



Shaare Ezra is a one of a kind, multi-faceted organization that's there for the community. Under the leadership of HaRav Shay Tahan שליט"א, Shaare Ezra feels that proper Halachic guidance should be accessible to everyone, therefore we offer the community the opportunity to call, text, WhatsApp, or e-mail any halachic questions they may have, through the Bet Horaah, where qualified, trained and ordained Rabbis are available to answer your questions in English, Hebrew and Russian. Shaare Ezra is from the community—for the community.

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347-918-4088

WhatsApp:

347-666-3467

Email: askhala-

cha1@gmail.com

Website:

www.askhalacha.com

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Parshat Mishpatem

Zmanim for New York:

Candle Lighting: 5:15pm

Shabbat ends: 6:16pm

R"Y: 6:47pm

Blessings to our generous donor for allowing the continuation of our newsletter to be available around the NY tristate area, Monsey, Miami, and more. May he and his wife merit to see much Nachat from their children and see them grow to be big Talmidei Chachamim!

EARTHQUAKES IN THE TORAH

RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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What is an earthquake? Is it a natural event that is caused when underground rocks suddenly break, resulting in the movements of the ground, or does it happen because Hashem cries and His tears fall in the ocean causing the earthquake?

As we watch the horrific devastation of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, one wonders if the Torah mentions anything about such calamities. Does the Torah give any insights of why such things happen?

Many feel that since we don't really know why things happen in the world, it's not our business to deal with such questions. Others say that catastrophes, such as the movements of the earth, is a natural occurring event, and therefore we have to deal with this question in a scientific way. Although both approaches are correct, we also should realize that the Gemara deals with such questions as well and suggests a totally different understanding to it.

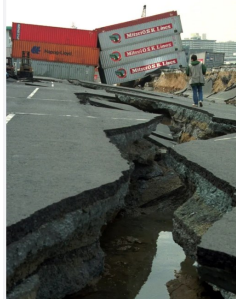
Chazal explained the reasons of many worldly events, and we will try to take a glimpse into their fascinating way of seeing things and see if they contradict science; or if Chazal and science actually complement each other.

The Torah says (פרשת נח טי-טז) that whenever Hashem gets very angry, to the point that He wants to destroy the world, a rainbow appears in the sky. After the destruction of the world in Noach's time, Hashem made a treaty not to destroy the world again. To express Hashem's anger at those times He forms a rainbow in the sky.

The Gemara (כתובות עז,ב) tells us that when Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levy passed away he was greeted by Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai who wanted to know how righteous he is. The ultimate test that would define his level was whether a rainbow appeared in his lifetime. If it didn't, it will prove he was such a person who was able to protect his

generation.

But we all know that rainbows are formed for a totally different reason. After a rainy day, the sunlight enters the water droplets which are still in the atmosphere. Then the light reflects off the inside of the droplets and when the light exits the droplet it forms a rainbow.



Since Chazal explained many of the worldly events in other ways, many started to express doubts in their holy words, since today we know why the earth and nature behaves the way it does.

So the question is asked again, which approach is correct—is it the natural explanation of the scientists or is it Hashem's treaty? Or maybe they can both be true?

Here is another example which is more relevant to the earthquake:

The Mishna (ברכות נד,א) says that we recite a Beracha שוכנו וגבורתו מלא עולם when we experience one of the following four natural events: strong winds, thunder, lightning and earthquakes.

The Vilna Gaon (שנות אליהו ברכות) explains that the Mishna mentioned the four elements of the world: fire, water, earth and air. The thunder is categorized as fire, the thunder is water, the wind is the air and the earthquake is the earth.

This teaches us that all of "nature's powers" are controlled by Hashem. Nothing is natural, or to say it better—all nature is from Hashem. The mefarshim say that the numerical value of the word nature in Hebrew is הטבע - 86, the same as Hashem's numerical value - Elokim, to teach us that nature is Hashem in disguise.

The Gemara (ברכות נט,א) explains that the earthquake phenomenon is due to the fact

EARTHQUAKES IN THE TORAH

that Hashem is so sad when He thinks about His children, Am Yisrael, which are thrown amongst the nations, and He starts crying. When Hashem cries, two tears come out of His eyes and land in the big ocean. The reaction of those tears falling to the ocean is the earthquake which is accompanied with an extremely loud sound.

In today's terms, this might be referring to what is better known as a tsunami, which is when an earthquake occurs in the ocean, thus causing a rush of huge waves to the shores.

As an aside, there is an interesting insight here that the Gemara mentions. The Gemara explains that the two tears represent the fact that the earthquakes usually come one after another, which is probably what is known today as a "secondary earthquake" or an "aftershock", which many times, is as deadly as the first earthquake.

