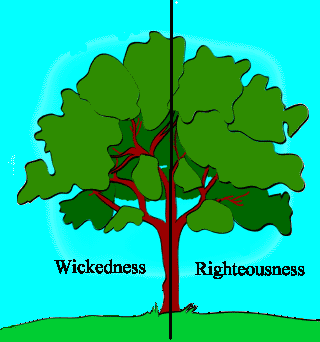
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Why do the Wicked Prosper?

By Rabbi Dr.Hillel ben David (Greg Killian)

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In this [study](study.html) I would like to examine a question that was raised by the Prophet, “Why do the wicked prosper?”

***Yiremeyahu (Jeremiah) 12:1*** *Right wouldest Thou be,* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, were I to contend with Thee, yet will I reason with Thee: Why do the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they secure that deal very treacherously?*

Solomon brings this question into sharp focus:

***Kohelet 8:14*** *There are righteous who are treated as if they had done the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked who are treated as if they had done the deeds of the righteous. I**thought, this is more futility!*

This famous question [needs](needs.html) to be answered in order that we should begin to understand the ways of [HaShem](hashem.html). This question is especially important at [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) ([Yom Teruah](teruah.html)). In this paper I would like to explore an answer that I have learned[[1]](#footnote-1).

# Making a decision

In various places, the Torah compares a person to a tree:

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:19*** *A person is like the tree of a* [*field*](field.html)*...*

***Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 65:22*** *For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people.*

***Yiremeyahu (Jeremiah) 17:8*** *He will be like a tree planted near water...*

All men enter the [world](worlds.html) with their tree planted on the middle line between good and evil. Their branches hang on both sides and they will bear fruit on both sides. [HaShem](hashem.html) will bring [mitzvot](cmds613.html) and [sins](sin.html) in order that they should test them. Most (99.99%) all people will remain firmly planted and will never move their tree off that middle line.

In Bereshit (Genesis) 3:9, [Adam](adam.html) and Chava had just [eaten](eating.html) some fruit from [the forbidden tree](thetree.html) and, sensing [HaShem](hashem.html)’s presence in the [Garden of Eden](eden.html), they hid among the trees. While they were hiding, [HaShem](hashem.html) asked [Adam](adam.html) a [one](one.html)-word question. In [Hebrew](hebrew.html) that word is ayeka? In English it means, “Where are you”? This question continues to reverberate through [time](time.html) to confront every man: Where are you?

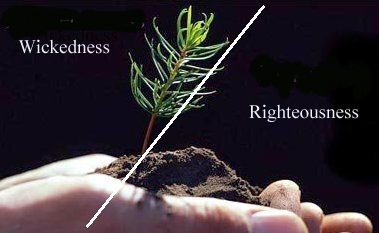
Maimonides writes in his [laws](law.html) of repentance[[2]](#footnote-2) that every person should consider himself or herself as perfectly balanced between good and bad and the [world](worlds.html) as perfectly balanced between good and evil. The next action you do, however trivial, can tilt you and the whole [world](worlds.html) toward the side of good and life or to the side of evil and death.

Each man has the power of choice, and is able to choose either side, [knowingly](daat.html) and willingly, as well as to possess whichever [one](one.html) he wishes. Man was therefore created with both a good inclination (yetzer tov) and an evil inclination ([yetzer hara](thetree.html)). He has the power to incline himself in which ever direction he [desires](needs.html).[[3]](#footnote-3)

Therefore, the [physical](physical.html) [world](worlds.html) was made neutral, left for man to determine how it would be used. [One](one.html) [world](worlds.html), [two](two.html) possibilities, and man is the [one](one.html) to determine whether or not he [walks](walking.html) that path, or stumbles it in. But, try it he must, for that is what he was [created](bara.html) to do.

Those who are righteous, the tzaddikim, in this [world](worlds.html) have made a conscious, decision to plant their tree on the side of righteousness.

Those who are wicked, the reshaim, in this [world](worlds.html) have made a decision to plant their tree on the side of wickedness.



Yet, most people never make a decision to move their tree [one](one.html) way or the other, and thus they remain in the middle, balanced between good and evil, they are still firmly straddling the line, a very bad position to be in. They fail to do what they were created to do.

***Revelation 3:16*** *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my* [*mouth*](body.html)*.*

[Rosh HaShanah](teruah.html) is a day tailor made by [HaShem](hashem.html), for planting [one](one.html)’s tree on the side of righteousness. We were born to choose [life](eternal.html). We were born to become a tzaddikim!

