד |
| 5 A time to cast stones and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. | ה עת להשליך אבנים ועת כנוס אבנים עת לחבוק ועת לרחק מחבק |
| 6 A time to seek and a time to lose; a time to keep and a time to cast away. | ו עת לבקש ועת לאבד עת לשמור ועת להשליך |
| 7 A time to rend and a time to sew; a time to be silent and a time to speak. | ז עת לקרוע ועת לתפור עת לחשות ועת לדבר |
| 8 A time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace. | ח עת לאהב ועת לשנא עת מלחמה ועת שלום |

RABBI JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK, KOL DODI DOFEK, THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER

According to Judaism, man's mission in this world is to turn fate into destiny — an existence that is passive and influenced into an existence that is active and influential; an existence of compulsion, perplexity, and speechlessness into an existence full of will, vision, and initiative...

As stated above, in man's "Existence of Destiny" arises a new relation to the problem of evil. As long as man vacillates in his fateful existence, his relationship to evil is expressed solely in a philosophical/speculative approach. As a passive creature, it was not within his power to wrestle with evil in order to contain or to exploit it for an exalted purpose...

However, in the realm of destiny man recognizes reality as it is, and does not desire to use harmonizing formulas in order to hide and disregard evil. The "Child of Destiny" is very realistic and does not flinch in anticipation of a face-to-face confrontation with evil. His approach is halakhic and moral, and thus devoid of any metaphysical/speculative nuance. When the "Child of Destiny" suffers, he says in his heart, "There is evil, I do not deny it, and I will not conceal it with fruitless casuistry. I am, however, interested in it from a halakhic point of view; and as a person who wants to know what action to take. I ask a single question: What should the sufferer do to live with his suffering?" In this dimension, the emphasis is removed from causal and teleological considerations (which differ only as to direction) and is directed to the realm of action. The problem is now formulated in the language of a simple halakhah and revolves around a quotidian (i.e. daily) task. The question of questions is: What does suffering obligate man to do?

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS, FUTURE TENSE - HOW THE JEWS INVENTED HOPE

Human beings are the only life form capable of using the future tense. Only beings who can imagine the world other than it is, are capable of freedom. And if we are free, the future is open, dependent on us. We can know the beginning of our story but not the end. That is why, as He is about to take the Israelites from slavery to freedom, God tells Moses that His name is 'I will be what I will be.' Judaism, the religion of freedom, is faith in the future tense.

Western civilization is the product of two cultures: ancient Greece and ancient Israel. The Greeks believed in fate: the future is determined by the past. Jews believed in freedom: there is no 'evil decree' that cannot be averted. The Greeks gave the world the concept of tragedy. Jews gave it the idea of hope. The whole of Judaism – though it would take a book to show it – is a set of laws and narratives designed to create in people, families, communities and a nation, habits that defeat despair. Judaism is the voice of hope in the conversation of mankind.

It is no accident that so many Jews are economists fighting poverty, or doctors fighting disease, or lawyers fighting injustice, in all cases refusing to see these things as inevitable. It is no accident that after the Holocaust Jews did not call it Al-Naqba, nursing resentment and revenge, but instead turned to the future, building a nation whose national anthem is Hatikvah, 'the hope'. It is no accident that Judaism has been opposed by every empire that sought to deny people the freedom to be equal-but-different. It is no accident that Israel is still today the only free society in the Middle East.

Judaism is a religion of details, but we miss the point if we do not sometimes step back and see the larger picture. To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope in a world serially threatened by despair. Every ritual, every mitzvah, every syllable of the Jewish story, every element of Jewish law, is a protest against escapism, resignation or the blind acceptance of fate. Judaism is a sustained struggle, the greatest ever known, against the world that is, in the name of the world that could be, should be, but is not yet. There is no more challenging vocation. Throughout history, when human beings have sought hope they have found it in the Jewish story. Judaism is the religion, and Israel the home, of hope.

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