Of course, when Chazal used such words to describe Hashem's sadness and crying, they didn't mean it literally, since Hashem isn't a human and doesn't have a body or tears, but they used metaphoric ways to explain to us Hashem's reactions to the events.

After scientists have learned the natural causes to each event, many have asked how the Torah and Chazal can possibly mention reasons which don't seem to be aligned with the reality.

The Maharal Miprag (באר הגולה, באר שיש) answers this dilemma in a very powerful way.

The Maharal says that the Torah and our Sages aren't busy with science; it's beneath them to deal with natural causes. Rather, they teach us the spiritual reasons of why the nature

behaves the way it does. The Torah deals with the spiritual causes which bring forth the natural causes of the outcomes. The Torah tells us things that are beyond our abilities to comprehend or find out scientifically. The reason to this is simple, if the Torah was to tell us the natural reason of things, it would be merely a science book and no better than any textbook or science book. In other words, there would be nothing special or Godly about such a book.

Let's take as an example the rainbows we discussed above: yes, those beautiful colors which come out of the rainbow are due to the sunlight entering the droplets, but did one ever wonder why Hashem decided to engage the sunlight and droplets at that very time? Is it a coincidence or is it heavenly planned? There are many other times that it rains and still no rainbow appears in the sky. Moreover, why was it raining that day? Who decided it should rain?

The Torah says it's not a coincidence at all. Rather, at that very moment, Hashem is angry—to the point that He would destroy the world—but since He had a treaty that whenever He feels that way He would bring out a rainbow instead, the droplets become colorful and the rainbow appears.

This may be applied by an earthquake as well. When Hashem sees His children suffering by the nations, He is saddened to the point that two tears fall from His eyes into the ocean, and cause underground plates to rub against each other resulting in the sudden release of an earthquake.

This idea should send us a reminder that although we should feel the pain of those who are suffering, we shouldn't ignore the pain of Hashem, Who is in great pain at that very moment over our own hardships.

ALLIGATORS AND HASHEM'S LOVE.

One sunny Florida day, in the Gregorian year 2000, a nice young man by the name of Jerry Michael Williams went out fishing and disappeared without any trace. When his wife noticed it was a while since he came home, she notified the authorities that something seems wrong. After an extensive search, the authorities concluded that Jerry's boat must have been overturned and he fell into the water. Since this Floridian lake was ridden with alligators, they assumed that they ate him until there were no remains left.

The case was closed and everyone at the detective's department went on to the next case. Even Jerry's wife moved on and remarried, starting a new life for herself.

But not quite everyone has forgotten about Jerry. His mother, an older woman, was unable to accept the detectives' closure and went on a years-long search to find out what happened to her beloved son. She hired private investigators, and regularly put ads in local magazines/newspapers looking for her son. She spoke on various television programs, and took to the streets on main intersections every single day, with a big sign imploring the public to give her information regarding her son. She even wrote a letter to the mayor every single day.

After twenty tireless years of researching and investigating, she finally uncovered evidence that Jerry had not fallen off his boat, but rather was murdered—by his own wife! She

didn't rest until justice was brought for her son, and his wife was convicted after revealing Jerry's fate.

Such unwavering, persistent love is found only with a parent.

Only a mother or a father would have the strength and energy to continue searching for 20 years to find out what had happened to their child.

Similarly, on a happy note, a parent will persist as well with their child's happy occasions.

For example, at weddings everyone is dancing! It is not necessarily easy to differentiate between the parents of the couple who are getting married

and the guests, since all are happy and dancing. However, one can easily know who the parents are after the wedding. If one happened to visit the parents' home, one is sure to see the photos of the joyous simcha on the walls and fridge for years to come. The parents feel their children's simcha forever.

In the end of this week's Parasha, we read of a vision of Hashem resting on a beautiful sapphire brick. Rashi explains that the brick had two purposes. One was to remind Hashem of the nation's harsh labor and the other was an expression of joy that the nation had left Mitzrayim. This same brick was also in front of Hashem when the nation was suffering from slavery in Mitzrayim, whose labor was to form and make bricks.



ALLIGATORS AND HASHEM'S LOVE.

The same brick signified both emotions of Hashem about his children—joy and sadness. Hashem feels our joy and pain simultaneously. A regular person can't be happy and sad at the same time, but Hashem can hold space for both emotions at the same time. Even more so, this spectacular vision was shown only AFTER leaving Mitzrayim. This illustrates that Hashem feels our pain not only when we are going through suffering, but even after!