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 30:19*** *I call* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy* [*seed*](flower.html) *may live: 20 That thou mayest love the* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *thy G-d, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest* [*dwell*](dwelling.html) *in the land which the* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *sware unto thy* [*fathers*](fathers.html)*, to* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, to* [*Isaac*](isaac.html)*, and to* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)*, to give them.*

The [type](types.html) of choices that are able to accomplish an attachment to [HaShem](hashem.html), are those choices taken for the express purpose of attaching to life, and to good, instead of what is temporary, and therefore to the evil.

These kinds of choices are made in the context of confronting moral dilemmas when we are torn in [two](two.html) directions, and we do not have a powerful inner program instilled by heredity or environment pointing us in the right direction. We [desire](needs.html) [one](one.html) thing, but we [know](daat.html) that the right decision is in the other direction, not because of our inner program but because [HaShem](hashem.html) told us in the Torah that that is the way to go. It is in these sorts of situations that present us with the opportunity of attaching ourselves to righteousness, to life.

***Devarim (Deuteronomy) 30:15-19*** *Look, I have placed before you today the life and the good, and the death and the evil, that which I* [*command*](cmds613.html) *you today, to love* [*HaShem*](hashem.html) *your* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*, to* [*walk*](walking.html) *in His ways, to observe His* [*commandments, His decrees, and His ordinances*](cmds613.html) *... But if your* [*heart*](body.html) *will stray and you will not listen, and you are led astray, and you prostrate yourselves to strange gods and serve them, I tell you today that you will surely be lost ... I have placed life and death before you, blessing and curse; and you shall choose life so that you will live, you and your offspring...*

Now, lets look at the implications that can be derived from the fact that our tree will always have some branches on the other side of this line, no matter which decision we have made.

The [Midrash](orallaw.html) provides a perfect introduction to this subject as it states the way [HaShem](hashem.html) acts in a very succinct way:

[**Midrash**](orallaw.html) **PESIQTA deRAB KAHANA Pisqa** [**Nine**](nine.html)**IX:I***[Concerning the verse: When a bull or sheep or goat is born, it will remain* [*seven*](seven.html) *days with its mother; and from the* [*eighth*](eight.html) *day on it will be acceptable as ‎an* [*offering*](korbanot) *by* [*fire*](fire.html) *to the Lord* (Lev. 22:27)]: *Your righteousness/generosity is like the mountains of God, Your judgments are like the great deep; [man and beast You* [*save*](salvation.html)*, O ‎LORD*] (Ps. 36:6). ‎R. Ishmael and R. Aqiba: R. Ishmael says, “With the righteous / generous, who carry out the Torah, which was given *from the mountains of God* the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, does ‎righteousness / generosity *like the mountains of God. Your righteousness / generosity is like the mountains of God.* ‎But with the wicked, who do not carry out the Torah, which was given ‘*from the mountains of God*,’ the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, seeks a strict ‎accounting, *unto the great deep. Your judgments are like the great deep.* ‎R. Aqiba says, “All the same are these and those: the Holy [One](one.html), blessed be He, seeks a strict accounting with [all of] them in accord with strict justice. He seeks a strict accounting with the righteous / generous, collecting from them the few bad deeds that they do in this [world](worlds.html), in order to pay them an abundant reward ‎in the [world to come](futures.html). And He affords prosperity to the wicked and gives them a full reward for the minor religious duties that they successfully accomplished in this [world](worlds.html), ‎in order to exact a full penalty from them in the [world](futures.html) to come.” ‎

Now that we have succinctly seen how [HaShem](hashem.html) works, lets examine this concept in more detail. We shall continue to use the metaphor of the tree to help explain how [HaShem](hashem.html) works.

# The Tzadik Gamur – Totally Righteous

If we have made a conscious decision to move our tree to the side of righteousness, then we are on the road to becoming a great Tzadik. Never the less, we will still have some branches which hang over the side of wickedness. [HaShem](hashem.html), in His mercy, will assist us in either moving our tree more, or in pruning the branches which are on the side of wickedness. The pruning of the branches is what we see as the tribulations that the righteous encounter in their [walk](walking.html) with [HaShem](hashem.html). The sufferings and trials of the righteous are simply the pruning of their wayward branches. These branches are the [sins](sin.html) which the righteous commit. Since evil is temporary, it’s *reward* (punishment) is paid out in this [world](worlds.html). [HaShem](hashem.html) can see that this tree will be with Him in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html), the [world](futures.html) to come. In that [world](worlds.html) of clarity, there will be no [sin](sin.html) and no ambiguity. Therefore the [sins](sin.html) of the righteous must receive their *reward* (correction) in this [world](worlds.html), because in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html) there is only righteousness.

