

# KOL MEVASSER

## Our Struggle with God's Goodness: God Is Too Great to Be Justified

*Rabbi Nathan Lopes Cardozo*

(For the philosophically inclined!)

It is time to stop justifying God. Morally, His ways are sometimes inexcusable. Allowing a Holocaust in which six million Jews were killed in the cruelest ways imaginable, causing unbearable pain to innocent children, is morally intolerable. Creating earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados and other "natural" disasters is insufferable. Any attempt to justify these deeds of God is to profane His holy name.

God is too great to be justified. In fact, any attempt to do so undermines His very being. It is trying to bring God into the limited dimension of human comprehension, which invalidates His total otherness. It is like explaining a three dimensional reality with the aid of a flat surface – a hopeless task that would ultimately lead to idol worship, the worst of prohibitions. Idol worship is an endeavor to limit the Infinite to the constraints of the finite.

To believe in God is to believe not only that there is ultimate meaning to our existence but also that this meaning is completely be-

yond our comprehension. We do not know *why* God created the universe and man; to know *that*, we would have to be God. We would have to abandon the human condition and confront a metaphysical reality that our brains are not equipped to absorb. A reality that asks us to do the impossible – to utterly reject our thoughts, go beyond the shore of our reason and enter into the unfeasible situation in which God's thoughts become ours.

As long as we do not know why God created anything, we cannot deal with the question of why God causes, or even allows, so much pain to be inflicted on us. Only if we would know *why* the world was created would it be possible to see if there is a need for pain and if it could therefore be justified.

The very fact that we do not know why God created the world forces us to admit that we cannot know what place morality plays in the divine scheme of things. It may well be that morality is only one of many necessary elements in creation and that it sometimes has to yield to other divine considerations. Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard spoke of the "suspension of the ethical" when he discussed the moral problem inherent in God's asking Avraham to sacrifice his beloved son Yitzhak.

From a moral point of view, it is clear that the creation of the world is unjustifiable as long as even the slightest form of pain accompa-

## KJ Schedule Parashat Ekev

### Erev Shabbat

#### Friday, August 15th

Shaharit/Morning Prayer .....	6:30 am
Shir Hashirim .....	6:45 pm
Minhah/Arbith .....	7:00 pm
Shabbat Candlelighting .....	7:21 pm

### Shabbat

#### Saturday, August 16th

Shaharit/Morning Prayer .....	8:30 am
Minha, Seudah Shlisheet, Arvit .....	7:00 pm
Motzei Shabbat / Havdallah .....	8:28 pm

### Weekdays

#### Sunday, August 17th

Shaharit .....	7:30 am
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#### Monday to Friday, August 18th to 22nd

Shaharit .....	6:30 am
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### Erev Shabbat / Friday, August 22nd

Shaharit/Morning Prayer .....	6:30 am
Shir Hashirim .....	6:45 pm
Minhah/Arbith .....	7:00 pm
Shabbat Candlelighting .....	7:13 pm

nies it. The anguished cry of even one baby undermines the very pretext of creation. We cannot infer from that, however, that God does not exist or that He had no right to create the world. It only means that by purely moral standards He had no right to do so.

Any attempt to explain all of God's deeds

*(Continued on page 3)*



## Shabbat Kiddush

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### Refuah Shlemah

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 Tilda Levy / Tilda bat Miriam  
 Joseph Sharaf / Yossef ben Jamila  
 Maurice Ovadia / Moshe ben Noosha  
 Michael Herzbrun / Michael Baruch ben Sarah  
 Sal Sassoon / Shlomo ben Sasson Menashe

### Shabbat Torah & Haftara Readings

Devarim / Deuteronomy: Ekev 780 to 793  
 Haftara from the Neviim/Prophets  
 Yishayahu / Isaiah 794 to 798

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 and Felorans Salehani; and to the family

### Condolences

We send our condolences to the family of  
 Hellen Lelah, z"l, sister of Rita Hanin, Saul  
 Elisha, Katie, Flexie, Joe, & Esther; mother of  
 Kathie & Yigal. May Hashem comfort them  
 with all the mourners of Tzion.

### Condolences

We send our condolences to the family of  
 Pnina Herzbrun, z"l, wife of Rabbi Michael  
 Herzbrun, mother of Yoni, sister to Ora Ezran,  
 Rabbi Meir Kohen, z"l, Devorah, Ashira,  
 Shlomo, & Avi. Devoted aunt of Dafna, Aye-  
 let, Shmuel and many nieces & nephews.

### In Memoriam

We remember these yahrzeit anniversaries for  
 August 16 to 23, 2014. It is customary to light a  
 memorial candle, donate tzedaka, & attend ser-  
 vices the preceding Shabbat.

**21 Av / Sunday, August 17th**

Ketty E. Hanoon *Khatoon bat Noosha*  
 Farangis Shaye *Farangis bat Hanonbibbi*

**22 Av / Monday, August 18th**

*Rahel bat Zivar*

**23 Av / Tuesday, August 19th**

Rachel Moses *Rahel bat Moshe*

**24 Av / Wednesday, August 20th**

Isaac Ezra *Itzhak ben Abdullah*

**25 Av / Thursday, August 21st**

Matty Yaqub *Simha bat Sulha Mitana*

**27 Av / Shabbat, August 23rd**

*Lulu bat Shereen*

### Shabbat Shalom U'Mevorah

*Wishing You a Peaceful Shabbat*

(Continued from page 1)

in terms of moral standards is doomed to fail. It only leads to apologetics, which ultimately produces no satisfactory explanations. That does not mean that God is not moral, or that He lacks the attributes of goodness, mercy and other lofty qualities. What it does mean is that morality is not the whole story. The need for morality is the necessary *result* of creation, not the *purpose* of creation. In fact, moral criteria may be required to temper the severe conditions under which the divine purpose of creation had to be realized. This may also be one of the goals of halachic living. It is God who asks us to live by His halacha so as to moderate consequences resulting from His creating the world in a way necessary for it to exist.

To argue that He created man so as to grant him happiness is of little meaning once we ask why man needs to be happy at all and therefore to exist.

To argue that good can exist only in relationship to that which is bad is to ask why there is a need for good to exist at all when it can only be accomplished through the creation of that which is seriously flawed.

To argue that God formed man so that he can earn his reward in the world to come is of little comfort once we realize that man would be much better off having never been created. What, after all, is the virtue of reward when it constantly comes at the cost of so much pain? It is true that not having been created would deny us happiness, but in


what way is this to our disadvantage? If we would not exist, we would never know what we fail to enjoy. Would, then, our non-existence not be more pleasant than our existence? To try and answer this question is to ask for the impossible.

The great rabbinical schools of Beit Shamai and Beit Hillel fully realized this fact. In a most unusual debate, which lasted two and a half years, they discussed whether it is better for man to have been created, or not to have been created. (Eruvin 13b) Their conclusion is most telling. It is better for man *not* to have been created; but now that he *has* been created, let him examine his deeds. It is in this knowledge, that man was created *despite* all moral norms, that he realizes the need to live his life most carefully.

And it is in this knowledge that he will find great joy. Only by acknowledging that human existence is beyond all moral comprehension can man realize how important it is to God that he exists. Not because man knows God's reasons, but because he knows that it holds ultimate meaning in His eyes.

To deny God's existence on the basis of the Holocaust is to misunderstand His supremacy. To try and justify His ways is to violate His omnipotence.

To live a life of Torah is to live a life of the greatest nobility in the presence of God, fully aware that the purpose of life is to live the ultimate mysterious "why" while never understanding it. Therein lies its meaning.



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