

Tazria-Metz.

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P*irkei Avos*, which we learn *Shabbos* afternoons between Pesach and Shavuot, begins with:

“All of Israel have a share in the World to Come, as it says: ‘*And Your people are tzaddikim. They shall inherit the land forever. They are the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, in which I take pride*’ (*Yeshayahu* 60:21).” (*Sanhedrin* 90a)

This raises the question, *why try*? One of the greatest motivations we have, right or wrong, to do *mitzvos* is the acquisition of a portion of eternity. If it is our birthright, can we do no wrong? Sure, in this world doing the right thing leads to good results and sinning can lead to bad results. But does either affect our destined portions in the World to Come?

According to other sources, of course. We are taught in many places that a person can lose their portion in the World to Come. The *mishnah* says that certain generations of sinners have. And sitting on your hands and doing nothing for eighty-five years doesn't help because that itself is a sin.

The Leshem addresses the issue:

“Regarding all those whom our rabbis, ז”ל, have said do not have a portion in the World to Come, the Rekanati wrote on *Parashas Ki Sisa*, on the verse ‘*I will cause My good to pass*’ (*Shemos* 33:19) in the name of Rabbeinu Ezra: We find in many places that our rabbis, ז”ל, have said that a person has no portion in the world. This means that they have no “house” of his own... a personal storehouse [of Divine light] that they control... a dwelling place according to their honor. But someone who lacks the merit will have to remain in the “public domain.” (*She’arim uHakdamos*, *Sha’ar* 6, Ch. 9)

Before this, it would have been easy to assume that one either has a portion in the World to Come or they don't, meaning they don't go there at all. Now we know that there is a third possibility: you go but you don't have a personal portion of Divine

light, and only get “leftovers,” whatever light that gets “reflected” out to the general public from those with personal portions.

It’s the difference, in everyday terms, between being able to go to your own fridge in your own home and eating every time you are hungry, or having to stand outside someone’s house and only eating when they remember to share with you, *if* they remember to share with you. You can be hungry for food down here that way, and hungry for light up there.

One of the ways to recover lost portions of the World to Come is through *din*. This is why Rebi Akiva was the “happiest” of everyone the day the Romans tortured him to death. The Romans were too busy being barbarians to care about the purpose of life, and Rebi Akiva’s students were too upset by the suffering of their rebi to appreciate the good in the moment. Only Rebi Akiva understood that his death, which would not last long, was his ticket to a full portion in the World to Come without having to go to *Gibnom*.

All suffering does the same thing for everyone, even if they can’t embrace it like Rebi Akiva did. We might hate *yesurim*, even run away from them whenever we can, being averse to physical and mental pain. But a person can only run so fast and so far from them before they catch up.

Like the *Metzora* in this week’s *parsha*. Amazing how despite the Torah’s warnings someone could still do that which would result in *tzara’as*, first on their walls, then on their clothing, and finally on their body. As they wandered around outside the camp alone, calling out about themselves, “Impure! Impure!” they had to ask themselves, “What was I thinking?”

One thing for sure, they were not thinking about others before themselves. They interfered in the relationships of others, so they were denied their own relationships. It was “I” before “we” as far as they could “see.”

A study was done that checked books written since around 1965, to see how many times “I” came before “we.” For a period, “we” was far more common than “I,” and then it turned around and “I” overran “we.” The authors of the study then checked social trends around the same period of time, and sure enough, people stopped helping our organizations at the same rate and time. The SEAT care may be joking when it says, “It’s all about Mii,” but we all know what it really means and how true the words are.

The *yetzer bara* tells us that selfishness is the only way to guarantee our success, which might be true. But it is selflessness that guarantees our happiness, and what is success without happiness? More importantly, it is what impresses God the most and

it is amazing how a selfless act can change a person's judgment for the better, and increase their portion in the World to Come.

Good Shabbos,

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