People who have attached themselves to the [eternal](eternal.html), even if they have only done so once in their lives, will make it to the [Olam HaBa](futures.html) eventually, in spite of the multitude of their transgressions. Never the less, those transgressions must be corrected in this [world](worlds.html).

But what about that person’s past transgressions? His transgressions are a barrier to the enjoyment of the [Olam HaBa](futures.html)and consequently they must be dealt with and [purified](purity.html). Consequently, the transgressions of such a person must be dealt with either in this [world](worlds.html) or in Gehenom (hell). But once again utilitarian considerations mandate that the necessary purification be accomplished in this [world](worlds.html). Therefore, anyone who belongs in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html)but is blemished by transgressions, as most of us are, this [world](worlds.html) can logically be expected to be a vale of [tears](mashal.html).

[Jewish tradition](gen-jew.html) [teaches](teacher.html) that [HaShem](hashem.html)’s policy is never to allow a person’s [mitzvot](cmds613.html) to be cancelled by his transgressions. Therefore, if a person performed his [mitzvot](cmds613.html) with the [type](types.html) of dedication that is required to attach himself to [HaShem](hashem.html) and to [eternal life](eternal.html), this act altered his inner reality permanently. He is now a person who is attached to [Olam HaBa](futures.html) once and for all and he will eventually enjoy that [life](eternal.html).

We certainly do not want to think of ourselves as wicked*.* But most of us [know](daat.html) that we are not tzaddikim gemurim, “totally righteous people” either. If so, we will make it to the [Olam HaBa](futures.html) with [HaShem](hashem.html)’s help, as all people in general do except for the wicked*.* But this means that something has to be done to cleanse us of our many evil deeds. This can either be done by the means of hardships that we suffer in this [world](worlds.html), or by subjecting us to the tortures of Gehenom or hell after we die.

As the tortures of hell are infinitely more painful than any tribulation we might [experience](experience.html) in this [world](worlds.html), we ought to prefer to complete our purification in this [one](one.html). So why, on [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html), are we asking [HaShem](hashem.html) for an easy year? And how could the decree of a good year possibly be considered a favorable judgment?

***Shabbath 104a*** *If* [*one*](one.html) *comes to cleanse himself, he is helped by* [*HaShem*](hashem.html)*.*

There is an additional component that we need to be aware of. The righteous is seeking an [eternal reward](eternal.html) and is not interested in a temporary reward, and because [HaShem](hashem.html) has promised an eternal reward, the ONLY reward is the reward in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html), the [world](futures.html) to come. Because the righteous man has not attached himself to the *temporary* [world](worlds.html), any reward in this [world](worlds.html) becomes unavailable to him. He is not attached to this [world](worlds.html).

# The Reshaim Gemurim - Totally Evil

On the other [hand](fourteen.html), if we have made a conscious decision to move our tree to the side of wickedness, then we are on the road to becoming a great rasha, a wicked person. Never the less, we will still have some branches which hang over the side of righteousness. Even the most wicked person does some [mitzvot](cmds613.html), some kindness in this [world](worlds.html). [HaShem](hashem.html), in His mercy, will assist the rasha in either moving his tree more, or in pruning the branches which are on the side of righteousness. The pruning of the branches is what we see as the prosperity that the wicked encounter in this [world](worlds.html).[[4]](#footnote-4) The prosperity of the wicked is simply the pruning of their wayward branches. These branches are their [mitzvot](cmds613.html). [HaShem](hashem.html) can see that this tree will NOT be with Him in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html), the [world](futures.html) to come. In that [world](worlds.html) of clarity there can be no [sin](sin.html) and no ambiguity. Therefore the [mitzvot](cmds613.html) of the wicked must receive their “reward” (blessing) in this [world](worlds.html), because in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html) there is only righteousness. In the [Olam HaBa](futures.html), the [world](worlds.html) of clarity, the wicked will simply not exist.

