

TSEFET'S PERICOPE #74

Commentary by Dr. Eliyahu Ben Avraham (Dr. Walter Oakley)

WHEN A SOUL SINS

נֶפֶשׁ כִּי-תַחַטָּא

“Nefesh Ki-Techta”

Torah Seder: Vayiqra (Leviticus) 4:1-35

B' midbar (Num.) 28:9-15

Ashlamatah: Ezekiel 18:4-9, 14-17

Special Verbal Tally:

Halakah:

Mishnah/ Oral Torah:

My Translation	Greek
<p>¹⁸The servants should submit to their masters in fear not only to the fair and reasonable but also to the crooked.</p> <p>¹⁹ For this grace (chesed), if on the account of G-d one patiently endures sorrow, suffering unjustly.</p> <p>²⁰ For what honor is there if you sin and endure punishment; but if you suffer for doing good and endure, this is grace in the presence (sight) of G-d.</p>	<p>¹⁸ Οἱ οἰκέται ὑποτασσόμενοι ἐν παντὶ φόβῳ τοῖς δεσπότηαις, οὐ μόνον τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς καὶ ἐπιεικέσιν ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς σκολιοῖς.</p> <p>¹⁹ τοῦτο γὰρ χάρις εἰ διὰ συνειδήσιν θεοῦ ὑποφέρει τις λύπας πάσχων ἀδίκως.</p> <p>²⁰ ποῖον γὰρ κλέος εἰ ἀμαρτάνοντες καὶ κολαφιζόμενοι ὑπομενεῖτε; ἀλλ' εἰ ἀγαθοποιούντες καὶ πάσχοντες ὑπομενεῖτε, τοῦτο χάρις παρὰ θεῶ.</p>

Transliteration

¹⁸ oi oiketai upotassomenoi en panti fobw tois despotais ou monon tois agaquois kai epieikesin alla kai tois skoliois

¹⁹ touto gar caris ei dia suneidhsin qeou upoferei tis lupas pascwn adikws

²⁰ poion gar kleos ei amartanontes kai kolafizomenoi upomeneite all ei agaqoipoiontes kai pascontes upomeneite touto caris para thew

DELITZSCH HEBREW TRANSLATION

¹⁸ הָעֲבָדִים הַכֹּנְעוּ לִפְנֵי אֲדֹנֵיכֶם בְּכָל-יְרָאָה לֹא לִפְנֵי הַטּוֹבִים וְהַעֲנוּיִם בְּלִבָּד כִּי אִם-גַּם-לִפְנֵי

הָעֲקָשִׁים: ¹⁹ כִּי חֶסֶד הוּא לְאִישׁ כִּי-יִשָּׁבַע מִמְרָרִים וַיַּעֲזֹב חֲנָם לְמַעַן דַּעַת הָאֱלֹהִים:

²⁰ כִּי אִם-תַּחַטָּאוּ וְסִבַּלְתֶּם מִכּוֹת אֲגָרוֹף מֵהַתְּהַלְלוֹ אֲבָל אִם-תַּעֲזֹבוּ וְסִבַּלְתֶּם בַּעֲשׂוֹתְכֶם הַטּוֹב

חֶסֶד הוּא מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלֹהִים:

DIVIDED CONTINUITY

The dividing article (Oι) demonstrates that this is in fact a new pericope. Likewise, it demonstrates that the new section while distinctive, maintains a continuity of thought from the previous pericope.

In this pericope, Hakham Tsefet sets his vocabulary in a system of contrast. Many of the words used in this simple pericope play against one another. It seems plausible that this contrast demonstrates the suffering of the soul. This suffering serves a multifaceted purpose. Firstly, it seems evident that the souls' suffering is in relation to the loss of something great such as the Temple. Secondly, the soul suffers as the result of its sin of abandonment of the mitzvot. Finally, here in the writings of Hakham Tsefet we have the servant who must subject himself to the maltreatment of a wicked master. This has relevance to the destruction of the second Beit HaMikdash in that the wickedness of people one to another is said to have been the reason for the Temple's destruction.

WHAT'S A SOUL TO DO?

A key theme to both the Torah Seder and the writings of Hakham Tsefet is one of the soul. This will be clearer as one reads the commentary. Our Torah Seder begins with the unintentional sin of the soul. This has caused Scholars to question why our verse which deals with the sin-offering attribute sin to the soul?

