

# The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash

Parshat HaShavua  
Yeshivat Har Etzion

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This parasha series is dedicated  
in memory of Michael Jotkowitz, z"l.

## PARASHAT EIKEV

This shiur is dedicated in memory of Dr. William Major z"l.

We dedicate this shiur to the Armies of Israel, our fathers, husbands, brothers and sons in the Israel Defense Forces, as well as our civilian neighbors to the north and south. Yeshivat Har Etzion in particular, as well as the entire Alon Shevut and Gush Etzion community, continue to welcome "refugees" into our midst, into our dormitories, our cafeterias, as well as our private homes, and will continue to do so, until they can return safely to their homes. May Hakadosh Barukh Hu have mercy upon His people and upon His land.

"To Know What was in Your Heart..."(Devarim 8:2):  
Of Divine Tests and a Knowing Heart

Rav Chanoch Waxman

I

During their forty years journey through the desert the Children of Israel were sustained by their daily ration of *man*, the "bread" provided for them by God (Shemot 16:13-16, 35). In thinking about the *man*, we often relate to the *man* and God's provision of the *man* as a matter of practical necessity. By simple logic, a people numbering six hundred thousand or so grown men alone will require some sort of regular food supply during a desert journey of any length. In line with this perspective, to no surprise, the *man* is first introduced in response to the people's complaining of their having been brought to the desert to die of starvation and stated preference to have died back in Egypt adjacent to bubbling pots of meat, their stomachs satiated with bread (Shemot 16:3-4). They are very hungry and rather unhappy about it. The *man* constitutes the solution to a very practical problem.

Alternatively, in what might be thought of as the perspective of Moshe, the *man* comprises a piece of an all embracing regimen of miraculous sustenance, part of a larger picture of providential care. In his first reference to the *man* in *Sefer Devarim*, Moshe differentiates between the *man* and bread. In pointed contrast to *Sefer Shemot* and its seven times repeated reference to *man* as a type of bread (Shemot 16:4,8,12,15,22,29,32), Moshe reminds the people that God has fed them *man*, something unknown to either the people or their forefathers (Devarim 8:3). Living off of this mysterious and hitherto unknown substance proves "that man lives **not by bread**

alone, but man may live by whatever God decrees." Needless to say, the *man* is the "not" "bread" decreed and provided by God that sustained the people for forty years.

Immediately after emphasizing the otherness and apparently divine nature of *man*, the not-bread fed the people, Moshe reminds the people that "your garments did not wear out, nor did your feet swell these forty years" (8:4). Apparently, Moshe intends to remind the people that they have been enveloped in a providential and miraculous atmosphere. Their sustenance has been openly miraculous and even the very rules of nature have been suspended, their clothes have not worn and despite forty years walking, no one has gotten blisters.

In a similar vein, in his second reference to *man* in *Sefer Devarim*, Moshe once again conjoins the images of *man*, clothing and walking. As part of the buildup to the final covenant contracted at the end of the book, Moshe once again reminds the Children of Israel for the forty years that God has led them in the desert, neither their clothes nor shoes have worn out (29:4). But this time Moshe goes a bit further. In pointed echo of his twice mentioned description of his forty days upon the mountain as a time when "I did not eat bread nor drink..." (9:9, 18), Moshe refers to the forty years the Children of Israel spent in the desert as a time when "you did not eat bread nor drink..." (29:5). Apparently, just as Moshe by virtue of his connection with the divine and divine word was sustained in a miraculous fashion for a period of forty "x" while on the mountain, so too the Children of Israel were sustained in a miraculous fashion by virtue of connection with the divine for a period of forty "x" while in the desert.

Yet while the themes of pragmatic sustenance, the probable perspective of the people, and miraculous providence, the apparent perspective of Moshe, certainly constitute central motifs in the story of the *man*, they do not constitute the entire story. The story of the *man* consistently emphasizes a third motif, as yet unmentioned until this point.