Reward in this [world](worlds.html) is mainly distributed to those who cannot receive their reward in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html) because they simply won’t make it there. (The exceptions are too complicated to explain in the context of this essay.) But even such people, [known](daat.html) as reshaim gemurim*,* or “totally evil”, have many good deeds to their credit. They may have been good [fathers](fathers.html) or husbands, they may have helped people when they felt the urge, and consequently they need to be rewarded.

Of course, it is impossible for us to grasp how such people with all these good deeds to their credit can be considered reshaim gemurim without appreciating how evil is to be understood, according to [Jewish tradition](gen-jew.html).

Never the less, [Jewish](gen-jew.html) tradition dictates that it is impossible to receive the reward for any [mitzva](cmds613.html) (good deed) in this [world](worlds.html):

***Kiddushin 39b*** *Yet is it a fact that he who performs* [*one*](one.html) *precept in addition to his [equally balanced]* [*merits*](merit.html) *is rewarded? But the following contradicts it: He whose good deeds outnumber his iniquities is punished, and is as though he had burnt the whole Torah, not leaving even a single* [*letter*](letters.html)*; while he whose iniquities outnumber his good deeds is rewarded, and is as though he had fulfilled the whole Torah, not omitting even a single* [*letter*](letters.html)*! — Said Abaye: Our* [*Mishnah*](orallaw.html) *means that a* [*festive day*](festival.html) *and an evil day are prepared for him, Raba said: This latter agrees with R.* [*Jacob*](israelja.html)*, who said: There is no reward for precepts in this* [*world*](worlds.html)*. For it was* [*taught*](teacher.html)*: R.* [*Jacob*](israelja.html) *said: There is not a single* [*precept in the Torah*](cmds613.html) *whose reward is [stated] at its side which is not dependent on the* [*resurrection of the dead*](techiyat.html)*. [Thus:] in* [*connection*](connection.html) *with honouring parents it is written, that thy* [*days may be prolonged*](eternal.html)*, and that it may go well with thee. In reference to the dismissal of the nest it is written, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days. Now, if* [*one*](one.html)*’s* [*father*](fathers.html) *said to him, ‘Ascend to the loft and bring me young birds,’ and he ascends to the loft, dismisses the dam and takes the young, and on his return falls and is killed — where is this man’s happiness and where is this man’s* [*prolonging of days*](eternal.html)*? But ‘in order that it may be well with thee’, means on the day that is wholly good; and ‘in order that thy days may be long’, on the day that is wholly long.*

The commentators explain that it would be utterly cruel of [HaShem](hashem.html) to reward any good deed in this [world](worlds.html) when the option exists to reward it in the next. The reward for any good deed preformed by someone with a share in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html), the [world](futures.html) to come, should automatically be received later on simple utilitarian grounds. The payoff in this [world](worlds.html) is incomparably less, and rewarding the good deed here would be an unconscionable waste of a valuable resource.

The truth is that the reward of a [mitzva](cmds613.html) simply doesn’t fit into this [world](worlds.html). If you lined up the pleasure felt by all human beings from the beginning of the [world](worlds.html) to the present and squeezed it into a single moment, it would still not equal a moment’s pleasure in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html).

Nachmanides explains that the word *tov[[5]](#footnote-5)* or “good”, refers to something “everlasting”, and that the word *ra* or “evil” refers to something “temporary”. This view is intuitively sensible as well, [HaShem](hashem.html) [wants](needs.html) the good to last forever, whereas evil is clearly a temporary phenomenon. According to this perception, a rasha is not necessarily an evil person in the common sense of the word; rather, he is a person who is attached only to the temporary and transient and has never [connected](connection.html) himself to the everlasting.

As Nachmanides explains: Life and good and death and evil are not different things but synonymous; the good is life everlasting, and the evil is death because it is temporary. This passage states that [life](eternal.html) is gained through choice: *choose life so that you will live.* The rasha is not evil in the common sense; he is merely a person who chooses the temporary and the short-lived rather than the everlasting.

For the rasha who has failed to attach himself to the [eternal](eternal.html) even once in his life, but who has performed many good deeds which must be rewarded, this [world](worlds.html) is the only place where such rewards can be made available, he does not exist in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html)! As the rewards of [mitzvot](cmds613.html) are so incomparably large, we would expect him to have a wonderful life in this [world](worlds.html). Thus the wicked prosper in this [world](worlds.html), but they do not exist in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html).

