

Torah and the Struggle with Sin in the Shadow of the Second Temple

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Babylonian Talmud

1. Kiddushin 30b

תלמוד בבלי מסכת קידושין דף ל עמוד ב

ת"ר (דברים יא) ושמעתם - סם תם, נמשלה תורה כסם חיים; משל, לאדם שהכה את בנו מכה גדולה והניח לו רטיה על מכתו, ואמר לו: בני, כל זמן שהרטיה זו על מכתך, אכול מה שהנאתך ושתה מה שהנאתך, ורחוץ בין בחמין בין בצונן ואין אתה מתיירא, ואם אתה מעבירה הרי היא מעלה נומי; כך הקב"ה אמר להם לישראל: בני, בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין, ואם אתם עוסקים בתורה - אין אתם נמסרים בידו, שנאמר (בראשית ד) הלא אם תטיב שאת, ואם אין אתם עוסקין בתורה - אתם נמסרים בידו, שנא': לפתח חטאת רובץ, ולא עוד, אלא שכל משאו ומתנו בך, שנאמר: ואליך תשוקתו, ואם אתה רוצה אתה מושל בו, שנאמר: ואתה תמשל בו.

Our Rabbis taught: Ve-samtem [reads] sam tam [a perfect remedy]. This may be compared to a man who struck his son a strong blow, and then put a plaster on his wound, saying to him, 'My son! As long as this plaster is on your wound you can eat and drink at will, and bathe in hot or cold water, without fear. But if you remove it, it will break out into sores.' Even so did the Holy One, blessed be He, speak unto Israel: 'My children! I created the Evil Inclination, but I [also] created the Torah, as its antidote; if you occupy yourselves with the Torah, you will not be delivered into his hand, for it is said: If you do well, shall you not be exalted? But if you do not occupy yourselves with the Torah, you shall be delivered into his hand, for it is written, sin couches at the door. Moreover, he is altogether preoccupied with you [to make you sin], for it is said, and unto you shall be his desire. Yet if you will, you can rule over him, for it is said, and you shall rule over him.

תנא דבי ר' ישמעאל: בני, אם פגע בך מנוול זה משכחו לבית המדרש, אם אבן הוא נימוח, ואם ברזל הוא מתפוצץ, שנאמר (ירמיהו כג): הלא כה דברי כאש נאם ה' וכפטיש יפוצץ סלע, אם אבן הוא נימוח; שנאמר (ישעיהו נה) הוי כל צמא לכו למים, ואומר (איוב יד) אבנים שחקו מים.

The School of R. Ishmael taught: My son, if this repulsive [wretch] assails you, lead him to the beit midrash: if he is of stone, he will dissolve; if iron, he will shiver [into fragments], for it is said: Is not my word like as fire? says the Lord,' and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces? If he is of stone, he will dissolve, for it is written: Ho, everyone that thirsts, come you to the waters; and it is said: The waters wear the stones.

2. Baba Bathra 16a

תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא בתרא דף טז עמוד א

אמר רבא: בקש איוב לפטור את כל העולם כולו מן הדין, אמר לפניו: רבונו של עולם, בראת שור פרסותיו סדוקות, בראת חמור פרסותיו קלוטות; בראת גן עדן, בראת גיהנם; בראת צדיקים, בראת רשעים, מי מעכב על ידך! ומאי אהדרו ליה חבריה דאיוב (איוב ט"ו)? אף אתה תפר יראה ותגרע שיחה לפני אל - ברא הקדוש ברוך הוא יצר הרע, ברא לו תורה תבלין.

Raba said: Job sought to exculpate the whole world. He said: Sovereign of the Universe, You have created the ox with cloven hooves and You have created the ass with whole hooves; You have created the Garden of Eden and You have created Gehinnom: You have created righteous men and You have created wicked men, and who can prevent You? His companions answered him: Yea, you do away with fear and restrain devotion before God. If God created the evil inclination, He also created the Torah as its antidote.