In declaring his intention to Moshe to respond to the people's complaint and provide the *man*, God states the following:

Behold I will rain down bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather each day's portion that day, so that I may **test** them (*a'nasenu*) to see whether they will follow my instructions (*ha'yeileich be'torati*) or not. (Shemot 16:4)

From God's perspective, the provision of the *man* is neither a matter of pragmatic necessity nor even miraculous sustenance. Rather it is an opportunity to test the people, to investigate whether they will follow his commandments or not. Without going into the particulars, suffice it to note that much of the remainder of *Parashat Ha-man* (Shemot 16:5-35) concerns legal details such as the requirement not to leave the *man* over for the morrow, the double portion that fell upon the sixth day, the laws of the Sabbath and the Children of Israel's success or lack of success in keeping the various details of the Laws of *Man*.

On a similar note, Moshe's primary and only explicit reference to the *man* in *Sefer Devarim*, also emphasizes the theme of *nisayon*, the testing of the Children of Israel by God. The two central

verses of the passage that contains the partial citation of Moshe's words quoted above read as follows:

And you should remember the whole way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the desert; so as to cause you hardship (*le'ma'an a'notcha*), to **test** you (*le'nasotcha*), to **know** that which was in your hearts, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he caused you hardship (*va'yeancha*) and he caused you to be hungry and he fed you the *man*, which you did not know and your fathers did not know. So as to make you know that man lives not by bread alone, but man may live by whatever God decrees. (Devarim 8:2-3)

While Moshe certainly mentions his read on the *man*, its nature as miraculous sustenance, he gives primary billing to God's own perspective, first enunciated back in *Sefer Shemot*. The primary purpose of the *man* is to test the people. In fact, apparently, God has deliberately caused the people hardship and hunger. He has led them in the desert on a path that involves hardship, hunger and the possibility of starvation. He has deliberately structured the situation so as too necessitate the *man* as a pragmatic necessity that is provided in a miraculous fashion. But neither of these themes constitutes God's endgame. The real purpose of the suffering, the near starvation and the *man* consists of the test, the trying of the people.

This brings us to the nub of the matter. As Maimonides emphasizes in his Guide to the Perplexed (III:24), the interpretation of God's agenda presented here, the deliberate causing of hardship and suffering for some purpose other than punishment seems to contradict the theological principle of God's justice. As Maimonides reminds us, Devarim 32:4 teaches us that:

He is the Rock, his deeds are perfect: For all his ways are Justice.  
A faithful God, never false: True and upright is he.

While we may not be overly disturbed by the theological formulation and proof text provided by Maimonides, we can easily rephrase this problem in a less abstract-philosophical and more textual-literary fashion. The passage cited above twice utilizes a variation on the term *inui*, based on the stem i,n,a, and translated above as meaning "hardship" (8:2-3). In fact, the term probably carries a connotation a bit stronger than hardship. In the Covenant of the Pieces (Bereishit 15:7-21), God informs Avraham that his descendants will be strangers in a foreign land. They will "serve\slave" there and be "afflicted (*ve'inu*)" by their masters in that foreign land (15:13). Later on, in *Sefer Shemot*, the Egyptians do exactly that to the Children of Israel. Shemot 1:11 informs us that the Egyptians set taskmasters over the Israelites in order to "afflict them (*le'ma'an a'noto*)."  
Needless to say, the Egyptian's affliction of the people was to no avail. The more the Israelites "were afflicted (*ka'asher ya'anu*)" the more they multiplied (Shemot 1:12). God eventually sees the "affliction (*ani*)" of his people and declares his intention to Moshe to save them from the hands of Egypt (3:7-8).

