

# Machshevet Yisrael Unit 2

## I. FREE WILL

### A. Problem 1- Free Will vs. Divine Omniscience:

- Problem- If G-d's knowledge about the future is absolute/perfect, do I have free will?  
If G-d knows what you are going to do, how are you able to chose anything?
  - Pirkei Avot/Rabbi Akiva- all is foreseen, and humans have free will
  - Rambam- established idea that G-d is perfect inherently, and there can be no deficiencies→ assumes divine omniscience
- S1- הרלב"ג says that G-d knows all of the choices available to man but not the choice that we will actually choose
  - Flaw- severely limits G-d's knowledge of the exact occurrences of the future or which path you will take
- S2- Chasdai Kreskoff- humans beings have no free will even though we think we do and G-d's knowledge is perfect
  - Flaw- Schar V'onesh- why would you be held accountable if you don't have free will
- S3- Rambam- no problem because G-d's knowledge is nothing like our knowledge, so the problem is nonsensical because we don't really know how it works
  - Flaw- it is beyond us and it limits what it means to be a philosopher that we don't actually no so much about G-d
- S4- Mystics- G-d doesn't live in past/present/ future model, not the same stratosphere of time
  - Flaw- seems from the Tanach that ה' does live in the same stratosphere as us

### B. Problem 2- Free Will vs. Determinism (doesn't have to do with G-d):

- Problem- do I live in a deterministic universe or do I have free will? Since I live in a deterministic universe, what is the extent of my have free will?—we live in a world where all of our choices are caused by our environment
- S1- Spinoza-

- Stone analogy- goes through motion because of an external cause→ we are like that stone as we are aware of our desires but not aware of why we make the decisions we make
- Determinism- every one of your behaviors or actions is caused by an external cause
- S2- Sartre-
  - Essence precedes existence- for manufactured objects, the essence/the way to create the thing is known before it comes into existence
  - Existence precedes essence- for a person—first we are born, and then our essence shows up through our big decisions/moral dilemmas, it makes us who we are
- S3- Frankl-
  - “The last of the human freedoms”- there is some are of choice that you always have, which is the thought or attitude that you bring to the decisions
- S4- Rav Dressler- most of your life is determined, most aren’t truly decisions because they are behaviors that flow out of the ways you were raised, but there when it comes to The Bechira Point, you are deciding over something that you are not sure which has the right way to go, and once you’ve made the bechira pint, you move the area of contrast to a different point in your mind, aka the Fluid Front, and this area will change over the course of your life

## II. THEODICY

### A. Issue:

- Problem- if G-d is omnipotent and omnibenevolent, then how do we explain the suffering in the world for good people, how is G-d executing justice when innocent people suffer

### B. Biblical Solutions:

- Dvarim Model- שכר ועונש- this is based off of the community- if there is suffering it must be that there was sin
- Iyov Model-

- Story- suffering comes as a test for G-d from Satan's challenge→ G-d bets that Iyov will be good in whatever circumstances
- We as human beings are listed and tiny specs of things on this planet, and we do not have access to understanding of suffering, cannot understand G-d's justice because you are a human being

### C. Talmudic Solutions:

- Brachot- if you see suffering, this is what you hold do...
  - introspect
  - learn more torah
  - accept that suffering might be YISURIN SHE'EL AHAVA
    - If you are a tzaddik, G-d might be punishing you here so that you will have a clean slate when you come to OLAM HABA
    - G-d is giving you the punishment for your own good, and the suffering will make you stronger in the long run, and G-d wants you to become stronger so G-d makes you suffer
- Kiddushin-
  - Rav Yaakov- there is no reward or punishment in this world from G-d, all reward comes later→ brought story of the kid who died right after doing 2 mitzvot that reward a longer life and then he dies
  - Gemara responds to Rabbi Yaakov and says that it isn't right
    - Last response- there was a rickety ladder that the boy walked on, so it was evident that he would have died if he walked on this ladder that had this danger on it, G-d does not swoop you out of this inherent danger→ G-d doesn't extend omnipotence to swooping out of danger
    - Acher- Elisha Ben Abuya- after witnessing this scene, he says that there isn't any G-d and leaves Judaism

### D. Medieval Solution:

- Ramban/Rambam- most of the suffering we experience comes from us, but we blame it on G-d

### E. Modern Solutions:

- Levinas-
  - Suffering happens, and one could conclude that there is no G-d if you assume Kindergarten Deity, that G-d gives reward/punishment for everything you do
  - When you find yourself in that way station, you can actually find a deeper understanding of G-d in this world by asking you to be godly
- Rav Soloveitchik- Man of Fate- passive, out of control, asks “why” suffering happens→ not the right approach. You should be a Man of Destiny- who is active, and rather asks “how can I respond to suffering?”
- Harold Kushner- suffering does not come from G-d, but G-d is there for us to help us thru it

#### *F. Terminology:*

- Theodicy- justifying G-d’s actions in the face of suffering or צידוק הדין
- Natural Evil- non-man made suffering
- Moral Evil- man made evils
- Soul-making defense- suffering is transcended by its necessity for “soul making”→ suffering helps us to become better/stronger people
- Free-Will Defense- G-d is all powerful, but doesn’t use all of G-d’s powers all the time in order to preserve and enable human free will
- Need for Natural Laws Defense- all events in the world take place in a regular/ natural way. Sometimes, the operation of natural laws leads to suffering