Since the soul is the faculty of thought sin is attributed to the soul. The reason a sin-offering is required is to atone for the soul. When a person sins it leaves a stigma and blemish on the soul. Therefore, the sinning soul must bring a korban. The Hebrew word korban means to "draw near." This drawing near is accomplished by korban, an offering. If the soul is alienated from the presence of the Holy One, Blessed be He, it must be atoned for with a korban which brings the soul near to the HaShem once again. The sin-offering rectifies (tikkun) the blemish of the soul.

SERVANTS

Hakham Tsefet opens this Pericope with a command. "Servants willingly submit or subject yourselves to your masters." This seems to be well related to the Torah Seder in that it opens with a commandment.

Hakham Tsefet opens this pericope with an admonition to the servants. He calls for willing submission to their masters.

Here I believe that the Delitzsch is worth noting. Eved עֶבֶד ('ebed) means a slave or bondman. The difficulty with the Greek language is that the idea of "slave" or "servant" does not perfectly match the Hebraic concept of the bondman. This phrase οἰκέτης (oiketēs)¹ represents someone who is a bond slave. Likewise, this person is different than the δούλος (doulos) mentioned in the previous pericope. In reading this pericope, we must maintain a Hebraic train of thought. It would be very easy to accept Grecian asceticism while reading this pericope. However, the

¹ οἰκετεία, ας, ἡ (since Dit., Syll.³ 495, 112f [c. 230BC]; Strabo 14, 5, 2; Lucian, De Merc. Cond. 15; Epict., Ench. 33, 7 [s. Schenkl, app.]; Dit., Syll.³ 694, 54f; 695, 61; PTebt. 285, 6; Sym. Job 1:3; Ep. Arist. 14; 15; Jos., Ant. 12, 30) *the slaves in a household καταστήσαι τινα ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκετείας αὐτοῦ put someone in charge of the slaves in) his household Mt 24:45. M-M.**

complexity of ideas here is NOT Grecian. Nor, is the servant a slave after the idea of Roman subjugation of Eretz Yisrael. The slave is, as mentioned above an “eved” עֶבֶד. We have dealt with this subject in recent weeks. Therefore, we will not elaborate at length here. The point worth mentioning here is that the servant is one of the household.

oiketēs (οἰκέτης, (3610)), a house-servant (*oikeo*, to dwell, *oikos*, a house), is translated “servant” in Luke 16:13 (R.V. marg., “household-servant”); so Rom. 14:4 and 1 Pet. 2:18; in Acts 10:7, A.V. and R.V., “household-servants.”²

Those bondmen, or bondwomen who worked in or close to the house often experienced close contact with their masters.

THE FAIR AND REASONABLE.

The “fair and reasonable” masters are the masters who seem to be content to take less than their due. However, those who fit into this category are those who excel in qualities that are admirable and worth emulation. Their “good” is worth veneration and mention.

ἀγαθός (agathos)- טוֹב (tôv)

*It can be predicated of persons, things, conditions, qualities and affections of the soul, deeds, times and seasons. To this general significance can be traced back all those senses which the word gathers from the connection in which it stands;*³

σκολιός (skolios) - עֲקָשׁ (iqqēš)

“The health of the soul is ruined by an unrighteous ruler; everything is spoiled.”⁴

The corrupt and crooked masters are likened to the coiled snake. The snake’s method of locomotion is one of twisting and turning. Therefore, Hakham Tsefet requires fear of them. Perhaps the word φόβος (phobos) יִרְאָה (yir’āh) can be used for both the good master and the evil in opposite veins of thought. The masters σκολιός (skolios) - עֲקָשׁ (iqqēš) are contrasted with the ἀγαθός (agathos)- טוֹב (tôv) “good” who are worth G-dly respect and awe. The “good” ἀγαθός (agathos)- טוֹב (tôv) are honest and kind while the σκολιός (skolios) - עֲקָשׁ (iqqēš) are wicked and violent.

In this discussion, Biblical usages of yārē’ is divided into five general categories:

- 1) the emotion of fear,
- 2) the intellectual anticipation of evil without emphasis upon the emotional reaction,
- 3) reverence or awe,
- 4) righteous behavior or piety, and
- 5) formal religious worship.