All this leads to the following formulation. As part of the Egypt's ongoing attempt to control and wear down the Children of Israel, the Egyptians afflicted their Israelite slaves. This action is

first signified in the text by the phrase "*le'ma'an a'noto*" (11:1). Out of love of Israel, God thwarts the Egyptian's plan. He causes them to multiply and eventually redeems the Children of Israel from the hardships of Egypt. God is the anti-affliction figure in this story. But later on, in Moshe's recounting of the story of the desert journey and the *man* things seem to reverse themselves. In describing God's actions and motivation in the story of the *man*, Moshe states that God led the people in the desert forty years "*le'ma'an a'notcha*," in order to afflict you. But this is of course is the near exact phrase utilized to introduce the Egyptian's oppression of their slaves. In other words, the deliberate causing of hardship by God seems like an Egypt-like act, it seems out of character with the nature of God and his relation to Israel.

## II

In point of fact, the theological problem of God's justice, or as restructured here, the consistency of God's character and relation to the Children of Israel constitutes but the tip of the metaphorical iceberg. As pointed out above, God's primary agenda in providing the *man* is to test the Children of Israel. In Moshe's formulation in *Sefer Devarim*, the rationale of hardship\affliction (*le'ma'an a'notcha*) provided for the desert journey, is immediately followed by the term "*le'nasotcha*" (8:2). The testing of the Children of Israel constitutes both the real purpose of the just mentioned hardship\affliction and the rationale for the entire stretch of recent history; the desert journey, the near starvation and the provision of the *man* over a forty year period (8:2-3). But this is bizarre. What need does God have to test the Children of Israel? While it is in itself theologically difficult to formulate the question this way, let us be bold. What could possibly comprise God's motivation?

In this instance, the standard philosophical formulation of the problem of *nisayon* should be of some assistance. By no accident, Maimonides' discussion of the problem of God's justice inherent in our story serves as an introduction to his extensive discussion of the problem of *nisayon*. At the tail end of his discussion (Guide to the Perplexed III:24), Maimonides warns against the "imaginings of ignorant fools" and "their evil thoughts." He warns against the possibility that God tests men in order to find out information that he has not previously known. As God is omniscient, and knows not just the past and present, but the future as well, there exists no possibility that he tests in order to achieve knowledge. Such a reading constitutes a philosophical impossibility.

But in point of fact this interpretation seems to be the simple sense of the Biblical text. The text almost unfailingly connects the term and concept of *nisayon* with the idea of knowledge. As cited above, in a clear echo of God's words in *Sefer Shemot* (16:4) Moshe informs the Children of Israel that God has led them on their journey, afflicted them and fed them the *man* to "**test** you (*le'nasotcha*), to **know** (*la'daat*) that which was in your hearts" (8:2). Similarly, later on in *Devarim*, Moshe warns the people from following after the false prophet who urges the worship of other gods. In explaining the fact that the false prophet performs valid signs and wonders, Moshe maintains that it constitutes an occasion upon which "the Lord your God **tests** you (*me'naseh*), to **know** (*la'daat*) whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart..." (13:4). Finally, in the first and most well known of the four contexts in which the Torah describes God as testing, *Bereishit* 22:1 informs us that God "**tested** (*nisah*)" Avraham. The story of the binding, the Akeida (22:1-19)

reaches its crescendo with last moment call of the angel. Just as Avraham takes the knife to slaughter Yitzchak, an angel calls from Heaven to stay his hand. The angel of the Lord commands Avraham not to lay his hand upon the lad "for now I **know** (*ata ya'dati*) that you fear God" (22:12). Avraham's readiness to sacrifice Yitzchak has been demonstrated and there is no need for the actual deed.

To put this together, the constant conjunction of "testing" and "knowledge" as well as the formulation of the just cited passages seems to imply a causal relation between "testing" and "knowledge." God tests in order to gain knowledge. He tests Avraham to find out whether he is in fact truly God fearing and tests the Children of Israel to know what is in their hearts and investigate whether they will follow his commands. But this seems difficult to say the least. Is not God all-knowing? What possible need does he have to test humanity? As Maimonides would have it, is this not just the opinion of fools?