Further, the wicked does not believe in an eternal existence and would not want is reward in the next [world](worlds.html). He [wants](needs.html) his reward in this [world](worlds.html), and he [wants](needs.html) it NOW! Therefore, [HaShem](hashem.html) must pay him in this [world](worlds.html). He would not want any other reward.

In the [end of days](lastdays.html), [HaShem](hashem.html) will reveal Himself and say just [two](two.html) words: “[*Ani HaShem*](hashem.html) - I am [HaShem](hashem.html),” and all will become crystal clear to us. Everything will make sense; it will all fit. We’ll see that there was a divine scheme. A sequence of [events](feasts.html) had to take place the way it did for our ultimate benefit. And we will see clearly that even what seemed bad and unjust was, without a doubt, orchestrated by [HaShem](hashem.html) for our benefit.

# Cause and Effect

This [world](worlds.html) and what happens in it is not about reward and punishment. As we have explained, reward and punishment become a part of our [world](worlds.html) due to purely secondary considerations.

This [world](worlds.html) is a workplace. The Divine policies that apply here are generated primarily by concerns over maximizing production, just as you would expect in any industrial setting. After all, the product of this [world](worlds.html) is the manufacture of [eternal life](eternal.html). Practically [speaking](mashal.html), this means that the [creation](bara.html) of a place in [Olam HaBa](futures.html) for all of us is the focus of Hashgacha Pratit, Divine Providence.

There are [three](three.html) primary factors involved: We all must be placed into a situation that will force us to produce. For example, suppose A is sent into the [world](worlds.html) to correct the character trait of arrogance and cruelty. The extent of the correction achieved will determine A’s place in the [Olam HaBa](futures.html). Providence will have determined that A must be born rich or become wealthy early in his adult life. Such a life situation will guarantee that he will always contend with the character traits he was sent to correct. People will constantly ask him for help, and with each instance he will have confront his streak of cruelty. The very fact that everyone will always be asking him for help and attempting to curry favor with him will ensure that he has to confront his trait of arrogance.

On the other [hand](fourteen.html), B is sent to the [world](worlds.html) to correct the trait of self-pity and to demonstrate the cheerful acceptance of [one](one.html)’s lot. Providence will arrange for B to be poor, as his poverty will automatically force him to contend with the very problems he was sent into the [world](worlds.html) to work on. If A were poor and B were rich neither would automatically be forced to do their jobs, and their productivity would be entirely dependant on their inner motivation, a very inefficient policy in terms of assuring maximum productivity. As they say, necessity is the mother of invention. No [one](one.html) has ever come up with a better motivator. A’s wealth and B’s poverty thus have zero relationship with reward and punishment. The determination is based on purely utilitarian considerations.

The second function of Providence is to provide help. As the [Talmud](orallaw.html) states “someone who seeks to make himself [spiritually](physical.html) impure, they open the way for him, and if someone [desires](needs.html) to [purify](purity.html) himself, [heaven](heaven.html) assists him[[6]](#footnote-6)“. Providence is always there to provide assistance; how much assistance, and what sort will be available, is again based on considerations of productivity.

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto in “Derech [HaShem](hashem.html)”, “The Way of God”, explains that there are [three](three.html) levels of assistance in either direction. The person who begins on the path towards the [Olam HaBa](futures.html), the [world](futures.html) to come, automatically receives some assistance. The person who is firmly set on his way gets more; his assistance comes in the form of redefining his job so that it is easier to complete. The person who has already gone most of the way gets the most assistance; [HaShem](hashem.html) provides him with whatever it takes to guarantee that he successfully completes his job.

But if we want [HaShem](hashem.html) to help us and lead us away from the wrong choice and along the path of life and goodness, then we have to do something equal and similar to deserve it. We have to go out onto the roads, where the roads are forked and there is a choice that [needs](needs.html) to be made, and we have to stand there and tell other [Jews](gen-jew.html), which way they should go, we have to go out there and scream “go in the right path, go in the path of goodness, away from the avenger, the Satan, away from the [yetzer hara](thetree.html), the evil inclination”.

For the rasha who is headed in the opposite direction there are also [three](three.html) levels of “assistance”. Someone who has begun on the path away from the [Olam HaBa](futures.html) loses the assistance he could have received and is left to his own devices, but Divine Providence doesn’t hinder him from turning back to [face](body.html) the right direction either. On the other [hand](fourteen.html), for the person who is well on his way on the road that leads away from the [Olam HaBa](futures.html) is positively hindered from turning back. Divine Providence places him in a situation that makes it difficult for him to change directions, while the confirmed rasha is placed in a life situation that renders a change in direction next to impossible.