² W.E. Vine, Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament words Riverside Book and Bible House

³ Thayer Joseph, D.D. A Greek –English Lexicon of the New Testament, International Bible Translators, 1889

⁴ Plat. Gorg., 525a

Major OT synonyms include pāhad, ḥātat, and ḥārad as well as several words referring to shaking or quaking because of fear.

Through this list of possible definitions to φόβος (phobos) יִרְאָה (yirə'āh) we can see that both ideas would have applied to Hakham Tsefet's warning of fear. Reverential awe is due to the "good" master. The intellectual anticipation of evil should be anticipated from the master who is depicted as being σκολιός (skolios) - עֲקָשׁ (iqqēš). Therefore, the type of fear being discussed is relevant to the circumstance.

The Ashlamatah of Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 18:4-9 demonstrates the qualities of a good master. However, contrasted is the evil man, whom the son does not emulate in Yechezkel (Ezekiel) 18:14-17.

Regardless of the master's disposition, the servant is called upon (commanded) to walk in fear and respect as if being submitted to G-d.

The Pseudepigraphal work Odes of Solomon records the idea of the servant, which is exemplary. *"There is no hard way where there is a simple heart, nor barrier for upright thoughts,"*⁵

This exemplary attitude is very hard to emulate. Likewise, this attitude demonstrates the truly righteous servant.

THE SUFFERING SOUL

IF ON THE ACCOUNT OF G-D ONE PATIENTLY ENDURES SORROW

λύπη (lupē) - יָגֹן (yāgōn)

ψυχή (psukhē) - נִפְשׁ (nepeš)

I find it very interesting to note that all of these ordeals are matters of the soul.⁶ The natural impulse of the soul is to avoid suffering. λύπη (lupē) - יָגֹן (yāgōn) can refer to both physical and mental anguish. The wisdom of Hakham Tsefet is here established in that; he knows how to perfectly contrast the good with the bad, joy with suffering. λύπη (lupē) - יָגֹן (yāgōn) is perfectly contrasted to ἀγαθός (agathos)- טוֹב (tōv). Here we have a contrast of emotions. When things are "good," we are prone to joy. When things are painful, we tend to be sorrowful. Hakham Tsefet is perfectly aware of the period of suffering we are experiencing. (In this three week period of mourning) However, all the matters and vocabulary of Hakham Tsefet in this small pericope are related to matters of the soul. This is of great interest since the idea of our present Torah Seder is that of "if a soul sins." This thematic connection actually started when we began our reading in the book of Leviticus. His Eminence Dr Rabbi Yoseph Ben Haggai pointed out that the words of Hakham Tsefet in 1 Tsefet (Peter) 2:11-12 were directly related to the opening phrase of Leviticus i.e. Vayikra and παρακαλέω (parakaleō). Consequently, I find another point very interesting in relation to this verbal and thematic connection. The eleventh verse, which connected directly to the readings of Vayikra (Leviticus) reads as follows.

⁵ Odes of Solomon 34.1

⁶ TDNT 4:313-322

¹¹ Dearly beloved, I **exhort** you as temporary residents and pilgrims to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ^(1Pe 2:11 MKJV)

Here Hakham establishes a theme of the Soul and its troubles. The opening Sederim of Vayikra deal specifically with the Three Weeks of Mourning. However, they also deal with the troubles of the soul. Vayikra further tells us how we can overcome and atone for the troubles of the soul.

FOR THIS GRACE (CHESED), IF ON THE ACCOUNT OF G-D

The Greek word χάρις (kharis) is directly related to the Hebrew word Chesed חֶסֶד (ḥesed). As a matter of fact this is the word used by Delitzsch in his translation of Hakham Tsefet this week. Chesed is a very complex word. It is more complex than the Greek counterpart. I have used the word "Grace" to translate this word. However, the idea of chesed covers far more territory than the word "grace." Synonyms for chesed are kindness, loving-kindness, mercy and similar words. The RSV usually has steadfast love occasionally loyalty, and the NASB loving kindness, kindness, love, NIV unfailing love.

This *chesed* is extended to the willing obedient. The text is actually trying to stress the idea that we should be ever aware of G-d's presence. This awareness should transform our conduct into that of a righteous servant.

