

Reward and Punishment

Introduction

This topic has not yet undergone editorial review

A Plethora of Blessings and Curses

Torah is replete with promises of both rewards for obedience and punishment for transgression. Though these are perhaps most evident in Vayikra 26 and Devarim 28 which each contain a full list of blessings and curses, many other individual verses¹ similarly promise recompense, including health/disease, rain/drought, peace/war and more. In the vast majority of cases, retribution is promised in the context of general observance,² but in other instances, specific mitzvot are singled out as meriting reward or punishment.³

"היכן טובתו של זה?"

Despite the plethora of promises, however, experience suggests that not all who observe Hashem's commands reap the benefits described. The problem is raised in Yerushalmi Chagiga 2:1⁴ through the mouth of Elisha b. Avuyah. He witnesses an individual fulfilling the directive to send away the mother bird, a commandment whose stated reward is longevity, and yet finds that the man dies upon descent:

פעם אחת היה יושב ושונה בבקעת גינוסר וראה אדם אחד עלה לראש הדקל ונטל אם על
הבנים וירד משם בשלום למחר ראה אדם אחר שעלה לראש הדקל ונטל את הבנים ושילח את
האם וירד משם והכישו נחש ומת אמר כתיב {דברים כב} שלח תשלח את האם ואת הבנים
תקח לך למען ייטב לך והארכת ימים איכן היא טובתו של זה איכן היא אריכות ימיו של זה?

Elisha b. Avuyah asks, "Where is the good promised to this one? Where is his longevity?" We, too, wonder, why does it seem that Hashem promises but does not fulfill? The Gemara responds that the verses refer to rewards in the World to Come, but is that the simple sense of the text?⁵ If the Torah's blessings all refer to the spiritual world, why are the vast majority physical in nature? If, though, they refer to rewards in this world, why are these not always evident? Have Hashem's modes of providence changed over time, and what was true in the time of Tanakh,⁶ is no longer true today?⁷

Collective or Individual?

The Torah's discussion of retribution leaves another important question open to debate: at whom are Torah's blessings targeted – the individual or the collective? Several factors might influence one's position:

- While many verses are formulated in the singular,⁸ others are addressed in the plural.⁹ Is this difference significant, suggesting that some blessings are for the individual and others for the nation as a whole? Or, is the formulation irrelevant as one can address both a collective and an individual in either the singular or the plural?¹⁰
- A few passages, such as Vayikra 20:1-5 or Devarim 29:17-20, explicitly target the individual ("בְּאִישׁ הָהוּא") for retribution. Others speak of individual observance of specific mitzvot,¹¹ also implying that the stated

reward is personal. Should these cases be viewed as exceptional or as proof that individual retribution is the norm?

- Many verses speak of recompense such as rain, famine, or war, which would seem to naturally affect the collective. Are the verses suggesting that these phenomena will behave as they normally do, and thus, by definition, it is the nation rather than the individual who will suffer or be blessed? Or, might rewards and punishments be miraculous, so that a righteous individual might benefit from peace and rain, while his wicked neighbors do not?

Related Philosophical Issues

- **Divine providence** – To what extent is the world run by natural order, and to what extent via Divine providence? Is there individual providence, only general providence, or neither in this world? How often will Hashem actively intervene and perform miracles to either reward or punish?
- **The World to Come** – What is the nature and purpose of the next world? Is it just for the soul, or for the body as well? How does the retribution received in one world relate to that received in the other? Do individuals get their just desserts in both worlds, some in each, or just the future? Is there a difference between national and individual recompense?
- **Hopes of reward** – In Avot 1:3, Antigonos makes the well known statement, "אל תהיו כעבדים המושמטין את", "הרב על מנת לקבל פרס", asserting that one should not serve Hashem out of hopes of reward.¹² How, though, does this jive with the dozens of verses which promise exactly that? If the ideal is that one observe commandments regardless of compensation, why does Hashem devote so much press space to delineating blessings and curses? Might they have another purpose, not related to retribution?
- **Physical or spiritual** – Almost all the rewards and blessings of the Torah are physical in nature.¹³ Why does Hashem not also promise spiritual rewards? Are they not considered to be of a higher level? And if the World to Come is indeed considered the ultimate reward, why is it never explicitly mentioned in Torah?

In Sum

The Torah's account of retribution, thus, leaves us wondering on many fronts. Are these blessings and curses for the individual or the collective? Do they refer to this world or the next? Are they miraculous or natural? Might they be limited to a specific time and place or are they relevant always and everywhere? If the latter, why are they not always manifest? The approaches page will explore how commentators throughout the ages have answered these questions.

¹ See, for example, Shemot 15:26, Shemot 23:23-27, Devarim 4:40, Devarim 7:11-16. Devarim 11:8-9, 13-25 and many more.

² See, for example, Vayikra 26, Devarim 5:25, Devarim 6:1-3, Devarim 7:11-16, Devarim 11:13-25 and Devarim 28. . Most of these verses are prefaced with a statement to the effect of "וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמָע בְּקוֹל יְיָ" or "אִם בְּחֻקֵּי תִלְכוּ", mentioning keeping Hashem's laws as a whole, but not specifying any one commandment.

³ See, for instance, rewards of longevity for honoring parents (Shemot 20:11), sending away the mother bird (Devarim 22:6-7), or for using proper weights in business (Devarim 25:15), Hashem's promise to punish one

who sleeps with his uncle (Vayikra 20:20) or worships the Molekh (Vayikra 20:1-5), or blessings of prosperity for one who gives the tithe of the poor (Devarim 14:28-29) or loans to the disadvantaged (Devarim 15:7-10).

⁴ See also the parallels in Bavli Kiddushin and Bavli Chulin. In these versions the problem is even more acute, as the child goes to take the hatchlings at the request of his father, which should have earned him double reward: longevity and good life for both respecting his parent and for sending the mother bird away!

⁵ The concept that justice might be deferred to the next world is also difficult from Devarim 7:9-10, which states, "וְיִשְׁלַם לְשִׁנְאָיו אֶל פְּנֵיו לְהַאֲבִידוֹ לֹא יֵאָחֵז" implying that a sinner gets his just due immediately, in his lifetime.

⁶ As opposed to today, Tanakh is replete with examples of immediate retribution, with both the nation as a whole and individual sinners being punished soon after sinning. For example, Hashem immediately sends plague on those who worshiped the calf and sinned at Baal Peor. Divine fire consumes Nadav and Avihu and the complainers at Tavera and *tzara'at* strikes Miryam and Uzziyahu almost instantaneously.

⁷ In other words, is it possible that the retribution discussed in Torah refers only to a specific era or only comes into play under certain conditions which are no longer true today?

⁸ See, for instance, Shemot 15:26, Shemot 20:11, Vayikra 20:1-5, Devarim 4:40, Devarim 7:11, Devarim 12:28, or Devarim 28.

⁹ See Vayikra 26, Devarim 5:25, Devarim 5:29, Devarim 11:8-9, Devarim 11:13-25 and Devarim 32:46-47.

¹⁰ The nation might be addressed as a single body or as many members thereof. Similarly, when speaking to many individuals one can address each one personally, using a singular formulation, or speak to them all at once in the plural (even though what one is saying might apply to each one alone).

¹¹ These include rewards for honoring parent, giving loans, or using proper weights in business. [See the full list above].

¹² Cf. Sifre Devarim and Bavli Nedarim which similarly suggest that one should not learn Torah for glory or other reward. In contrast, though, see Bavli Pesachim which states that someone who gives charity so that his son will live or he will be rewarded in the Next World is considered a "צדיק גמור".

¹³ One exception might be Hashem's promise in Vayikra 26:12, "וְהִתְהַלַּכְתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם," understood by Rashi to refer to Gan Eden and by the Kuzari to refer to communion with the Divine (i.e. spiritual reward) already in this world.

Reward and Punishment

Exegetical Approaches

This topic has not yet undergone editorial review

Individuals Not Rewarded in this World

Individuals do not receive true retribution in this world, getting their just desserts only in the next world.

SOURCES: R. Yaakov in Bavli Kiddushin and Bavli Chulin,¹ Kuzari,² Rambam, R. Yonah, Ralbag, Ran, R. Chasdai Crescas, perhaps Sefer Halkkarim,³ Abarbanel,

Biblical blessings – This position must explain the Torah's many promises of reward and punishment, especially considering that many of these are physical in nature,⁴ implying that they refer to this world. If there is no individual retribution in this world, to what do these refer?