### III

A comprehensive analysis of the thorny theological issues and philosophical problems raised until this point remain far beyond the scope of our discussion. The issues of God's justice and knowledge raised by the story of the *man* and the Biblical idea of "trial" have preoccupied thinkers for quite a while and are not clearly resolvable in a neat fashion. Nevertheless, let us not despair, as in many other cases, the text may yet lead the way to some sort of resolution. At the very least it may provide insight and allow us to tilt towards one of the existent interpretations of *nisayon*. With this in mind, let us turn our attention back to Moshe's discourse upon the desert journey, the *man* and the concept of "trial" found in *Parashat Eikev*, the locus of his previously cited speech.

The two verses containing the problematic references to God's afflicting and testing the Children of Israel (8:2-3) are in fact embedded in a larger speech of Moshe urging the Israelites to keep the commandments. In almost stereotypical fashion for *Sefer Devarim*, Moshe opens his address with a prompting to keep "all the commands commanded this day." This of course will lead to success in possessing and flourishing in the land promised to the forefathers (8:1). At this point, Moshe segues to the importance of memory, memory of the journey through the desert, God's affliction of the people, God's testing of the people, the *man* and the miraculous nature of the people's preservation in the desert (8:2-4). In sum, the material discussed previously. At this point, Moshe moves to what appears to be the logical terminus of this particular segment of Moshe's address. He returns again to the topic of the commandments, urging the people once again to keep the commandments.

You shall know in your heart; that just as a man disciplines his son so too the Lord your God disciplines you. And you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in his ways and to fear him. (8:5-6)

At this point we may well wonder as to the overall logical flow of the narrative. Throughout *Sefer Devarim* Moshe stresses the connection between keeping the *mitzvot* and reward and

punishment. Keeping the commandments leads to reward and violating the commandments leads to punishment. So too in part of the text cited here (8:1, 5-6). Similarly, Moshe often links historical memory and the commandments. Out of gratitude for God's kindness, providential care and miracles, the Children of Israel should keep the commandments. Once again, so too in part of the text cited here (8:4-6). Yet these themes do not constitute the entirety of the passage nor even its' central motif. Rather, it is God's mysterious afflicting and testing of Israel that constitutes the centerpiece of the passage (8:2-3). But in what sense does or can God's testing of Israel lead to increased fidelity to his commands? The logic seems obscure.

Rather than confronting the logical problem head on, let us first continue on with the structure of the larger "keep the commandments\memory" narrative (8:1-18) in which we find Moshe's mention of the *man* and the problematic doctrine of affliction and testing. This may be of some help. While there is no real substitute for looking at the entirety of this lengthy piece of text, the following chart will have to suffice for now. The overall structure of the speech can be mapped as follows:

	Verses	Themes
Segment One	8:1-6	Keeping the commandments, Remembering God's leading the people on the desert journey, God's afflicting, testing, the <i>Man</i> , God's providence
Segment Two	8:7-10	The goodness of the land, thankfulness to God
Segment Three	8:11-18	The danger of forgetting God and not keeping the commandments, forgetting God and his providence on the desert journey, attribution of success to the power and might of my own hand

Although the chart only provides a partial picture of the general thrust of the narrative, it should be readily apparent that segments one and three stand in a relation of "opposition." While segment one focuses on "keeping the commandments," "remembering" and recognition of God, segment three focuses on the linguistic and conceptual opposites of these notions. In segment three, Moshe refers to the possibility of "not keeping the commandments," "forgetting" and the attribution of success to one's own might, a failure to recognize God.

Bearing this relationship in mind, let us take a careful look at the language of segment three. The latter part of Moshe's "commandments and memory" speech reads as follows:

Guard yourselves lest you **forget** the Lord your God and **not keep** (*li'vilti shemor*) his **commands...that I command you this day**. Lest you eat and become satiated, build good houses and dwell in them; when you herds and flocks multiply...and all that you have is multiplied. Then your **heart** will be lifted up (*ve'ram le'vavcha*) and you will **forget** the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt...Who led you through that great and terrible desert...where there was no water who brought forth water for you from a rock;

who fed you *man* in the desert which your fathers did not know, so as to cause you **hardship\afflict** you (*le'ma'an a'notcha*), so as to **test** you (*le'nasotcha*), to do you good at your latter end. And you will say in your **heart**: My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth. And you should **remember** the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to make wealth... (8:11-18)