Luzatto provides a practical example to bring this down to earth. Changing [one](one.html)’s direction in life requires introspection, self-criticism and thought. These in turn require opportunity and motivation. Thus the rasha may be so loaded down with the trials and cares of poverty and ill health that his daily struggles make it impossible for him to enjoy the peace of mind that is required to really look closely at his life and figure out that he is headed in the wrong direction. Or Divine Providence may decide to bless the rasha with great wealth which will remove his motivation to indulge in searching self-criticism. Why [rock](rock.html) the boat when everything is going well? The method selected by the Providence will depend on whether the rasha[needs](needs.html) to be rewarded for his good deeds in this [world](worlds.html) or not.

This determination of Divine Providence, of how much positive help a person deserves, or how many obstacles should be placed in his path, is a function of judgment. This is what the judgment of [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) is about.

# The Judgment of [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html)

Let us return to our examples A and B.

A, the wealthy man who was sent into the [world](worlds.html) to struggle with arrogance and cruelty has been doing a poor job. He hasn’t been at all charitable and he has become unapproachable and haughty. He knows about the workings of Providence that we have just described and stands before [HaShem](hashem.html) on [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html), desperately afraid. His wealth was given to him only to ensure a productive struggle with his negative character traits. As he is losing the struggle and not being productive, if he were [HaShem](hashem.html), at this point he would decide to take his wealth away as a means of making the task of reaching his objective more cumbersome and difficult.

What can he do about it? He should say to [HaShem](hashem.html) that he realizes that until now he has been deficient in his task but from now on he intends to fully engage in the activities for which he was born. If he can persuade [HaShem](hashem.html) of his sincerity, he will not lose his wealth.

B, also stands before [HaShem](hashem.html) knowing that his poverty is a result of the workings of Providence. But he has done an excellent job and worked on his self-pity and has tried to accept his situation with good cheer. He tells [HaShem](hashem.html) that he has struggled hard and long and been productive and now he would like some help. He would like his task made easier and therefore there is no more need for him to be poor. Let [HaShem](hashem.html) consider what he has accomplished as enough and let him contend with other character traits such as arrogance and cruelty. Let Providence place him in a life situation that would make him productive in these [new](new.html) tasks. Let Providence make him rich.

[Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) is indeed about judgment. The judgment doesn’t concern ultimate rewards but is about the availability of Divine assistance. Unlike the ultimate rewards which are the direct results of the inner transformations accomplished by the person himself and therefore cannot be awarded but must be chosen, assistance is a variable commodity whose availability is never absolutely fixed. Like everything else in this [world](worlds.html) it is relative rather than absolute, and human beings can employ their creative ingenuity to increase it.

We stand before [HaShem](hashem.html) on [Rosh HaShana](teruah.html) to present our case for increased Hashgacha Pratit, Divine Providence. May it be His will to judge our worldly task as finally complete and witness the arrival of the [Mashiach](mashiach.html), Amen ve Amen!

The wicked prosper because they have chosen evil and death. They are receiving the reward for their [mitzvot](cmds613.html) in a temporary [world](worlds.html) because they are attached to temporary things only.

# In The Nazarean Codicil

The idea that certain things receive their due in this [world](worlds.html) and others in the next [world](worlds.html), is clearly spelled out in the [remez](remez.html) of the Nazarean Codicil:

***Luqas (***[***Luke***](luke.html)***) 16:19-31*** *There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And* [*desiring*](needs.html) *to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the* [*angels*](angels.html) *into* [*Abraham’s*](avraham.html) *bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his* [*eyes*](body.html)*, being in torments, and seeth* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his* [*finger*](fourteen.html) *in water, and cool my* [*tongue*](spirit.html)*; for I am tormented in this* [*flame*](fire.html)*. 25 But* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. 27 Then he said, I* [*pray*](prayer.html) *thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: 28 For I have* [*five*](five.html) *brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29* [*Abraham*](avraham.html) *saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father* [*Abraham*](avraham.html)*: but if* [*one*](one.html) *went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though* [*one*](one.html) *rose from the dead.*

This passage warns us to hear and heed the [law](law.html) of Moshe. This is just another way of warning us to choose life!