- **Collective recompense** – R. Crescas, R"Y Albo and Abarbanel⁵ respond that the retribution spoken about throughout Torah refers only to the collective and speaks of national rather than individual rewards.
 - **Collective nature** – This is supported by the collective nature of the vast majority of the Torah's blessings and curses which speak of war, rain, famine and the like.⁶
 - **Plural formulation** – As further support for this reading, R"Y Albo points to the plural formulation of the blessings/curses of Vayikra 26,⁷ which suggests that a group, rather than an individual, is being addressed. He notes that other verses, despite being worded in the singular, explicitly mention or reference the nation⁸ as well.⁹
 - **Larger covenantal context** – The context of the blessings and curses of both Vayikra 26 and Devarim 28 is that of a national covenant, further implying that they are aimed at the nation as a whole.
- **Rewards of next world** – This approach can also suggest that certain rewards¹⁰ in Torah do indeed refer to the individual, but to blessings of the next world. Thus, R. Yaakov maintains that the promises of "לְמַעַן יִטֵּב לָךְ / לְמַעַן יִצְרָחוּ יְמִיךָ" in Devarim 5:15 and Devarim 22:7¹¹ refer to the spiritual good and eternal life of the next world.¹²
- **Enablers** – In contrast to the above, Rambam¹³ suggests that even individuals might in fact benefit from the promises of Torah in this world, but he maintains that these do not constitute rewards but rather enablers.¹⁴ A life free of troubles, sickness, and war will make it easier for people to observe Hashem's commandments,¹⁵ paving the way for one to earn real reward in the next world.¹⁶

Evidence from Biblical history – This position must explain historical cases of individuals (from Kayin to David) who appear to be personally rewarded or punished by Hashem already in this world.¹⁷

- Rambam would claim that these cases are not examples of punishments and rewards but deterrents or enablers, preparing the person for his full retribution in the next world.
- Others might suggest that these cases are exceptional, either because the individual's actions had ramifications for the nation as a whole (as in the case of the spies or Korach) or because the individuals were leaders who are above the system of law and not easily punished in human courts.¹⁸

Difficult verses – Several verses are somewhat difficult for this approach as, at first glance, they appear to speak explicitly of individual (and not collective) retribution in this world specifically:¹⁹

- **"וּמִשְׁלֵם לְשָׂנְאָיו אֶל פָּנָיו לְהַאֲבִידוֹ לֹא יֵאָחֵר"** – Contrary to this approach, this verse implies that individual punishment²⁰ is not deferred (לֹא יֵאָחֵר). It is possible, though, that the verse is not speaking of immediate punishment at all. It simply states that in contrast to the previous verse's promise that righteous deeds will be remembered for thousands of years, a sinner's actions will not affect those generations that come after him (לֹא יֵאָחֵר), but only he himself (אֶל פָּנָיו).²¹
- **Individual observance** – Verses which speak of rewards for individual observance of specific mitzvot,²² would seem to be speaking also of individual recompense. Several commentators²³ claim that, nonetheless, even these refer only to collective retribution.²⁴ Thus, Ralbag understands the promise "לְמַעַן יֵאָרְכוּן יְמֵיךָ עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר יִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ" to refer not to personal longevity, but a long national existence in the land of Israel.²⁵
- **"אִישׁ אוֹ אִשָּׁה... וְרַבְצָה בּוֹ כָּל הָאֲלֵה הַכְּתוּבָה בְּסֶפֶר הַזֶּה"** – This verse implies that the punishments of Devarim 28 will apply even on the individual level. One could say, however, that the verse is saying only that such a sinner should not think that he will escape the collective punishment of the verses.
- **"וְשִׁמְתִּי אֹתְךָ כְּפָנִי בְּאִישׁ הַהוּא"** – In this verse, Hashem promises Divine punishment to even the individual worshiper of the Molekh. These sources might claim that this is not referring to punishment in this world, as the verse mentions כָּרַת, understood by the Rambam to mean being cut off from the next world.²⁶

Ultimate reward: physical or spiritual? One of the main philosophical motivations for this position is the belief in the primacy of spiritual rewards:

- Abarbanel notes that since observance of Hashem's commandments is essentially a spiritual act, it is only fitting that the ultimate reward be spiritual as well.
- Rambam adds that physical rewards, being meaningless to the soul and piling in comparison to spiritual rewards, are insignificant to the point of being almost worthless. Moreover, the highest pleasure is contemplation of God, and this is best achieved when the soul is not trapped and limited by a body. As such, it is impossible to be fully rewarded in this physical world; retribution must of necessity come only in the next world where the righteous merit to commune with Hashem (נִהְיֶין מִזִּיּוֹ הַשְׂכִּינָה) and the sinners are cut off.²⁷

Nature of the World to Come – According to Rambam, the World to Come refers to the eternal existence of the souls of the deserving after death (and the cutting off of the undeserving). It is a purely spiritual existence where souls exist without a body, basking in Hashem's glory, with no need for food, drink, or sleep. It is not a distinct place to be created in the future after the Messianic era and Resurrection of the Dead,²⁸ but simply how one refers to what happens to each soul immediately after death. This purely spiritual existence is the only true reward.²⁹

Hashem's providence – This reading of reward and punishment is further influenced by these sources' understanding of Divine providence. According to many of these thinkers,³⁰ though there is individual Divine providence, not all merit it to the same degree.³¹ Moreover, the world is generally run via natural law³² rather than such providence.³³ In such a world, judged as it by the deeds of the majority, an individual will not often reap the appropriate recompense for his personal deeds, as doing so would necessitate intervening in nature³⁴ (a degree of providence which many might not deserve).

Today's reality – These sources might also be motivated by their perceptions of reality, in which individuals often do not appear to receive the rewards promised by Torah despite mitzvah observance.³⁵ Positing that the Torah does not actually promise individual retribution in this world resolves the seeming contradiction.³⁶ [By adding that the individual instead gets his just compensation in the next world, they also address the associated and more general problem of theodicy.³⁷]

Is not deferred retribution unjust? One might question the justice of deferred retribution. If a person sins or acts righteously in this world, should he not get his due in this world as well? Is it fair that one needs to wait for the next world to be compensated?

- Rambam appears unperturbed by the question, assuming that the magnitude of the good of the next world renders all rewards of this world negligible. According to him, it is simply impossible to get full reward in this world, so there can be no question of injustice.
- Others might suggest that since this and the next world are one continuum,³⁸ there is no issue in meting out recompense in one world for deeds done in the other.
- Alternatively, one could suggest that in reality justice is not totally deferred; the two worlds are simply run by different judicial systems. In this world, justice is meted out by humans through the court system, while in the next world it is left to the hands of Hashem.

Why isn't עולם הבא mentioned in the Torah? Considering that these sources all assume that "עולם הבא" constitutes the ultimate reward, they must explain why it is never mentioned in Torah. Many explanations have been offered;³⁹ just a few are listed below:

- **Ensure proper worship** – Rambam explains that Hashem omitted mention of this bliss because He does not want people to serve Him for hopes of reward or fear of punishment, but rather for the sake of Hashem Himself.
- **Masses wouldn't understand** – Ibn Ezra suggests that since Torah is given to the masses, who would not be able to comprehend the secrets of the next world, Hashem speaks on their level, telling only of the physical rewards of this world.⁴⁰
- **Torah's focus is the nation** – R"Y Albo asserts that Torah's focus is the collective rather than the individual, being a covenant between Hashem and the nation. Therefore, there is no room for discussion of the next world which refers only to the fate of the individual.
- **Inculcate belief in providence** – The Kuzari and Ran⁴¹ note that if Torah only spoke of a world to come (as is promised by other religions), there would be no way to verify Hashem's providence and one would have to rely on faith alone that retribution is really to come.⁴² The Kuzari further adds that, for many, the physical rewards of this world are a greater incentive to observance than promises of the next world.

Is it problematic to hope for reward? Commentators divide on this point.

- Rambam claims that one should observe mitzvot for their own sake, simply because that is God's bidding, and not for hopes of reward. As mentioned, it is for this reason that true rewards are not mentioned in Torah.
- Abarbanel, in contrast, asserts that there is nothing wrong with serving Hashem in hopes of reward, as proven by the many verses in which Hashem Himself says to observe "so that it will be good for you" and the like. He does assert, however, that one should not serve with the hope of achieving physical rewards as these are fleeting and not the true compensation, regardless.

Purpose of rewards / punishments – Many of these sources might view the main goal of rewards and punishments to be simple retribution. A righteous person deserves to benefit and a wicked person deserves to suffer. Had the main goal been motivational, it would seem that this would be better achieved if recompense was received earlier.



Individuals Rewarded in this World

Individuals receive retribution for their actions already in this world, and not only in the next world. This position subdivides regarding the extent of the compensation in this world:

Rewards for All Mitzvot

Individuals gets reward in both this and the next world for observance of every mitzvah.

SOURCES: one opinion in Bavli Kiddushin,⁴³ Netziv,⁴⁴ perhaps Shadal,⁴⁵

Biblical blessings – This approach might suggest that all the blessings and curses mentioned in the Torah, even those formulated in the plural⁴⁶ and which are collective in nature,⁴⁷ are applicable on the individual level. As many of these are prefaced by formulations such as "אִם שָׁמַע תִּשְׁמָעוּ אֶל מִצְוֹתַי", they would appear to apply to observance of all mitzvot. In addition, the fact that the vast majority are physical in nature would suggest that they refer to retribution in this world and not the next.

