

The Book of Job, Chapters 1 and 2
JSI at Beth Torah, November 3, 2011

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabat page 55a – b

R. Ammi said: There is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity. There is no death without sin, for it is written, The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son, the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him, etc.,²⁸ There is no suffering without iniquity, for it is written, Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.²⁹

An objection is raised: The ministering angels asked the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Sovereign of the Universe! Why didst Thou impose the penalty of death upon Adam?' Said He to them, I gave him an easy command, yet he violated it.' But Moses and Aaron fulfilled the whole Torah,' they pursued — 'yet they died'. 'There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, etc.,¹ He replied .² — He maintains as the following Tanna. For it was taught: R. Simeon b. Eleazar said: Moses and Aaron too died through their sin, for it is said, Because ye believed not in me[...therefore ye shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them]:³ hence, had ye believed in Me, your time had not yet come to depart from the world.⁴

An objection is raised: Four died through the serpent's machinations,⁵ viz., Benjamin the son of Jacob, Amram the father of Moses, Jesse the father of David, and Caleb the son of David. ... which proves that there is death without sin and suffering without iniquity. Thus the refutation of R. Ammi is [indeed] a refutation.

Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Brachot page 5a – b

Rava (some say, R. Hisda) says: If a man sees that painful sufferings visit him, let him examine his conduct. For it is said: Let us search and try our ways, and return unto the Lord.²¹ If he examines and finds nothing [objectionable], let him attribute it to the neglect of the study of the Torah. For it is said: Happy is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest out of Thy law.²² If he did attribute it [thus], and still did not find [this to be the cause], let him be sure that these are chastenings of love. For it is said: For whom the Lord loveth He correcteth.²³

Rava, in the name of R. Sahorah, in the name of R. Huna, says: If the Holy One, blessed be He, is pleased with a man, he crushes him with painful sufferings. For it is said: And the Lord was pleased with [him, hence] he crushed him by disease.²⁴ ...

A Tanna recited before R. Johanan the following: If a man busies himself in the study of the Torah and in acts of charity and [nonetheless] buries his children,¹ all his sins are forgiven him. R. Johanan said to him: I grant you Torah and acts of

charity, for it is written: By mercy and truth iniquity is expiated.² 'Mercy' is acts of charity, for it is said: He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, prosperity and honour.³ 'Truth' is Torah, for it is said: Buy the truth and sell it not.⁴ But how do you know [what you say about] the one who buries his children? ...

R. Johanan says: Bodily suffering and [the lack of] children are not chastisements of love. ... Did not R. Johanan himself say: This is the bone of my tenth son?

(21) Lam. III, 40.

(22) Ps. XCIV, 12.

(23) Prov. III, 12.

(24) Isa. LIII, 10.

(1) An allusion to R. Johanan himself, who was a great scholar and a charitable man, and was bereft of his children.

(2) Ibid. XVI, 6.

(3) Ibid. XXI, 21.

(4) Ibid. XXIII, 23.

Midrash Breishit Raba 57:4

R. Simeon b. Lakish said: Job never existed at all. This view of Resh Lakish is self-contradictory, for elsewhere he said in the name of Bar Kappara: He flourished in the days of Abraham,⁴ while here he maintains thus? He means, however, that he was never exposed to the sufferings ascribed to him.⁵ Why then were they ascribed to him? Because had they come upon him, he would have been able to withstand them.

Midrash Rabbah - Genesis XXXIV:2

2. The Lord trieth the righteous, etc. (Ps. XI, 5). R. Jonathan said: A potter does not test defective vessels, because he cannot give them a single blow without breaking them. Similarly, the Holy One, blessed be He, does not test the wicked but only the righteous: thus, 'The Lord trieth the righteous.' R. Jose b. R. Hanina said: When a flax worker knows that his flax is of good quality, the more he beats it the more it improves and the more it glistens; but if it is of inferior quality, he cannot give it one knock but it splits. Similarly, the Lord does not test the wicked but only the righteous, as it says: 'The Lord trieth the righteous.' R. Eleazar said: When a man possesses two cows, one strong and the other feeble, upon which does he put the yoke? Surely upon the strong one. Similarly, the Lord tests none but the righteous; hence, 'The Lord trieth the righteous.'

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God etc.¹¹ It has been taught: R. Eliezer says: If it says 'with all thy soul', why should it also say, 'with all thy might',¹² and if it says 'with all thy might', why should it also say 'with all thy soul'? Should there be a man who values his life more than his money, for him it says; 'with all thy soul'; and should there be a man who values his money more than his life, for him it says, 'with all thy might' . R. Akiba says: With all thy soul': even if He takes away thy soul.¹³

When R. Akiba was taken out for execution, it was the hour for the recital of the Shema', and while they combed his flesh with iron combs, he was accepting upon himself the kingship of heaven.¹⁶ His disciples said to him: Our teacher, even to this point? He said to them: All my days I have been troubled by this verse, 'with all thy soul', [which I interpret,] 'even if He takes thy soul'. I said: When shall I have the opportunity of¹⁷ fulfilling this? Now that I have the opportunity shall I not fulfil it? He prolonged the word ehad¹⁸ until he expired while saying it. A bath kol¹⁹ went forth and proclaimed: Happy art thou, Akiba, that thy soul has departed with the word ehad!

(11) Deut. VI, 5.

(12) This word is interpreted by the Rabbis to mean money.

(13) I.e., thy very self, thy life.

(16) I.e., recited the Shema'. V. supra 130.

(17) Lit., 'when will it come to my hands'.

(18) 'One' in Hear, O Israel etc.

(19) V. Glos.