***Devarim(Deuteronomy) 30:19*** *I call* [*heaven*](heaven.html) *and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy* [*seed*](flower.html) *may live:*

Choosing life is nothing more than moving your tree. After all, moving our tree to the side of righteousness is the ultimate choice for [life](eternal.html).

Have you ever wondered whether you have trully moved your tree? [One](one.html) of the ways to receive confirmation that you have moved your tree and are now doing the Torah deeds of righteousness, is to see what [HaShem](hashem.html) is giving you as your due in this [world](worlds.html):

***Luqas (***[***Luke***](luke.html)***) 6:20-26*** *And lifting up his* [*eyes*](body.html) *upon his disciples, said, Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled. Blessed ye that* [*weep*](mashal.html) *now, for ye shall* [*laugh*](mashal.html)*. 22 Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from them, and shall reproach you, and cast out your* [*name*](name.html) *as wicked, for the Son of man’s sake: 23 rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in the* [*heaven*](heaven.html)*, for after this manner did their* [*fathers*](fathers.html) *act toward the prophets. 24 But woe to you rich, for ye have received your consolation. 25 Woe to you that are filled, for ye shall hunger. Woe to you who* [*laugh*](mashal.html) *now, for ye shall* [*mourn*](mourning.html) *and* [*weep*](mashal.html)*. 26 Woe, when all men* [*speak*](mashal.html) *well of you, for after this manner did their* [*fathers*](fathers.html) *to the false prophets.*

**Have you moved your tree yet?**

The [physical](physical.html) [world](worlds.html) was made neutral, left for man to determine how it would be used. [One](one.html) [world](worlds.html), [two](two.html) possibilities, and man is the [one](one.html) to determine whether or not he walks that path, or stumbles it in. But, try it he must, for that is what he was created to do.

For further elucidation on this fascinating subject, I recommend:

Michtav m’Eliyahu - Strive for Truth! by Rabbi E. E. Dessler.

# The Worm on the Hook of Reality

It is possible to believe that our prosperity is due to our own hard work and wisdom. When we believe this, we must also believe that [HaShem](hashem.html) does not control His [world](worlds.html). Never the less, it is easy to decieve ourselves and believe in our own abilities.

Hard work does not bring prosperity; [HaShem](hashem.html) brings prosperity. When people work hard and prosper, they can fool people into believing that they achieved their own properity. We must *constantly* acknowledge that [HaShem](hashem.html) is in control of our prosperity and all of our circumstances, and we must verbalize this to others. If we fail to alert others to [HaShem](hashem.html)’s total control, then we become the worm on the hook of reality. We deceive others into imitating us so that they can achieve what we achieved. We become like the wicked who believe in their own hard work, looks, wisdom, etc. and that those are what brought our success.

**Do not become the worm on the hook of reality!**

**From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"He forgives* [*sins*](sin.html)*....* " [Vayakhel 34:7]

The word for "[forgive](forgive.html)" here literally means "carry" or "lift". Based on this, the Baal Shem Tov [taught](teacher.html) that G-d elevates the sparks of holiness in the [sin](sin.html), for nothing - not even a [sin](sin.html) - could exist unless it contained a spark of holiness. G-d returns them to their source. This is the essence of [forgiveness](forgive.html).

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi explained this idea as follows: It is indeed impossible to elevate a sinful act; such an act is evil, and the only proper treatment for it is to denounce it.

In contrast, the power of [desire](needs.html) vested in the act is not evil, for it is possible to utilize this power to [desire](needs.html) good as well as evil. When we repent properly, we divest our power of [desire](needs.html) of its veneer of evil and restore it to its holy source.

**\* \* \***

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1. I learned this lesson from Rabbi Akiva Tatz. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuva 3:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Derech Hashem, 1:3:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **Targum Pseudo Jonathan for: Debarim (Deuteronomy 7:10** and who repays to them who hate Him the reward of their good works in this world, to destroy them (for their evil works) in the world to come; neither delays He (to reward) His enemies, but while they are alive in this world He pays them their recompense.

   JERUSALEM: And he repays them who hate Him for their little deeds of good which are in their hands in this world, to destroy them in the world to come; nor does He delay to render to them that hate Him the reward of the slight works that are in their hands in this world. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Bereshit (Genesis) 1:4 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Yoma 38b [↑](#footnote-ref-6)