Specific mention of the individual – This position might be supported by several verses which explicitly target the individual for reward or punishment:

- **"יָעֲשֶׂן אִף יָי וְקָנָתוֹ בְּאִישׁ הוּא"** – Devarim 29:17-20 addresses individual sinners, stating that they, too, will be plagued by the curses of Devarim 28. The verses imply that even if the collective is being rewarded and reaping blessings, the sinner will individually suffer the calamities described. Even in this world, then, punishment is individual, and not just collective.
- **"וְאִנִּי אֶתֵּן אֶת פְּנֵי בְּאִישׁ הוּא"** – Vayikra 20:1-5 similarly singles out the individual, with Hashem promising Divine punishment to the individual worshiper of the Molekh.
- **Individual observance** – Other verses don't explicitly mention an individual reward, but as they speak of retribution for individual observance or transgression of mitzvot, they imply that the reward, too, is for the individual.⁴⁸

"וּמִשְׁלָם לְשָׂנְאָיו אֶל פְּנֵיו לְהַאֲבִידוֹ לֹא יִאָּחַר" – Devarim 7:10's statement that punishment will not be delayed (לֹא יִאָּחַר) to individual sinners further supports the idea that individuals receive retribution already in this world.

Plural formulation – This position is not troubled by the plural formulation used in describing several of the blessings and curses as this does not preclude them from referring to the individual.⁴⁹

Evidence from Biblical history – The fact that many individuals in Tanakh (including Kayin, Yehuda's children, Miriam, Korach, David, or Yaravam) receive immediate punishment already in this world is further proof that retribution is not deferred to the next world.

Ultimate reward: physical or spiritual? According to this approach, though the ultimate reward is the spiritual one in the next world, justice dictates that one receive physical rewards as well. Since both one's body and soul participated in the positive or negative deed,⁵⁰ one deserves both physical and spiritual retribution.

Deferred justice is unfair – This approach might be further motivated by a discomfort with the idea of deferring punishment to the next world. One should receive retribution when and where the crime or good deed was performed ("מקום הרשע שמה המשפט") and so retribution should be given already in this world.

Divine providence – This approach divides in how it views Divine providence and how Hashem ensures that each person gets his recompense:

- **Miraculous rewards** – One might suggest that this world is run by individual providence and Hashem consistently actively intervenes in nature so as to reward and punish as deserved. As such, though many verses promise punishment which is collective in nature and which would seem to unavoidably prevent the righteous from receiving proper recompense, this position would claim that Hashem intervenes to ensure that only the wicked individuals suffer when calamities fall, while the righteous are spared and instead given their proper reward.⁵¹
- **Natural rewards** – Netziv, in contrast, asserts that rewards and punishments are built into the very fabric of observance and transgression.⁵² Performing mitzvot naturally brings blessing in its wake and transgressions naturally bring calamity.⁵³ This, though, does not mean that a righteous individual will automatically be saved from collective afflictions;⁵⁴ even innocents can be caught in a general catastrophe.⁵⁵ According to this logic, though all might be rewarded for their good deeds in this world, they might simultaneously get punishments that they do not deserve (and vice versa).⁵⁶

Today's reality – One might question this approach from the perceived reality of today, in which it does not appear that people always get rewarded in this world. R. D"Z Hoffmann⁵⁷ responds that even though at times this might be our experience, one must view these as exceptional cases whose reasoning is unknown.⁵⁸

Is it problematic to hope for reward? These sources might suggest that there is nothing wrong with serving Hashem with hopes for even physical reward.⁵⁹ After all, Hashem Himself continuously alludes to such blessings, encouraging the nation to observe His commandments "so that...".

Purpose of Rewards/ Punishments – This approach might consider the motivational role of rewards and punishments to be just as important as the retributive function. As such, the Torah promises immediate rewards and punishments, recognizing that recompense that affects the individual already in this world is a much stronger motivator/deterrent for behavior than promises of future blessings.



Rewards for Select Mitzvot

Though many individual deeds are rewarded or punished only in the next world, there is a select group of actions for which one receives recompense already in this world.

SOURCES: Mishna Peah and Tosefta Peah,⁶⁰ R. Yochanan in Bavli Shabbat,⁶¹ perhaps R. Saadia Gaon, Chovot HaLevavot,

For which mitzvot? Mishna Peah and Tosefta Peah list both the mitzvot and sins for which one receives retribution also in this world:

- **Rewarded for interpersonal acts** – Mishna Peah notes that honoring parents, acts of kindness, peace-making and learning Torah all merit reward even in this world.⁶²
 - Rambam explains that the common denominator is that all these are interpersonal mitzvot,⁶³ and suggests that the Mishna is differentiating between these deeds, for which one gets immediate reward,⁶⁴ and mitzvot between man and his Creator, for which one reaps reward only in the next world.
 - Chovot Halevavot makes a similar distinction,⁶⁵ but in contrast to the Mishna, he claims that the former is rewarded *only* in this world, and the latter *only* in the World to Come
- **Punished for severe crimes** – Tosefta Peah enumerates crimes for which one is punished in both worlds, listing idolatry, murder, sexual misdeeds and gossip. The common denominator might be the severity of the crime, as three of the four constitute those commands for which one is obligated to forfeit one's life rather than transgress.⁶⁶

Evidence from Biblical blessings – The Mishna and Tosefta's distinction between those deeds which are only rewarded collectively (מצוות בין אדם למקום) and those for which also the individual receives retribution already in this world (מצוות בין אדם לחברו and severe crimes) might be rooted in the Biblical text:⁶⁷

- **Collective blessings for service of Hashem** – The majority of blessings and curses in Torah⁶⁸ speak only of general observance⁶⁹ and are aimed at the collective.⁷⁰ This approach would suggest that these relate mainly to the realm of "מצוות בין אדם למקום". This is supported by the fact that the verses speak of observance in terms of "loving" or "fearing" God, and explain that punishment comes "פחת אִשֶּׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ" and the like, all of which focus on a relationship with God rather than man.
- **Individual blessings for interpersonal deeds** – Other blessings and curses refer to observance of specific mitzvot,⁷¹ and appear to be aimed at the individual.⁷² Almost all of these refer to deeds between man and his fellow man (honoring parents, being honest in business, giving tithes or loans to the poor), or to severe crimes such as idolatry or sexual misdeeds. In fact, almost every mitzvah listed in the Mishna and Tosefta finds their counterpart among those singled out by Torah⁷³ for individual retribution.⁷⁴

Evidence from Biblical history – There is ample Biblical evidence of Divine punishments meted out to individuals who committed the various crimes mentioned in the Tosefta.⁷⁵ However, alongside these, there is also evidence of individuals being punished for other crimes not listed (such as Korach, Datan and Aviram being punished for rebelling). This position might explain that there are always exceptional cases of punishment, but that does not contradict the general rule that as a whole, people only receive retribution in this world for the select deeds discussed above.⁷⁶

Why differentiate? This approach must explain why there should be a difference in reward for different mitzvot:

- **Different realms** – Rambam explains that observance of law between man and His Creator is essentially a spiritual act and is thus rewarded in the spiritual sphere. It is appropriate, though, that non-spiritual acts (such as מצוות בין אדם לחברו) receive compensation also in the physical world.⁷⁷
- **Severity of crime** – Crimes of the severity of murder or idolatry might be punished in both worlds due simply to the weight of the crime.

"משלם לשנאיו אל פניו להאבדו לא יאחר" – This approach might suggest that the immediate punishment mentioned in this verse refers specifically to those who have committed murder, worshiped idolatry or engaged in forbidden sexual relations. Punishment for other crimes, though, might be deferred and dispensed only in the next world.

Ultimate reward: physical or spiritual? This position does not view spiritual rewards and punishments as necessarily being of higher value than physical ones. Instead, each reward must match the deed performed; in some cases one type of reward is appropriate and in others a different one is.

Divine providence – These sources might suggest that there is individual Divine providence in this world, as evidenced by the fact that Hashem does reward individuals for select mitzvot. Cases where one is not rewarded are not simply the product of chance, but intentional deferring of spiritual reward.

Deferred justice – This position sees no injustice in deferring spiritual rewards to the next world, as these simply cannot be provided in this world.

Today's reality – As the Torah does not claim that all individual deeds will be rewarded in this world, the fact that blessings are not always evident is less troubling. This position would still have to explain the absence of specific expected rewards such as long life for honoring parents. It might suggest, as does R. D"Z Hoffmann, that such instances should be seen as aberrations and not the norm.



For Select Individuals

Retribution is given in this world only to either the totally righteous or the totally wicked.

SOURCES: Ramban

Biblical blessings – Ramban claims that many of the of blessings in Torah, like those of Vayikra 26 and Devarim 28, are aimed at the collective and refer to this world.⁷⁸ However, there are also promises, like those of Shemot 15 or Shemot 23:23-27, which target the individual.⁷⁹ It seems that according to Ramban, though, all the rewards mentioned in Torah, be they collective or individual, are relevant only for the totally righteous or totally wicked.⁸⁰

Verses which single out the individual – Is there evidence that verses which target the individual for retribution refer only to the extremely righteous or wicked?