As pointed out previously, in contrast to section one of his address (8:1-6) where Moshe twice stresses "keeping the commandments" (8:1,6) that "I command you this day" (8:1), here Moshe raises the specter of "not keeping the commandments" that "I command you this day" (8:11). Similarly, again as already mentioned above, in a second obvious contrast between the two segments, in the latter part of his speech, Moshe twice mentions "forgetting." The people will "forget" God and not keep his commandments (8:11). They will "forget" God who redeemed them from Egypt and led them on the desert journey (8:14-16). This of course contrasts with the imperative to "remember" the "whole way" which God has led you found in segment one (8:2).

But there is more to it than this. The process of forgetting\not keeping the commandments in the latter part of Moshe's address is tied up with a third symbol, that of the "heart." As a result of inhabiting the good land and finding success, the Children of Israel's "heart" will become "raised" (8:14). In more colloquial terminology, they will become arrogant, prideful and egotistical. In the second usage of the term found in the segment, Moshe predicts the people will "say in their heart," i.e. begin to believe and claim, that it was their own power and might that has led them to their success (8:17). But of course, as Moshe points out in the last sentence of his speech in a return to the remembering\forgetting symbolism of the passage, the people should "remember" that it is God who has given them the strength to succeed.

This state of an "elevated," "arrogant" and fundamentally unknowing\ignorant heart contrasts with the usage of the term "heart" in the first part of Moshe's speech. As cited earlier on, the first part of Moshe's speech terminates with the following words:

You shall know in your **heart**; that just as a man disciplines his son so too the Lord your God disciplines you. And you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in his ways and to fear him. (8:5-6)

To put this all together, the first and third parts of Moshe's long "*mitzvot* and memory" speech (8:1-18) comprise "complementary opposites." In other words, while they constitute linguistic opposites, they both intend the same purpose. The first part outlines what we might term the positive state of a knowing\remembering heart. The people remember and hence possess a humble and knowing heart that fears God. In consequence they keep the commandments. The third part outlines the opposite and negative state, what we may term the state of an ignorant\forgetful heart. The people forget and hence possess an arrogant and ignorant heart. Having forgotten God and attributing their success to their own powers, they abandon the commandments. But of course, the latter state is highly undesirable. As such Moshe closes the latter part of his speech with one last plea to remember, to remember God and to remember that

he is one who grants strength and success. In other words, he emphasizes once again the importance of the positive state, of the knowing\remembering heart.

#### IV

This brings us to a fourth linguistic connection between the two segments of Moshe's speech and back to the twin issues of "hardship\affliction" and "testing." In addition to its references to "forgetting," "commandments" and the "heart," the latter segment of Moshe's address (8:11-18) also echoes the first segment (8:1-6) by referring to the whole complex of the desert journey, the *man*, God's causing hardship\affliction and testing of the Children of Israel.

Immediately following the mention of the danger of "a raised heart" (8:14), Moshe delineates the contents of this experiential and cognitive state. The people will forget God who "led you (*ha'molichacha*)" in "the desert" (8:15) and who "fed you *man* (*ha'ma'achilcha man*)" (8:16). This of course constitutes a near perfect parallel to the historical references found earlier in the first part of Moshe's speech. In the prior, positively phrased part of his address, Moshe had already told the Children of Israel that God has "led you (*ho'lichacha*)" in "the desert" (8:2). Likewise, Moshe had already told the people that God "fed you the *man* (*va'ya'achilcha et ha-man*)" (8:3).

More importantly, as part of the history lesson, in a highly precise echo of the previous mention of the "affliction\hardship" and "testing" (8:2), Moshe once again raises the problematic terms of "*inui*" and "*nisayon*."