IF YOU SIN AND ENDURE PUNISHMENT

If you suffer punishment on the account of evil deeds, the only fault is that of the servant. Perhaps there were those in Hakham Tsefet's audience who believed that their suffering for the wrong was of some special benefit to their walk. Hakham Tsefet sets the record straight by calling on righteous behavior. The conduct of the servant must be appropriate and righteous. He can claim no special benefit, glory or honor when he is punished for his erroneous conduct. Honor belongs to the servant who endures and evil or crooked master. One can only imagine the thought in Hakham Tsefet's mind here. The master who physically abused his servants seems to be at the forefront of his mind. However, one could easily imagine a multitude of circumstances related to the master servant relationship.

MITZVOT RELATED TO THIS TORAH SEDER AND PERICOPE OF HAKHAM TSEFET

#120 (Sh) The Great Rabbinical Court is to offer a sacrifice, if they have erred in instruction or ruling.

Mitzvah	Torah Address	Oral Torah
P68	Vayikra 4:13	Horayot 1:1-2

Special Notes:

P68 For the Great Rabbinical Court to offer a sacrifice, if they have erred in instruction, as it is written "and if the whole congregation of Israel shall err" (Leviticus 4:13).

Horayot 1:1 [if] the court gave a decision to transgress any or all of the commandments which are stated in the Torah, and an individual went and acted in accord with their instructions, [so transgressing] inadvertently,

(1) whether they carried out what they said and he carried out what they said right along with them,

(2) or whether they carried out what they said and he carried out what they said after they did,

(3) whether they did not carry out what they said, but he carried out what they said—he is exempt, since he relied on the court.

[If] the court gave a decision, and one of them knew that they had erred, or a disciple who is worthy to give instruction, and he [who knew of the error] went and carried out what they said,

(1) whether they carried out what they said and he carried out what they said right along with them,

(2) whether they carried out what they said and he carried out what they said after they did,

(3) whether they did not carry out what they said, but he carried out what they said—lo, this one is liable, since he [who knew the law] did not in point of fact rely upon the court. This is the governing principle: He who relies on himself is liable, and he who relies on the court is exempt.

1:2 [If] the court gave a decision and realized that it had erred and retracted it, whether they brought their atonement offering or did not bring their atonement offering, and an individual did in accord with their instruction—R. Simeon declares him exempt. And R. Eliezer says, “It is subject to doubt.” What is the doubt? [If] the person had stayed home, he is liable. [If] he had gone overseas, he is exempt. Said R. Aqiba, “I concede in this case that he is nigh unto being exempt from liability.” Said to him Ben Azzai, “What is the difference between this one and one who stays home?” “For the one who stays home had the possibility of hearing [that the court had erred and retracted], but this one did not have the possibility of hearing [what had happened].”

#121 (Sh) Is the precept of a Chatat for certain unintentional sins.

Mitzvah	Torah Address	Oral Torah
	Vayikra 4:27	Shabbat 11:6

Special Notes: Rambam finds this mitzvah in another location. i.e Leviticus 5:1

Shabbat 11:6 This is the general principle: All those who may be liable to sin offerings in fact are not liable unless at the beginning and the end, their [sin] is done inadvertently. [But] if the beginning of their [sin] is inadvertent and the end is deliberate, [or] the beginning deliberate and the end inadvertent, they are exempt—unless at the beginning and at the end their [sin] is inadvertent.

OTHER RELATED ORAL TORAH

Berachot 2:7 And when Tabi, his servant, died, [Gamaliel] received condolences on his account. Said to him [his students], “Did not [our master] teach us that one does not receive condolences for [the loss of] slaves?” He said to them, “Tabi my slave was not like other slaves. He was exacting.”

Terumot 3:4 [In a case in which one] gave permission to a member of his household, to his slave, or to his maidservant to separate heave offering that which that individual separates is [valid] heave offering. [If he] retracted [the permission]— if he retracted [it] before [the other individual] separated heave offering— that which [that individual] has separated is not [valid] heave offering. But if he retracted [it] after [the other individual] separated heave offering— that which [that individual] has separated is [valid] heave offering.

Ma’aser Sheni 4:4 One says to his adult son or daughter [or] to his Hebrew servant or handmaid, “Take these coins and redeem [with them] this [produce in the status of second tithe [without paying the added fifth].”

Avot 1:3 Antigonus of Sokho received [the Torah] from Simeon the Righteous. He would say, “Do not be like servants who serve the master on condition of receiving a reward, “but [be] like servants who serve the master not on condition of receiving a reward. “And let the fear of Heaven be upon you.”