- The various verses which single out the individual for punishment, such as Vayikra 20:1-5 or Devarim 29:17-20 do appear to be speaking of particularly wicked people, those who worship Molekh or reject Torah, fitting Ramban's criteria for punishment in this world.
- Shemot 15:26 and Shemot 23:23-27, which Ramban claims target the individual, speak of general observance (ועבדתם את יי' / אם שמוע תשמע לקול יי') and Ramban appears to assume that this implies full observance (and not just fulfilling one specific command) in which case the reward here, too, is limited to the totally righteous.
- It is not clear how Ramban would read verses which speak of individual reward for specific mitzvot such as honoring parents, honesty in business, and the like. He might suggest that here, too, rewards are

reserved only to people who are also otherwise righteous. Alternatively, he could claim that some of the verses refer only to rewards in the next world.⁸¹

Verses which speak of the collective – A similar argument might be made regarding verses which speak of collective rewards and punishments. These are granted for general observance, being prefaced by statements such as: "וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמָע בְּקוֹל יְיָ". Some verses further mention observance of "all mitzvot" ("כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת"). As such, Ramban might explain that the verses refer only to a situation in which the vast majority of the nation is observing the vast majority of the mitzvot. Only when the nation as a whole can be said to be following in Hashem's ways will the rewards listed take full effect.

Evidence from Biblical and contemporary history

- **Individual punishment** – Many of the individuals punished in Tanakh, such as Korach, Datan and Aviram, or Achav, can easily be labelled "רשעים גמורים", fitting Ramban's understanding of reward and punishment. Others, though, such as Miryam, Nadav and Avihu, or David, despite having sinned (even egregiously) would not appear to be "totally wicked". Ramban might suggest that these are exceptional cases in which Divine intervention was necessary due specifically to the stature of the people involved.⁸²
- **Collective punishment** – On the collective level, Ramban suggests that the punishments of Vayikra 26 were fulfilled in the time of the destruction of the first Beit Hamikdash and exile, while those of Devarim refer to the present exile. Tanakh ascribes the first destruction to the mass idolatry and innocent blood which filled Yehuda, suggesting that the people were indeed "totally wicked". It is a bit more difficult to know the extent of the sins which brought about the second destruction, but Ramban would likely say that then, too, the nation as a whole had drastically veered from Hashem's ways.
- **Individual and collective reward** – Ramban notes that, in contrast to the fulfilled curses, none of the blessings promised in Vayikra and Devarim have come true on either the individual or collective level, as the nation was never righteous enough to merit them.⁸³ He suggests that it might be first in Messianic times, when the entire nation turns to Hashem, that the blessings come to fruition.

Present reality – The fact that not all individuals appear to be rewarded for observance (or punished for transgressions) in this world might, in part, motivate this reading. According to Ramban, this to be expected, as most individuals are not totally righteous or wicked.⁸⁴

Hashem's providence – Ramban's understanding of reward and punishment correlates with his understanding of Divine providence.⁸⁵ According to him, though there is individual providence, the world is generally run by nature. Hashem's providence, for the most part, is evident only over the collective who are judged according to the deeds of the majority. It extends to the individual only in two exceptional cases: Hashem will miraculously intervene in this world to reward the totally righteous or punish the totally wicked.⁸⁶

Retribution: miraculous or natural – Ramban views all retribution in this world, be it for the individual or for the collective, as miraculous. He explains that there is no natural connection between observance of Hashem's mitzvot and rain or peace and so if the nation or individual is blessed with these as the result of observance, it must be due only to Hashem's providence and intervention.⁸⁷

Ultimate reward and nature of the World to Come – According to Ramban, the ultimate reward is in the World to Come. As the vast majority of individuals do not receive retribution in this world, compensation

must be granted later. In his view, the World to Come is an actual physical place which will be created after the Messianic age and Resurrection of the Dead, in which the resurrected will live eternally. As such, it is not a purely spiritual reward, but one for both the body and soul (though the body will not have all the same physical properties it does in this world). Ramban might suggest, as does R"Y Albo, that rewards are for both the body and soul, since both together performed the deed worthy of retribution.⁸⁸

Why is the World to Come not mentioned in Torah? According to Ramban, only material rewards are mentioned in Torah, since only such retribution is miraculous.⁸⁹ The existence of a World to Come, in contrast, should be expected, for it is natural that the human soul will return to its Creator and live eternally.

Is not deferred retribution unjust? Ramban might suggest that since the possibility of reward in this world exists for those who are sufficiently deserving, it is not unjust that not all reap such rewards.

Is it problematic to hope for reward? Ramban suggests that there is a hierarchy in mitzvah performance. Those who perform with hopes of either material or spiritual reward or out of fear of punishment are at the lowest level (though they still merit reward). Those who serve out of love, but are still involved in matters of this world, are at the next level. Finally, those who are able to leave all physical matters behind and turn their entire being and thoughts to Hashem, with their soul clinging to the Divine, are at the highest level. Like Eliyahu, such individuals will merit to live forever.



Changing Rewards

Hashem's modes of providence have changed over time. Though immediate reward and punishment for both the collective and individual is manifest from the Biblical through First Temple periods, it diminished thereafter as Hashem's initial overt providence gradually became covert.

Biblical blessings – This position assumes that Biblical blessings relate to both the collective and the individual.⁹⁰ All of these, though, refer only to the Wilderness and First Temple periods when Hashem's providence was manifest, be it in the Mishkan or Mikdash.

"מִשְׁלֵם לְשָׂנְאָיו אֶל פְּנֵי לְהַאֲבִידוֹ לֹא יֵאָחֵר" – This verse, which promises immediate retribution, just like other promises of punishment in Tanakh, refers only to the Biblical and First Temple periods. It is an accurate description of that era, where we see people not only getting their just desserts, but often being paid for their crimes almost immediately after committing them. It is not, however, meant to be true of all time periods.

"עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר יִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ" – Many of the blessings and curses are directly related to the land of Israel, promising children, prosperity, or longevity specifically **"בְּאֶרֶץ"**⁹¹ or **"עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר יִי אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ"**.⁹² This might support the idea that Biblical promises are aimed at the nation in the period before the destruction and exile, and not afterwards.

The Biblical record – Throughout the period of Tanakh, there is evidence of both individual and collective retribution, but with a gradual reduction in its miraculous and immediate nature.

- **Individual** – In Torah, individuals including the spies, Nadav and Avihu, Datan and Aviram, or Miryam are all miraculously punished for their crimes almost instantaneously.⁹³ In later books,⁹⁴ punishment is still given in this world, but it tends to be more natural and a bit less immediate.⁹⁵ In such cases,

prophetic rebukes often precede or follow the retribution, ensuring that the sinner sees the causal relationship and attributes calamities to sin.

- **Collective** – This worldly retribution is also evident on the collective level. In Torah, immediate plague, fire and the like often strikes the nation immediately after rebelling.⁹⁶ In prophetic works, punishment is more natural, but almost every national catastrophe, from defeat in war,⁹⁷ to famine or drought⁹⁸ and the ultimate exile,⁹⁹ is still explained in terms of sin and punishment.¹⁰⁰ Here, too, prophets go out of their way to show the one to one correspondence between deed and reward.¹⁰¹

The post Biblical record – In the post Biblical period, in contrast, God's hand is not nearly as recognizable, miracles are hidden, and there is no immediate retribution. It seems that even where the collective is righteous, they not only are not granted rewards, but sometimes suffer terribly, with entire communities being martyred for their very observance ("קהלות הקדש שמסרו נפשם על קדושת השם")! This reality is one of the main motivations for this position.

Explaining the change – This position might explain Hashem's changing mode of providence in several ways:

- **Reaction to sin** – In Torah, Hashem warns the nation that sometimes sin will bring in its wake the hiding of Hashem's providence: "וְאֶנֶּכִי הַסֵּתֶר אֶסְתִּיר פָּנַי בְּיוֹם הַהוּא".¹⁰² As such, it is possible that the sins that caused the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash might have simultaneously ushered in a period of "הסתרת פנים".¹⁰³
- **Opportunity for growth** – Alternatively, one might view the naturalistic model of providence in a much more positive light, as an opportunity for spiritual growth. Living in world of miraculous, immediate retribution both significantly reduces one's free will, and invites one to serve out of fear rather than love. If Hashem's rewards are much less evident, one's observance is of a totally different quality, with "אהבת ה'" at its core. Though it is a challenge to see God's hand, the search brings maturation and growth.¹⁰⁴
- **Consequence of exile** – Part of the change might also have been a natural consequence of the exile. The dispersal led to the breakdown of the collective, making collective retribution impossible. As the majority of the Torah's blessings are aimed at the nation, and many are targeted at the Land of Israel specifically,¹⁰⁵ the exile rendered many simply inapplicable.

Divine providence – This position suggests that differing levels of providence and retribution might be connected to the level of Hashem's presence within the nation. The more constant and close Hashem's presence is, the more likely that His wrath (or beneficence) will be felt instantaneously. Thus, in the wilderness period, when Hashem's *Shekhinah* resided in the midst of the camp, sin often resulted in immediate retribution. In contrast, when Hashem hides His face, reward and punishment is absent. At times, too, Hashem is present but distant, allowing for this worldly, but delayed retribution.

Turning points – One might point to specific points in history in which shifts in Hashem's mode of providence are evident: after the expulsion from Eden, re-creation of the world post-flood, the sin of the Golden Calf, the sin of the spies and the ultimate exile. Together these testify to an overall shift from the supernatural to the natural, and from immediate to delayed (or totally absent) retribution.¹⁰⁶ The following discussion will explore each of these turning points.