...who fed you *man* in the desert which your fathers did not know, so as to cause you **hardship\afflict** you (*le'ma'an a'notcha*), so as to test to **test** you (*le'nasotcha*), to do you good at your latter end. (8:16)

Just as previously the *man* was part of a deliberate regime of hardship, affliction and trial (8:2-3), so too here, the *man* is part of a deliberate regime of hardship, affliction and trial.

Apparently, the complex of historical memory, the *man* and the experiences of hardship and trial play a key role in the knowing\remembering heart – ignorant\forgetful heart dialectic that comprises the core of Moshe's "keep the commandments" speech. Consequently, on the textual plane, the complex comprises the centerpiece of both the positive and negative formulations that respectively comprise the first and last parts of Moshe's speech (8:2-3, 15-16). On the simplest level, the role is that of contents. Part of what the knowing heart knows and remembers is the history of God's afflicting, trying and sustaining the Children of Israel. Part of what the ignorant heart forgets is exactly that history, the history of God's afflicting, trying and sustaining the Children of Israel.

On a deeper level, a careful reading of the text may indicate that remembering the historical complex of hardship, trial and sustenance, or its forgetting, plays a causal role in the knowing\remembering heart – ignorant\forgetful heart dialectic under discussion. Moshe in fact seems to state such in the first part of his speech.

As pointed out previously, Moshe opens the first part of his speech with a general prompting to keep the commandments (8:1) and then moves to the imperative of remembering the journey and the entire complex of hardship, trial and sustenance (8:2-4). At this point, the segment turns to the theme of "knowing in one's heart" (8:5) and the purpose stated at the start, i.e. keeping the commandments (8:6). In other words, remembering affliction, trial and sustenance is what comprises and creates the existential state of the "knowing heart." Affliction, trial and sustenance are what eventually lead, through the intermediaries of historical memory and the knowing heart to the keeping of the commandments.

By logic, the exact reverse is true in the latter part of Moshe's speech. The forgetting of God and history, the forgetting of hardship\affliction, trial and sustenance is not so much the internal state, the "contents" of the forgetful\ignorant heart but also its cause. By forgetting history, the Children of Israel run the risk of becoming arrogant, they stand to fall prey to an elevated heart and will eventually deviate from path of God and his commandments. Once again, affliction, trial and sustenance, by virtue of preventing and negating the forgetful\ignorant and arrogant heart are meant to lead to keeping of the commandments.

To put this together, affliction\hardship, trial and divine sustenance, are meant to comprise a transformative historical experience for the Children of Israel, one whose benefit echoes down through the generations, that attempts to guarantee continued loyalty to God and his commandments.

V

While this may sound highly abstract, the text seems to support this claim in a highly concrete fashion. As emphasized previously, the mentions of "affliction\hardship" and "testing" in the two halves of Moshe's speech parallel each other in a precise fashion. Yet this is not completely correct. In fact, the two sentences contain one apparently glaring disparity. This can best be seen by juxtaposing the two references.

The "knowing heart" – 8:2	The "forgetting heart" – 8:16
..so as to cause you <b>hardship\afflict</b> you ( <i>le'ma'an a'notcha</i> ), to <b>test</b> you ( <i>le'nasotcha</i> ), to know that which was in your hearts whether you would keep his commandments or not.	...so as to cause you <b>hardship\afflict</b> you ( <i>le'ma'an a'notcha</i> ), so as to <b>test</b> you ( <i>le'nasotcha</i> ), to do you good at your latter end.

While the first segment of Moshe's address defines the purpose of affliction and trial as to know the contents of people's hearts and investigate their fidelity to the commandments, the latter part of Moshe's address defines the purpose of affliction and trial, as somehow granting a future benefit to the people. While it may seem mysterious how these two phrases mean the same thing, the normal rules of parallelism and the overarching macro-parallel between the two segments indicate that such is indeed the case. Somehow, investigating the hearts of the Children of Israel,

trying their *shemirat mitzvot*, their keeping of the commandments, benefits the people in the long run.