3. Prayers from the Second Temple Period

a. "Words of the Luminaries" 4Q504 (Frgs. 1 + 2 ii recto) 13-16

[] *bnw* with all heart and with all soul and to implant your Torah in our heart [that we turn not from it, straying] from the right or the left for you will heal us from madness ^{and blindness} and confusion. [Behold, because of] our [i]niquities we have been sold but in (spite of) our transgressions you have called us [] and you will deliver/have delivered us from sinning against you

דברי המאורות "Words of the Luminaries" 4Q504 (Frgs. 1 + 2 ii recto) 13-16

[] בְּנוּ בְּכֹל לֵב וּבְכֹל נֶפֶשׁ וְלִטְעַת תּוֹרַתְכָה בְּלַבְנוּ [לְבַלְתִּי סוֹר מִמְּנָה לִלְכֹּת] מִיָּמִין וּשְׂמֹאל כִּי אֵת תִּרְפָּאנוּ מִשְׁגָּעוֹן יִשְׁרָיוֹן וְתַמְהוֹן [לִבָּב הֵן בַּעַל] וְזִנְיוֹתֵינוּ נִמְכְּרָנוּ וּבִפְשָׁעֵינוּ קִרְתָּנוּ וְהִצַּלְתָּנוּ מִחַטּוֹא לֵכָה

b. Songs of the Sage 4Q511 48-49+51ii:1-6

... [] His knowledge he put [in my] hear[t] the praises of His righteousness, and [] and by His mouth he frightens [all the spirits] of the bastards to subdue [] uncleanness. **For in the innards of my flesh is the foundation of [] and in] my body are battles. The statutes of God are in my heart, and I prof[it] from all the wonders of man.** The works of guilt I condemn [] God. *vacat*

שירי המשכיל Songs of the Sage 4Q511 48-49+51ii:1-6

... בִּינְתוּ נֶתַן [ב]לִבִּי [בִּי הוֹדוֹת צִדְקוֹ] [] עָלָה וּבִפִּי יִפְחַד [כֹּל רוּחוֹת] מִמְּזִרִים לִהְיוֹנִיעַ [] טִי טָמְאָה כִּי אֵת
בְּתִלְמִי בְּשָׂרִי יִסּוֹד דָּ [] [וּב]גִיטִי מִלְחָמוֹת חֻקִּי אֵל בְּלִבִּי וְאוֹעִיל [] עַל כֹּל מוֹפְתֵי גִבּוֹר מַעֲשֵׂי אֱשֵׁמָה אֲרִשִּׁיעַ
[] אֵל [] וְתִ *vacat*

c. 4Q444 (4QIncantation) 1-4i+5:1-5)

And as for me, because of my fearing God, he opened my mouth with his true knowledge; and from his holy spirit... truth to a[] the]se. **They became spirits of controversy in my (bodily) structure; law[s of God [] in]innards of flesh. And a spirit of knowledge and understanding, truth and righteousness, God put in [my] he[art] And strengthen yourself by the laws of God, and in order to fight against the spirits of wickedness, and not [] ... its judgments**

תפילה אפוטרופאית 4Q444 (4QIncantation) 1-4i+5:1-5)

ואני מיראי אל בדעת אמתו פתח פי ומרוח קודשו [] אמת ל[] אל[] ויהיו לרוחי ריב במבניתי חוק[] אל ב[] תכמי
בשר ורוח דעת ובינה אמת וצדק שם אל בל[] בבי [] וזה ותתחזק בחוקי אל ולהלחם ברוחי רשעה ולא [] [] ל[] ת
דיניה vacat

4. Wisdom Literature

a. Ben Sira 21:11

He who **keeps the law** gains mastery over the **object of his thought** (Greek: *ennoêmatos*, Syriac *yašreh*), and consummation of the fear of the Lord is wisdom.

Ὁ φυλάσσων νόμον κατακρατεῖ τοῦ ἐννοήματος αὐτοῦ, καὶ συντέλεια τοῦ φόβου κυρίου σοφία.

b. 4 Macc. 2:21-3:5

Now when God fashioned human beings, he planted in them their passions and habits, but at the same time he enthroned the mind among the senses as a sacred governor over them all, and to this mind he gave the law. The one who adopts a way of life in accordance with it will rule a kingdom that is temperate, just, good and courageous.

c. 4 Ezra

(Ezra:) “You rescued Jacob’s descendants from Egypt **and led them to Mount Sinai**. There you made the heavens bow down, shook the earth, moved the world; you made the depths shudder and convulsed the whole creation. Your glory passed through the four gates of fire and earthquake, wind and frost, **in order to give the commandments of the law to the Israelites**, the race of Jacob. **Yet you did not take away from them their evil heart, so that the Torah might bring forth fruit in them**. For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him. Thus the disease became permanent; the Torah was in the people’s heart along with the evil root, but what was good departed, and the evil remained.” (4 Ezra 3:17-22)

(Angel:) “For this reason, therefore, those who dwell on earth shall be tormented, because though they had understanding they committed iniquity, **and though they received the commandments they did not keep them, and though they obtained the law they dealt unfaithfully with what they received**.” (4 Ezra 7:72)