Expulsion from Eden – Though it is somewhat difficult to know exactly what life was like in Eden, it seems that Hashem's presence there was very tangible and life was somewhat miraculous, with no need to toil for

sustenance, trees with supernatural properties, and close contact with the Divine.¹⁰⁷ If so, the expulsion marked a first turning point and distancing of the Divine and miraculous from humankind.

Post-flood: from the universal to the national – In the period of the flood, God's providence and the connection between sin and punishment was so strong that sin could bring in its wake total destruction of all life. Afterwards, in recognition of man's limitations, Hashem softened His retribution, with it never again to appear on so mass and obvious a scale.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps, though, a change of equal or even greater import was the decision to single out one nation to have a unique relationship with God. After the flood, Avraham emerges, and his descendants alone merit Hashem's special providence - with its accompanying obligations, rewards and punishments.

Sin of the Calf: from "ויחר אפי" to "ארך אפיים" – The wilderness period is marked by God's instantaneous punishment of the sinful, stemming from His direct presence in the nation's midst. R"m Leibtag¹⁰⁹ notes that after the sin of the Calf, Hashem recognized that this was potentially disastrous¹¹⁰ and therefore decided to remove His presence. Moshe, uncomfortable with the solution, suggested a compromise, that Hashem mix justice with mercy and allow for non-immediate retribution. The thirteen attributes attest to this new type of providence, one in which Hashem is no longer "filled with anger" but "long to anger", (ארך אפים), no longer "עשה חסד" but "נוצר חסד".¹¹¹ The new model, though, is a mixed blessing. Holding judgement at bay allows for repentance and reconciliation, but holding back rewards simultaneously allows for cases of "צדיק ורע לו".

Sin of the Spies: from miracle to nature – The Netziv suggests that the switch from total providence to a more natural existence was initiated by the people themselves during the story of the spies. Unable to handle the intensity of having Hashem in their midst (with its accompanying immediate retribution), they, of their own accord, requested His distance and to be guided in a more natural way, as evidenced by their request to send spies.¹¹² Netziv asserts that had it not been for the nation's request, both the conquest and subsequent life in Israel would have been totally supernatural.¹¹³ Hashem, though, leads the people as they seek Him, and so beginning in the fortieth year, He began to hide His providence and allow nature to guide.¹¹⁴

Exile – The Book of Esther, taking place in exile, perhaps best demonstrates the final move to hidden providence.¹¹⁵ Hashem is totally absent from the book, there are no overt miracles, and neither the danger nor the salvation is explained in terms of sin or virtue.¹¹⁶

Role of prophecy – The end of prophecy might be directly related to the diminishing of both Hashem's providence and immediate retribution. As prophets provide a link between man and Hashem, His distancing of Himself naturally means limiting prophecy as well. Moreover, when retribution is pushed off to the distant future or another world, one of the main functions of a prophet – warning that sin will bring punishment – is no longer relevant. There is not much point for a prophet to warn of retribution that is to come only in hundreds of years.

Is not deferred retribution unjust? This position might reply in one of two almost opposite ways:

- **Undesired** – One might agree that deferred justice really is not desired. Hashem brings it only as punishment for sin.
- **Necessary** – Alternatively, one can claim that it is a desired necessity, but a double edged sword. On one hand, deferring retribution is an act of mercy, as it allows for the possibility of repentance and the

potential averting of punishment altogether. However, as not only punishments but also rewards are delayed, it simultaneously allows for one to suffer unduly in this world.¹¹⁷

Is it problematic to hope for reward? According to this position, the ideal is to serve Hashem and observe his commandments out of love and not for fear of punishment or hope of reward. The present absence of immediate retribution encourages this.

¹ It is possible that this is R. Tarfon's position in Mishna Avot as well, where he states, "וְנֶאֱמָן הוּא בֶּעַל מְלָאכָתָךְ", implying perhaps that there is only reward in the next world, and thus reassuring the individual that (even if right now, one is not reaping rewards) Hashem will be faithful and ultimately compensate all.

² R. Yehuda HaLevi speaks of the collective retribution of this world and the individual rewards of the World to Come, but does allow for at least minimal reward to the individual, too, in this world: "וְעוֹד שֶׁבְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה יִתֵּן". Nonetheless, he appears to believe that on the whole individual rewards are deferred until the next world.

³ This seems to be R"Y Albo's understanding of the rewards and punishments mentioned in Torah, as he explicitly states that Torah never speaks of individual retribution in this world, only of national recompense (ונתבאר מדברינו שלא נזכר בתורה השכר האישי הגשמי כמו שחשבו רבים אלא הרוחני הפרטי והגשמי הכללי). However, his comments in Sefer Halkkarim 4:29 appear to contradict this, as he writes: "והדעת הרביעי הוא דעת מי שיאמין: שהשכר ממנו גשמי ובעולם הזה וממנו רוחני ובעולם הבא אחר המות, וזהו דעת תורתנו הקדושה שיעדה יעודים גשמיים פרטיים ולצדיקים כמו לאבות ולזולתם". It is possible, though, that here too, R"Y Albo is referring to collective physical rewards, but noting that also certain exceptional individuals, such as the Patriarchs, will merit such rewards as well. [Cf. Ramban's position below.]

⁴ See, for instance the rewards and punishments promised in Shemot 15:26, Vayikra 26, Devarim 7:11-16, Devarim 11:13-25, Devarim 28 or Devarim 29:21-27. As these include agricultural blessings, promises of victory over enemies, abundance of children, and health, they would seem to relate to this world rather than the next.

⁵ This is also R. Shemuel Eidels' understanding of R. Yaakov's position in Kiddushin, "די"ל לרבי יעקב דמודה, דזכות הרבים ומעשיהם הטובים מביאים להם כל הברכות והטובות שנזכרו בתורה גם בעוה"ז וכן בהיפך בחטא הרבים אבל ר"י לא אמר כן אלא ביחיד". See also R. Elazar in Kiddushin 40b who notes that "the world is judged by the majority".

⁶ See, for instance, Shemot 23:27, Vayikra 26:3-12 / Vayikra 26:14-21, Devarim 7:16, Devarim 11:13-17, Devarim 28:1-13, 21-25, 49-63, and Devarim 29:21-27. All of these naturally affect an entire group, not the individual.

⁷ See also Devarim 5:25, 29, Devarim 11:8-9, 13-25 and Devarim 32:46-47.

⁸ R"Y Albo points to Devarim 28:36, which speaks of "you and your king" going into exile, clearly referring to the nation at large. See also Devarim 7:14 ("בְּרוּךְ תִּהְיֶה מְכַל הָעַמִּים"), Devarim 28:9 ("וְיָקִימְךָ יי' לְעַם קְדוֹשׁ") and Devarim 28:52 ("וְהֵצַר לְךָ בְּכָל שְׁעָרֶיךָ בְּכָל אֶרֶץ"). Other verses (Devarim 29:23-27) foretell how outsiders will view the fate of the *country* when the blessings / curses come to fruition, further supporting the idea that Biblical rewards are aimed at the group rather than the individual.

In addition, the collective context of specific verses implies that even surrounding verses which could theoretically be explained to refer only to the individual refer to the group as well. Thus, though the blessings

of Devarim 28:3-8 are all worded in the singular ("ברוך אתה") and could easily refer only to individuals, the fact that they are followed by a discussion of how the *nation* will be perceived after these have been bestowed, suggests that even the initial blessings of the list speak of the collective. Similarly, though Shemot 23:26 refers to the removal of barrenness, a promise which might be understood to refer to an individual, the verse's addition of "in your land" ("לא תהיה משכלה ועקרה בארצך") suggests that it is referring to a nation-wide phenomenon.

⁹ Even without such explicit references, however, the singular formulation need not be troubling as the nation is often addressed as an individual body.

¹⁰ It would be very difficult to suggest that **all** discussions of recompense in the Torah refer only to the next world as many speak of purely physical phenomena (as discussed above), all of which would seem to be irrelevant to the next world. However, one could perhaps posit an in-between position, that all the rewards refer only to the eras of Mashiach and Revival of the Dead which are to usher one into the next world. See R. Bachya who writes, "והנה כל הפרשה הזאת בין ביעודים גופניים בין ביעודים שכליים הבטחה עתידה היא, כי מעולם לא, [In this he follows Ramban, but Ramban suggests that the only reason the rewards are to come in the time of Mashiach is because it is then that the nation will first merit them; implying that if the entire nation is deserving earlier, the promises will come to fruition earlier. See discussion below.]

¹¹ These verses refer to honoring one's parents and sending away the mother bird. Similar blessings are mentioned for honesty in business dealings in Devarim 25:15, and for general observance of mitzvot in Devarim 5:25, Devarim 5:29, Devarim 6:24, Devarim 12:28 and Devarim 32:47.

¹² This, however, is difficult with regards to Devarim 5:15, as the verse explicitly states, "על האדמה אשר יי"י", suggesting that the promise applies to this world. Nonetheless, the concept can be applied to other verses such as Devarim 5:25, Devarim 6:24, and Devarim 12:28 (none of which mention specific physical goods or that the blessing will apply "on the land.") See R"Y Albo who explains also the promises of "נחם בָּהֶם" in Vayikra 18:5 to refer to eternal life.