To put this in the terminology utilized earlier, affliction and trial constitute a transformative historical experience, one that builds the knowing and humble heart and negates the forgetful and arrogant heart. As such, they contribute, through the means of the knowing-remembering heart to the people's future keeping of the commandments. As the text phrases it: "to do you good" (8:16). In afflicting and trying the people, God benefits the people. Somehow the search for a heart committed to God's commandments generates exactly the object of the search, it builds commitment to the commandments. But this still seems mysterious. How does the complex of affliction, trial and sustenance build commitment to the commandments?

This piece of the puzzle may in turn be found in yet another of the Torah's *nisayon* stories, the as yet unmentioned story of the "trial" at Sinai.

Upon perceiving the thunder, lightening and fire at Sinai the people fled. Shemot 20:16 informs us that the people "were shaken" and "stood far off." They requested of Moshe that he act as intermediary. They no longer wish to hear the voice of God in an unmediated fashion, lest they die. In response, Moshe attempts to quell the people's panic. He informs them that:

...God is come to test you (*nasot etchem*), so that his fear (*yir'ato*) will be upon you, and so that you will not sin. (Shemot 20:17)

In this passage, Moshe advocates the exact same position he later maintains in *Sefer Devarim* regarding the God's "trying" of the Children of Israel. The purpose of a "*nisayon*" is to benefit the Children of Israel. The benefit is manifested in increased fidelity to God's commandments, in the formulation of Shemot - the prevention of sin. The link between the experience of the trial and the commitment to the commandments occurs via the religious virtue of *yir'ah*, translated as fear, or awe of heaven. The experience of the trial is an experience of awe and fear of heaven. As such, the experience itself, or a properly internalized and assimilated memory of such an experience serves as a spur to loyalty to God and consequently results in the keeping of his commandments. By no surprise, Moshe's second mention of the "keeping of the commandments" that follows upon the imperative to remember the "trial" of the desert and the *man*, closes with the mention of the "fearing" of God. (Devarim 8:6)

But there is more to it than this. As mentioned earlier, in his numerous references to trial and the *man* in his "*mitzvot* and memory" speech (8:1-18), Moshe refers not just to hardship but also to divine providence. He refers not just to suffering, but also to sustenance. In a similar vein, when Moshe explains the signs performed by false prophet as stemming from God's interest in "testing" the people, he refers not just to "testing," "knowing," "hearts" (13:4) and "fear" of God (13:5), but also to "loving" God (13:4). In other words, a "trial" does not just revolve around the religious virtue of fear and awe of heaven. It also revolves around the religious virtue of love. It intends to stir and form the mix or balance of fear and love of heaven that comprises the ideal religious personality. As such the trial of the *man* includes not just the hardship and trying of the

people but also their miraculous sustenance. Awe\feared, love and fidelity to God and his commandments are meant to be the result.

## VI

To close, let us try to tidy up some loose ends. By now, we should no longer need to worry about the problem we began with, the problem of God's justice, or Egyptian like action. God's causing of hardship to Israel should be understood as part of a process of education, as part of a process of building the religious virtue of awe and fear of heaven. It is intended to benefit Israel and help them, both now and in the future in following God's word and fidelity to his commandments. As Moshe puts it in a sentence of his speech we have as yet let languish: "For as a father disciplines\instructs a son, so the Lord your God disciplines\instructs you" (8:5) (see Job 4:3).

Similarly, we have gone a long way to unpacking the Torah's notion of *nisayon*, the idea of a trial. It represents an experience meant to influence the one tried. As Ramban puts it in his comment on the trial of Avraham, (Bereishit 22:1), a trial is for the benefit of the one tested. In the particular variation of this interpretation presented above, a trial aims to build the religious virtues of love and fear of God, to build the "knowing heart" that maintains fidelity to God's word and follows his commands. In this light, we no longer need to worry about another one of the issues raised along the way, the connection between undergoing a trial and the outcome of following God's command. A trial leads to love and fear and love and fear lead to keeping the commandments.