A human being's happiness and sadness becomes lost after

a while, but Hashem's feelings of our emotions lasts forever. This demonstrates just how much Hashem loves us, His children, to an even greater degree than the love of a father for a son. Additionally, just as Hashem feels our happiness and sadness, He feels every single other emotion we experience as well. All the successes and failures, the highs and the lows—every single moment. This is the unending love that He has for us.

מי שמאמין לא מפחד!

In the aftermath of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, and the heart-breaking attacks in Israel, many wonder whether one should avoid visiting such places that often experience catastrophes and terrorism, or rather a person should put his trust and faith in Hashem, since it is not possible for a person to be harmed unless it was decreed so from above, and if he is destined to be harmed, there is no power in the world that can change or stop that.

Everything is from above.

Apparently, from the words of our Sages in several places, we learn that everything that happens in the world is from above. Therefore, one who trusts Hashem should not fear that he will get hurt, for there is no death without sin (Shabbat נה"ב) and everything is in the hands of heaven (כתובות ל"א).

The Gemara (ברכות לג"א) brings a story of a place which was terrorized by a creature called "Arod" that was harming people. They came and informed Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa of the creature, he then asked them to show him where the creature's hole was, and after he saw it he put his foot on the opening of the hole and the creature came out. As the creature saw the Rabbi he bit him; but instead of hurting the Rabbi, the Arod died! The Rabbi then declared: my students learn! It's not the Arod that brings death, but it's the sin that brings death. At that time they said: "Woe to the man who was struck by an Arod, and woe to the Arod who was struck by R'Hanina ben Dosa."

We are also familiar of the Gemara's (Rosh Hashanah ב"ט) words: Three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah, one for the completely wicked, one for the completely righteous, and one for the mediocre. The completely righteous are written and signed immediately for life, the completely wicked are written and signed immediately for death, and the mediocre, those that fall in between the other 2 ends of the spectrum, have their fate pending until Yom Kippur.

We see from all of the above that if a person gets harmed, it is because it was declared so from heaven.

Taking caution even if we aren't supposed to be harmed.

On the other hand, there are many statements from Chazal which teach us that a person should not put himself in dangerous places in which he can get harmed. For example, the Gemara (שבת לב"א) warns not to go to dangerous places since it might be that, even if a person doesn't deserve to be harmed, still he might be harmed since a miracle would not be performed for him.

Working out the contradiction

The answer to this contradiction is openly addressed in the Sefer Meslat Yesharim (Chapter 9) who explains that there is a clear distinction between a person who is negligent about his safety and puts himself in a place of danger, where then he is not protected from above, to one who does not do anything dangerous. Therefore, whatever was decreed upon him is destined to come to him.

These are the holy words of the Mesilat Yesharim: "Perhaps you will ask: we see that the Sages everywhere obligated a man to guard himself well and not put himself in danger even if he is a righteous person with many merits. For instance, Chazal said: 'everything is in the hands of heaven except colds and heat strokes' (Ketubot 30a) and the Torah says 'you shall guard yourselves very carefully (Devarim 4:15)'. Hence one should not decide to 'trust Hashem' in all situations, and in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Berachot 3, see also Chulin 142a) they said to be careful even when performing a Mitzva!"

The answer is that there is fear which is considered good and there is fear which is considered bad. There is justified fear and there is foolish fear. There is trust [in Hashem] and there is recklessness.

Hashem made man with intellect and clear reasoning so that he may guide himself in the right way and avoid harmful things which were created to punish the wicked.

But someone who does not want to conduct himself in an intelligent manner and exposes himself to dangers, this is not trust in Hashem, but rather foolishness. Such a person is actually sinning, in that he is acting against the Will of Hashem, Who desires that a man guard himself.

The foolish fear is when a man wants to add protection upon protection, and fear upon fear, devising precautions for his



מי שמאמין לא מפחד!

precautions in such a way that this results in neglect of Torah study and Divine Service.

The general principle to distinguish between the two types of fear is, as our Sages specified, saying: "where harm is likely, it is different" (Pesachim 8b).

For in a place where harm is likely, it is proper to guard oneself. But in a place where there is no known danger one should not fear.

In those words of the Mesilat Yesharim we learn a clear distinction between times and places which are considered dangerous and must stay away from, to times in which he should not worry and go about his way normally.

In the event that one goes to a dangerous place and gets harmed, he should not think that it is from heaven, but rather he brought it upon himself.

One might ask why Hashem allows righteous people to be harmed, why wouldn't He protect them even though they went to dangerous places?

The Sefer Hachinuch (מצוה תקמו) addresses this question and says that Hashem does not change anything in the world to perform

a miracle, even for righteous people, since Hashem wants the world to go on its natural way.