¹³ See also R. Yonah.

¹⁴ Cf. Sforno on Devarim 5:29. See also his comments to Devarim 7:12 where he claims that any good that is reaped by an individual in this world is a "חסד", not retribution for his deeds.

¹⁵ Rambam notes that this is the reason that all yearn for the Messianic age as well. The peace that will mark the era will enable all to engage in Torah and mitzvot, meriting all with the rewards of the next world.

¹⁶ The same is true for sinners. Once someone has embarked on a path of evil, he is cursed with travails, making observance more difficult and paving the way for his true punishment in the next world.

¹⁷ Others examples include the spies, Yehuda's sons, Miriam, Korach, Datan and Aviram, and more.

¹⁸ The Divine punishment of Adam and Chavvah or Kayin might also be viewed as exceptional, as they lived before the giving of the Torah. Moreover, there was no human courts in place at the time to deliver justice in this world.

¹⁹ These would not be difficult for Rambam, who would view each of these as speaking of enablers, as discussed above.

²⁰ See the singular formulation: "אל פניו להאבידו".

²¹ See Rashbam and R. Yosef Bekhor Shor and the discussion in Are Children Punished for Parents' Sins. One could alternatively explain, like Ralbag, that the verse is referring to the immediate punishment of the collective, speaking of enemy nations, not individual sinners. Hence, the initial plural formulation of "לשנאיו".

[Ralbag himself, however, understands the verse as a whole in a different manner. Following Targum Onkelos and others, he assumes that the verse refers to early rewarding of sinners for the few positive actions they perform, so as to more fully punish them later.]

²² See, for instance, the promise of long life for honoring one's parents in Shemot 20:11 or for using proper weights in business in Devarim 25:15.

²³ See Ibn Ezra, Ralbag, Shadal and Hoil Moshe .

²⁴ See above that others suggest that these refer to rewards of the next world.

²⁵ He explains the mechanism of the collective reward, noting that a society in which people revere their parents is one in which people have respect for their elders. This, in turn, leads to general Torah observance, meriting the nation to live in Israel and not be exiled.

Though he and the other exegetes address only Shemot 20, the same logic could be applied to other similar verses which also grant long or good life for individual observance of specific commands. Another example where the text itself might imply national retribution for what appears to be an individual transgression is Shemot 22:21-23. As the chapter as a whole speaks of recompense to be meted out in human courts for individual crimes, it would seem that these verses, too, speak of an individual's actions, yet nonetheless the punishment appears collective in nature, "וְחָרָה אִפִּי וְהִרְגֹתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּחָרֵב".

²⁶ Alternatively, this approach could explain that this case is exceptional, as it speaks of a scenario in which human courts fail to do their job ("הַעֲלֵם יַעֲלִימוּ עִם הָאָרֶץ אֶת עֲוֹנוֹתָם מִן הָאִישׁ הַהוּא"), leaving Hashem to fill in.

²⁷ For the Rambam, the biggest punishment is that a soul should cease to exist and lose the opportunity of joining in the spiritual good of the next world.

²⁸ The Rambam explains that the Messianic era will occur sometime in the future, in this world itself. It will not be marked by the supernatural, but rather by a just leader, world peace and conditions which will enable people to learn and observe Torah with ease.

Rambam is a bit more ambiguous about the nature of the period of the Resurrection of the Dead. He claims that it is a phenomenon limited to the righteous alone and appears to believe that souls will come back to life with a body, but then die again to return to עולם הבא, where they resume their purely spiritual existence and continue to enjoy this ultimate reward. Given that Rambam believes that life in עולם הבא is the better existence, and that souls can enjoy it from the moment of death, it is not clear what he thinks is the purpose of the Resurrection.

²⁹ One could have alternatively suggested, as do R. Saadia Gaon and Ramban, that the World to Come is an actual physical place which will be created after the Messianic age and Resurrection of the Dead, in which the resurrected will live eternally. If so, the ultimate reward is for both the body and soul, and is not purely spiritual (though bodies might not need physical sustenance or act as they do in this world). R. Saadia and R"Y Albo explain that since both the body and soul performed mitzvot, and neither was fully rewarded in this world, they both deserve reward in the next world.

³⁰ See Rambam, Ralbag, Ran, R"Y Albo, and Abarbanel.

³¹ The more righteous one is (or the more in line with the Active Intellect), the more providence one will receive. Ralbag notes that, as a result, it is possible that some people might not merit any individual providence at all. Moreover, even a basically good person, who at times benefits from Divine providence, might not merit enough providence to cause Hashem to overturn nature on his behalf.

³² These sources do not use the language of natural order but instead refer to "מערכת הכוכבים".

³³ The Ran points to Rava's statement in Bavli Moed Katan 28a that length of life and livelihood are dependent on the constellations rather than one's merits, as proven by the very different fates of Rabbah and R. Chisda despite their both being Torah giants.

³⁴ For example, if one deserves rain, but his neighbors do not, to make the individual's crops grow while the neighbors' suffer drought requires a miracle.

³⁵ R. Yaakov's position that "שְׂכָר מַצּוֹה בְּהַאי עֲלָמָא לִיכָא" is presented in Bavli Chulin as an answer to Elisha b. Avuyah's questioning of a real life scenario, where a son who both honors his father and observes the commandment of sending away the mother bird, gets not long life as promised by the Torah, but early death!

³⁶ This issue, though, might still be somewhat difficult for the Rambam who suggests that people who perform mitzvot should receive the benefits listed in Torah, even if they are not considered rewards.

³⁷ See Theodicy – צדיק ורע לו – for a full discussion.

³⁸ See R. Yaakov's statement in Mishna Avot 4:16, "הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה דּוֹמֶה לְפָרוֹזְדּוֹר בְּפָנֵי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא".

³⁹ See Abarbanel who discusses seven different approaches taken by his predecessors. Others, too, have made similar lists. See R. Bachya, R"Y Albo and Keli Yekar (who mainly summarizes Abarbanel's list.)

⁴⁰ R"Y Albo questions that there are many other difficult concepts in Torah which were not hidden despite the fact that many might not be able to comprehend them.

⁴¹ See also Shadal in his letter to Almeda: "However, for purposes of sanction in his laws, Moses announced rewards that were earthly, natural, verifiable in this life,

and such a sanction was much more effective than one that would

have been drawn from heavenly rewards, supported by faith alone." (See Daniel Klein, "A Letter to Almeda: Shadal's Guide for the Perplexed," Hakirah 10: 225-241 for a translation of the full letter.)

⁴² The Kuzari notes that among the blessings promised for this world are also spiritual ones (for instance, Vayikra 26:12 promises "וְהִתְלַחֲתִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְהִיִּיתִי לָכֶם לֵאלֹהִים"). When people see that even in this world, one's soul can cling to the Divine and reap spiritual rewards, they will know by a priori argument that in the spiritual world to come, their souls will surely be able to benefit similarly.

⁴³ Though the Mishna implies that there is reward in this world, it is not clear what is the extent of the reward to be received. The Netziv, though, claims that the statement, "כָּל הָעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה אַחַת מִטִּיבִין לוֹ וּמֵאֲרִיכִין לוֹ יָמָיו וְנוֹחַל" teaches that one receives retribution for each mitzvah in both worlds. See also Rabbenu Tam's understanding of Abbaye's explanation of the Mishna, "דְּעֵבְדִּין לִיה יוֹם טָב וְיוֹם בִּיש", that a wicked person gets mostly punishments in this world, and just an occasional good day to reward him for any good deeds that he have performed (and vice versa for a righteous individual) which might suggest that he, too, thinks that this world's retribution is for all deeds.

⁴⁴ This position is most clear in his comments to Devarim 22:7.

⁴⁵ In his introduction to Yeshayahu, Shadal speaks about how one can only understand Tanakh if one recognizes that there is Divine providence and reward and punishment in this world. Though he is not explicit if he is referring to the individual or only to the collective, the continuation of his comments suggest the former. Nonetheless, it is still not clear if he assumes that the rewards of this world are meted out for each and every mitzvah observed, only for observance of specific mitzvot or perhaps for general upright behavior.

⁴⁶ See, for example, Vayikra 26:3-12, Devarim 5:25, 29, Devarim 11:8-9, 13-25 and Devarim 32:46-47.

⁴⁷ See the many blessings and curses in Vayikra 26, Devarim 11, or Devarim 28 which relate to rain or drought, victory or defeat in war, plague, exile and the like

⁴⁸ See, for instance, rewards of longevity for honoring parents (Shemot 20:11 and R. David Zvi Hoffmann there), sending away the mother bird (Devarim 22:6-7), or honesty in business (Devarim 25:15), Hashem's promise to punish one who sleeps with his uncle (Vayikra 20:20), or blessings of prosperity for one who gives the tithe of the poor (Devarim 14:28-29) or loans to the disadvantaged (Devarim 15:7-10). As several of these specifically mention blessings "on this land" (Shemot 20:11 and Devarim 25:15) and others refer to physical punishment (Vayikra 20:20.) or material prosperity (Devarim 14:28-29 and Devarim 15:7-10.), it seems that these, too, refer to recompense in this world and not the next. In addition, some of these rewards (longevity and dying childless) would seem to naturally affect the individual rather than the collective.