Yet nevertheless, much remains unresolved, particularly the linguistic problem of *nisayon* mentioned earlier. As pointed out above, and adamantly rejected by Maimonides three of the four contexts of God testing stress the connection between testing and knowledge. The *parasha* of the false prophet (see 13:4), the *parasha* of Moshe's "*mitzvot* and memory" speech (see 8:2) and the Akeida (see Bereishit 22:1, 12) all seem to suggest a certain causal relation between God's testing and knowledge. God tests in order to know, to arrive at knowledge. God tests to know the hearts of the tested (8:2, 13:4), and the apparent move is from ignorance\lack of knowledge to knowledge. This problem still remains standing.

While there exist many solutions to this problem, much of our analysis has constituted an attempt to perform a revolutionary turn on this problem and to provide the sketch of a particular possible solution. As our discussion of Moshe's "*mitzvot* and memory speech" should demonstrate, God's search for knowledge, his investigation of the heart of Israel by providing the *man* and its attendant commandments is not about garnering knowledge, i.e. creating a state of knowing for himself. Rather it is about building and actualizing the "remembering\knowing" heart of Israel. The experience of undergoing the trial and keeping the commandments of the trial creates a move from ignorance\non-knowing not so much for God but for Israel. The central move from absence to presence, happens in the heart of the tested that can now be said to be a "knowing," i.e. loyal and obedient, heart. Again as Ramban briefly puts it in his comments on the Akeida, a test involves movement from potential to actual on the part of the tested.

But there is more to it than this. As briefly mentioned earlier, on the literary plane, God's search for knowledge of Israel's heart, his investigation, generates the very knowledge, the very heart, sought out. God's quest for the love and fear of God is met by the development and springing into being of precisely that which he seeks. In sum, God's search for knowledge, the thorny linguistic problem of *nisayon*, constitutes not so much an epistemic quest or even an educational act. Rather, it constitutes a creative act. In the final analysis, the moment of *nisayon* constitutes a creative partnership between the divine tester and the human subject, a moment in the religious relation of God and Israel. He seeks us out and we must rise to his service. On both the linguistic and philosophical planes, he wishes to know us and we must make ourselves known.

### Further Study

- 1) This shiur has attempted to expand on Ramban's groundbreaking interpretation of *nisayon* as actualization while drawing from Rambam's explanation of the Akeida found in Guide to Perplexed III:24. a) Review Bereishit 22:1. Now see Rav Sa'adiah Gaon (cited in Ibn Ezra) and Ibn Ezra 22:1. Try to formulate the two main opinions found in their comments. b) Read Guide to the Perplexed III:24 (primarily the opening and closing segments). How well does Rambam resolve his opening difficulty? How well does his theory deal with the case of the *man*? How well does it deal with the linguistic difficulty discussed in the shiur above? Note the centrality of love and fear of God in his interpretation of the Akeida and the differences between his opinion and the opinion espoused in the shiur. c) See Ramban Bereishit 22:4, Shemot 16:4, Devarim 8:2. Does Ramban 22:4 indeed advocate a "actualization" theory of *nisayon* as opposed to a "reward" theory? Make an argument based on 16:4 and 8:2. Note Ramban's reason in 16:4 for rejecting Rambam's opinion.
- 2) Reread Devarim 8:1-6. Note the five occurrences of the term *da'at* in the text. Analyze the relationship between the middle three occurrences. Now analyze the relationship between the first and fifth occurrence. Formulate how these two relationships and the shifting of the term supports the central idea of the shiur above.
- 3) See Devarim 6:16 and Shemot 17:1-7. Now see Ibn Ezra and Ramban 6:16. Formulate two theories for the prohibition to test God based upon their comments. Now try to formulate an alternative in light of the shiur above.
- 4) See Devarim 7:17-19. Pay careful attention to 7:17 and 7:19. Interpret these verses in light of 8:1-18 and the shiur above. Now read Devarim 4:32-40. Note the connections between 4:34-36, 4:39 and 8:1-18. See Rashi, Ibn Ezra and Ramban to 4:34. Try to formulate a theory for the repeated references to *masot* in the Torah.