The Rashbash (הובא בפתחי תשובה סי' קט"ח סימן קצה) divides the lifespan of people to three categories:

People who are given a set amount of years to live. Those people won't die earlier or later than what was given to them.

People who are added an extension of a few more years on top of what was given to them for their righteousness, and people who are deducted from their life years due to their sins.

People who go to dangerous places or behave dangerously could end their life earlier than what was set for them.

Because of the last category, one must be careful not to put himself in such places and avoid dangerous places.

This obviously includes doing things that are harmful, such as smoking or getting drunk and even constantly eating unhealthy foods, which is the main cause of heart diseases, the leading cause of death globally.

In conclusion, one must examine whether what he is doing and where he is going is safe; and if he determined that it isn't, he should avoid going.

ברכה על רעידת אדמה

אמנם ביאר בזה המשנה ברוח (ס"ק ו') שניתן לברך איזה ברכה שיבחר, רק אין לו לברך שניהם כאחת, אלא או זו או זו.

אולם לדעת התבואות השדה ישנם כאן שני ברכות שנאמרות במצבים שונים. ותלוי הדבר בעוצמת וחוזק הרעידה. שעל רעידה קלה יברך 'עושה מעשה בראשית', ואילו אם היתה רעידה חזקה ועוצמתית יברך ברכת 'שכחו וגבורתו מלא עולם'. וכן כתב גם בספר נחלת

צבי, וחילם מדברי הירושלמי (הובא בתוספות ברכות מט, א ד"ה על) שלמד מזה שהמשנה כתבה שיש לברך ברכה זו גם על הרוחות, והסביר בזה שהיינו רוחות כאלו שבאו בזעף, דהיינו בחוזק רב אבל אם באו בנחת אומר 'ברוך עושה מעשה בראשית'.

והביאם בשו"ת רבי עקיבא יוסף (או"ח פג) וכתב לחלוק עליהם, וסבר שיש לברך 'עושה מעשה בראשית' אפילו על רעידה קלה וחלשה, ולמד מלשון המשנה שכתבה 'זעות' שהכוונה היא תנועה קלה כשם שכתוב במגילת אסתר (פרק ח פסוק ט) שמרדכי "לא קם ולא זע", ולא כמו שכתבו הפוסקים דלעיל דזוועות היינו רעידת אדמה חזקה.

וכן הסיק להלכה בשו"ת שבט הקהתי (חלק ה סימן מו) שמסתימת הפוסקים שלא חילקו בעוצמת הרעש משמע שעל כל רעידה המורגשת יש לברך אף על פי שלא היתה חזקה. ולא היה בה סכנה.

וייתרה מזו כתב בשער העין (פרק ו') שאף אם לא הרגיש כלל את הרעידה אבל ראה שהחפצים זזים שהוא אינדיקציה וסימן שישנה רעידה גם אז יש לברך.

ולכן נראה שיש לסמוך על רבותינו אלו ולברך על כל רעידת אדמה ללא חילוק בעוצמתה.

שלום. במקום בו אני מתגורר הרגשנו היטב שבוע שעבר את רעידת האדמה אף שהיתה רעידה קלה ביותר. וב"ה שלא ניזוקנו כלל, לא היזק בגוף ולא היזק בממון. וברצוני לשאול מהו השיעור של חוזק רעידת האדמה שבעבורה יש לברך את הברכה שקבעו רבותינו?

שלום לכם, ושמחתי לשמוע שאתם שלום וביתכם שלום וכל אשר לכם שלום.

אכן קבעו חכמים שיש לברך בשעה שאדם מרגיש רעידת אדמה, והוא דין זה במשנה (ברכות נד, א) שנקטה שיש לברך על הזוועות, ורש"י (דף נט, א) פירש זוועות- רעידת הארץ, וכן רבינו עובדיה מברטנורא (פרק ט' משנה ב') פירש: זוועות- שהארץ מזדעזעת ורועשת.

ולשון הברכה הוא: "ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך העולם עושה מעשה בראשית, ואם ירצה יאמר ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך העולם שכחו וגבורתו מלא עולם". כמובא בשולחן ערוך (או"ח סימן רכז סעיף א').

והנה ישנה כאן שאלה לברך, מדוע ישנם כאן שני ברכות ומתי יש לברך בלשון אחד ואימתי בלשון השני?

יתירה מזו המשנה כתבה לברך 'שכחו וגבורתו מלא עולם' (אף שבגמרא נקטו גם את הברכה השניה), ואילו השולחן ערוך כתב תחילה לברך 'עושה מעשה בראשית' בעיקר הברכה.



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Last Moment**



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