⁴⁹ As Hashem is addressing every individual within the nation (and not speaking to one person at a time), it is natural to address them in the plural, even if the words apply to each personally.

⁵⁰ See R. Saadia who notes this, and concludes from this fact that even future rewards of the next world will be for both the body and soul.

⁵¹ Conversely, when good is brought to the collective, Hashem will ensure that a wicked individual not share in it, so that he gets his proper punishment. Thus, while rain might come to reward the righteous individual, the crops of a neighboring wicked person might nonetheless fail.

⁵² Cf. R. Yeshayah Horowitz.

⁵³ His motivation in positing this appear to be a reluctance to have any evil be brought directly from God. If sin, on its own, brings afflictions, man has no one to blame but himself when tragedy strikes.

⁵⁴ He states that in times of anger, Divine providence will only serve to protect someone if he is righteous enough to merit a miracle.

⁵⁵ For this and other takes on collective punishment, see Collective Punishment, Collective Punishment for Akhan's Sin, and Are Children Punished for Parents' Sins.

⁵⁶ Thus, despite receiving rewards in this world, full justice is not served until the World to Come.

⁵⁷ According to the Netziv, who views retribution as a natural outcome of one's deeds, one might suggest that in such cases two natural processes might simply be in competition with one another. If, for instance, one climbs an unstable ladder to send away the mother bird, on one hand, nature dictates that he deserves a reward for observance of the mitzvah, yet on the other hand, nature simultaneously dictates that he might fall from the ladder. In some cases, then, he might fall.

⁵⁸ One might also suggest that in many cases, the seeming absence of retribution is simply a misperception. The vast majority of the rewards and punishments in Torah are for general observance, which is difficult for an outsider (not privy to others' every thought and action) to gauge. Moreover, Torah does not even share what level of righteousness one needs to merit these rewards. As such, it is possible that people who do not reap blessings have simply not accumulated sufficient merits.

Rewards received might be misperceived as well. Often, the rewards promised by Torah are quite general in nature (למען ייטב לך), which makes their fulfillment difficult for an outsider to discern. As there are often hidden goods, or good disguised as bad, one might not recognize such blessings immediately. In addition, as rewards and punishments are not always given in the immediate aftermath of one's actions, it is not always easy to see the correspondence between deed and retribution. The lack of perception, though, does not mean that the reward was not granted. For elaboration on this approach to the question of theodicy, see צדיק ורע לו.

⁵⁹ As Bavli Pesachim 8a-b asserts, "האומר סלע זו לצדקה בשביל שיחיה בני או שאהיה בן העוה"ב הרי זה צדיק גמור".

⁶⁰ This would appear to be the simple understanding of these sources. It is possible, however, to explain that the Mishna is not saying that one will be rewarded/punished by Hashem for observance of these mitzvot in this world, but only that one will reap the natural benefits/detriments of such behavior.

⁶¹ This is the simple understanding of R. Yochanan's words, but, here too, it is possible that R. Yochanan is referring to natural consequences rather than active retribution.

⁶² See the similar list in Bavli Shabbat which adds also visiting the sick, hospitality, and prayer. The gemara there suggests that all of these fall under the more general category of "loving kindness" mentioned in Mishna Peah. Similarly, Bavli Shabbat's addition of judging everyone favorably might parallel Peah's "peace-making" between individuals.

⁶³ He does not address how the mitzvah of learning Torah fits into this categorization, saying only that it is equivalent to all as learning brings to action.

⁶⁴ In some printed editions of Rambam's commentary, the translation reads, "יקבל כמו כן שכר מהענין ההוא", explicitly referring to the good that the individual will receive as a reward. In the translation of R. Kapach, however, he uses the term "תועלת", benefit. If so, Rambam might simply be speaking of the natural benefits of proper interactions with the other and not real "reward". [This reading would fit better with Rambam's overall approach to reward and punishment discussed in the first approach above.].

⁶⁵ Chovot HaLevavot precedes and might have influenced the Rambam's reading of the Mishna (though his comments are unconnected to the Mishna.) He distinguishes between "concealed" obligations of the heart (those that affect only the individual and God) and "revealed" obligations of the limbs (those that affect others as well). Visible duties get visible rewards in this world, while concealed ones are rewarded with the hidden good of the next world. R. Bachya points to Devarim 29:28 as support, "הַנִּסְתֵּר לֹא אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהַגָּלוּת לָנוּ", "ולְבָבֵנוּ עַד עוֹלָם".

⁶⁶ Though gossip would seem to be a "minor" crime, its inclusion in the list and the statement that it is equivalent to all suggests that the Tosefta is trying to underscore how serious the sin is.

⁶⁷ In contrast to the analysis here, see Yerushlami Peah which derive the list of mitzvot included in the Mishna and Tosefta from other verses throughout Tanakh.

⁶⁸ See Vayikra 26, Devarim 5:25, Devarim 6:1-3, Devarim 7:11-16, Devarim 11:13-25 and Devarim 28.

⁶⁹ Most of these verses are prefaced with a statement to the effect of "וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַע תִּשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְיָ" or "אִם" or "וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַע תִּשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְיָ", mentioning keeping Hashem's laws as a whole, but not specifying any one commandment..

⁷⁰ These units either specifically mention the nation, are worded in the plural, or speak of naturally collective retribution such as rain or war. [See the discussion above for elaboration.]

⁷¹ See, for instance, rewards of longevity for honoring parents (Shemot 20:11), sending away the mother bird (Devarim 22:6-7), or honesty in business (Devarim 25:15), Hashem's promise to punish one who sleeps with his uncle (Vayikra 20:20) or worships the Molekh (Vayikra 20:1-5), or blessings of prosperity for one who gives the tithe of the poor (Devarim 14:28-29) or loans to the disadvantaged (Devarim 15:7-10).

⁷² The very fact that these deeds are singled out might hint to their unique status and imply that even individuals reap Divine rewards for them already in this world. In addition, several of these specifically mention the individual (see Vayikra 20:1-5's "אֶתְּ אֶת פְּנֵי בְּאִישׁ הַהוּא" or Devarim 29:17s', "אִישׁ אִו אִשָּׁה") and others mention rewards that naturally affect the individual (dying childless or longevity) further supporting the idea that these rewards are aimed at the individual.

⁷³ In several cases, however, the Mishna and Tosefta bring a general category where Tanakh might mention a very specific example. For example, while the Torah speaks of the specific sexual misdemeanor of a man

sleeping with his aunt, the Tosefta talks of גילוי עריות in general. Similarly, while Torah rewards very specific examples of acts of kindness (giving tithes and loans to the poor), Mishna Peah generalizes and speaks of all גמילות חסדים. [Rambam then expands the category even further to include all interpersonal acts.]

⁷⁴ The following list demonstrates the correspondence:

- כבוד אב ואם – Honoring parents is rewarded with longevity in Shemot 20:11.
- וגמילות חסדים והבצאת שלום – Devarim 14:28-29 and Devarim 15:7-10 promise prosperity to one who has given the tithe of the poor or loans to the disadvantaged, acts of חסד. [Conversely, oppression of the widow and orphan is met with promises of death (Shemot 22:21-23).]
- עבודה זרה – In Vayikra 20:3 and in Devarim 29:17-20, Hashem explicitly targets individual worshipers of idolatry.
- גילוי עריות – Vayikra 20:20 specifies punishment of childlessness to one who sleeps with his aunt.
- שפיכות דמים – Already in Bereshit 9, Hashem says that He will seek the death of any individual who kills another (ומייד האדם מייד איש אחיו אדרש את נפש האדם)
- לשון הרע – Despite the fact that this sin is not singled out by Torah for retribution, the story of Miryam's slandering of Moshe and subsequent Divine punishment supports its inclusion in the list, as it suggests that it, too, is a crime which is punished in this world.

The above list includes almost all the specific deeds for which reward or punishment is specified in Torah. Two exceptions include the sending away of the mother bird and using proper weights in business, both of which merit longevity. They do not make it into the list of the Mishna in Peah, but could easily fit into Rambam's expanded category of "mitzvot that relate to the other" or Chovot HaLevavot's "mitzvot of the limbs". [Alternatively, they might also be perceived as other examples of loving kindness and peacemaking mentioned in the Mishna.]

⁷⁵ For example, see the punishments of Kayin for murder, David for murder and adultery, and Miryam for gossip.

⁷⁶ One might also question why there is no evidence of individuals being rewarded for the interpersonal mitzvot listed in the Mishna. This silence, though, need not be particularly troubling as interpersonal acts are not often discussed in Torah and even when they are, there is no reason to expect that rewards will automatically be mentioned. Tanakh share the crimes and punishments of its characters much more often than their rewards.

⁷⁷ One might question why, then, the individual also receives reward in the World to Come. According to Rambam, since the interaction with the other is this worldly, it deserves reward here, but since the very observance of the command, an act of obedience to Hashem, is a spiritual act, it is deserving of compensation also in the next world. [According to Chovot HaLevvaot, in contrast, it seems that the physical reward suffices.]

⁷⁸ He notes that this is clear from both the nature of the blessings themselves, as rain, war, or plague naturally affect a group, and the fact that many refer specifically to the land of Israel.

⁷⁹ He notes that these speak of personal rather than national health (how food will be blessed to ensure that individual bodies are robust). One might question Ramban's reading of these verses as the context is one which speaks of the nation as a whole and the language of "בארצך" might suggest that Hashem is speaking of a nation wide phenomenon. Nonetheless, even if one disagrees regarding these particular verses, as seen above, there are other verses which might more easily be viewed as targeting the individual as well so Ramban's assertion that certain blessings might be aimed at the individual can be sustained by the text.

⁸⁰ Regarding collective rewards, he writes, "אלה הברכות בתשלומיהן לא תהיינה רק בהיות כל ישראל עושין רצון אביהם" suggesting that the nation needs to be totally righteous - i.e. the vast majority (if not all) of its members must be deserving. Regarding individual rewards, he writes, "דע כי הנסים לא יעשו לטובה או לרעה רק", suggesting that Hashem intervenes in the world to reward or punish only these two extremes.

⁸¹ Alternatively, he might claim that these are exceptional and that for these specific miztvot even the average individual is rewarded even in this world.

⁸² Alternatively, one might suggest that these people are actually still considered "צדיקים גמורים" despite their transgressions, and so Divine providence affects them in this world for both good and bad. [It is questionable, however, if one can label someone who murdered and committed adultery a "צדיק גמור". Ramban, himself, points to Bavli Moed Katan 16 which explains that David did not merit the blessings of Devarim (the ability to chase 1000) due to his sin with Uriah, i.e because he was not totally righteous.]

⁸³ In other words, they were not "צדיקים גמורים".

⁸⁴ Moreover, as it very difficult for an outsider to determine a person's exact level of righteousness, it becomes difficult to question the injustice of any individual's retribution.

⁸⁵ At first glance, Ramban's views on Divine providence appear contradictory. In several places, such as Bereshit 18:19, Devarim 11:13, his introduction to Iyyov, and Iyyov 36:7, he explicitly states that Hashem's providence in this world extends only to the collective, and to several select individuals (the purely righteous or wicked), while the rest of the world is run by nature. However, elsewhere Ramban appears to imply that nothing in the world is natural, but rather all is miraculous. Thus, in his comments to Shemot 13:16, he writes: "שאין לאדם חלק בתורת משה רבינו" עד שנאמין בכל דברינו ומקרינו שכלם נסים אין בהם טבע ומנהגו של עולם, בין ברבים בין ביחיד."

Prof. D. Berger, Miracles and the Natural Order in Nahmanides, in Isadore Twersky, ed., Rabbi Moses Nahmanides: Explorations in his Religious and Literary Virtuosity (Massachusetts, 1983): 107-128, suggests that an analysis of all of Ramban's statements regarding providence and miracles suggests that he views all *retribution* in this world as being miraculous acts of Divine intervention, but not that the entire running of the world is miraculous. For the most part, the world is run by nature; when Hashem needs to reward or punish the collective or the totally righteous/wicked, Divine intervention and miracles are necessary.

⁸⁶ Average people, though, will receive their just desserts only in the world to come.

⁸⁷ He notes various levels of miracles. There are overt miracles such as the splitting of the sea in which there is obvious overturning of nature, and there are hidden miracles in which Hashem works through nature, but which are nonetheless manifestations of Divine intervention. Reward and punishment fall into the latter category. He notes that individual rewards are less evident miracles than collective ones because in every society there are individuals who are extremely successful (or the opposite) and this can be perceived as chance, whereas when an entire collective benefits from Hashem's blessings or suffers from His curses and the entire country is blessed with rain, peace, and prosperity (or the opposite), it becomes evident that Hashem's hand must be involved.

⁸⁸ Alternatively, he might simply believe that a complete human is one who has both a body and soul, viewing the body not simply as a container for the soul, but something with inherent worth.

⁸⁹ See the discussion above.

⁹⁰ Some blessings, such as many of those listed in Vayikra 26 and Devarim 28 which speak of national goods (rain, plague, peace, or exile) might be aimed at the collective, while others, such as promises of

longevity or curses of barrenness, might be aimed at the individual.

⁹¹ See, for instance, Vayikra 26:4-6, Devarim 5:29, Devarim 11:8-9, Devarim 11:17 or Devarim 28:6.

⁹² See, for example, Shemot 23:25-27, Devarim 4:40, Devarim 5:15, Devarim 7:13, Devarim 11:21, or Devarim 25:15. Other verses do not explicitly state that the blessings or curses will fall on the land, but speak about observance or transgression being in the land, and thus imply that the retribution is there as well. See, for instance, Shemot 23:23-27 and Devarim 6:1-3.

⁹³ The spies are killed via plague soon after delivering their report, Datan and Aviram are swallowed by the earth right after rebelling, and Miryam is struck with *tzara'at* right after slandering Moshe.

⁹⁴ There are exceptions in both directions. Even in later books sometimes an individual will be miraculously punished immediately after sin, such as Uzziyahu who is struck with *tzara'at*. And in earlier books there is also evidence of more natural punishments, such as Yehuda's sons who die young for their evil ways.

⁹⁵ See, for instance, Shaul who loses his kingship for his failing to abide by Hashem's word to obliterate Amalek, David who is plagued with family turmoil for his sin with Batsheva, or Achav whose descendants are wiped out and who himself is disrespected in death (with dogs lapping up his blood) for his idolatrous ways.

⁹⁶ For example, the nation is plagued right after their sin at Ba'al Peor, fire immediately rages on those who complained in Tavera, and those who eat from the quail are killed "when the flesh was still between their teeth".

⁹⁷ For instance, the defeat at Ai is attributed to the sin of Akhan, while the salvation from Assyria is connected to the righteous Chizkiyahu's prayers.

⁹⁸ The famine in the time of David (Shemuel II 21) is due to Shaul's sin of having killed the Givonites, while the drought in the time of Eliyahu is a direct result of the nation's worship of the Baal.

⁹⁹ Thus, Melakhim 17 lists the sins that led to the exile of the ten tribes, explicitly portraying the event as retribution for sins and not a natural occurrence. The fall of Yehuda is similarly attributed to sin, with the text blaming the destruction on Menashe and his filling of the land with innocent blood.

¹⁰⁰ This is highlighted in Sefer Shofetim where the book's cycle of sin and punishment hinges on the idea that when the nation turns to idolatry they are punished with enemies, but when they turn back to Hashem, they merit salvation.

¹⁰¹ There is one major exception to this trend of connecting sin and punishment. Nowhere does Torah suggest that the exile in Egypt was due to sin. This might be the only national catastrophe in Tanakh which is not correlated with wicked deeds. See Purposes of the Egyptian Bondage for various understandings of the need for the bondage.

¹⁰² See also Vayikra 26 where Hashem states, "וְאִם בְּזָאת לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וְהִלַּכְתֶּם עִמִּי בְקֶרֶךְ וְהִלַּכְתִּי עִמָּכֶם בְּחֶמֶת קָדְרִי". Keli Yekar explains that when people fail to recognize Hashem's hand and assume that all is up to chance, Hashem punishes accordingly, removing His Divine providence and leaving man to the whims of nature. See the discussion in Manifold Punishment.

¹⁰³ This might be viewed as either a punishment, or, alternatively, as a necessity for survival. Being left to nature leaves room for potential calamities, but probably not total destruction (especially if the nation is dispersed), whereas an undeserving nation who is under direct providence might be utterly destroyed.

¹⁰⁴ However, as spiritual development via hidden providence is only possible if it is preceded by a period of overt miracles which instill faith and recognition of God, the move towards natural guidance was gradual.

¹⁰⁵ See the discussion above.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. R. Friedman's *The Disappearance of God: A Divine Mystery* (New York, 1995) who traces God's diminishing presence throughout Tanakh. He does not single out these specific turning points, but does attempt to show how Divine providence, revelation, and miraculous intervention slowly disappears over the course of Biblical history.

¹⁰⁷ It is important to note, however, that one might disagree with this description. The verses states explicitly that Adam was placed in the garden to "work and guard it", suggesting that perhaps all was not miraculously provided for. The nature of both the "Tree of Life" and "Tree of Knowledge" is disputed, with some viewing them as not having any intrinsic, miraculous qualities. [See *The Tree of Knowledge* for discussion.] Finally, though Adam and Chavvah communicate with the Divine, this might not mark a higher level of contact than that of other prophets later in history.

¹⁰⁸ See Hashem's promise: "וְלֹא אֶחָד עוֹד לְהַכּוֹת אֶת כָּל חַיִּי". See also *Undoing and Redoing Creation* that the re-creation the world after the flood is a more natural process than the original, with Hashem being less active and more distant from mankind. This might reflect initial steps towards a more natural running of the world.

¹⁰⁹ See M. Leibtag, *The Thirteen Middot of Rachamim*.

¹¹⁰ As the nation was prone to sin, immediate retribution could cause their decimation. See Shemot 33:3 where Hashem tells Moshe that He will send an angel before the nation to lead them into Israel, for Hashem Himself will no longer go with them (כִּי לֹא אֶעֱלֶה בְּקִרְבְּךָ), lest he destroy the stiff-necked nation en route ("פֶּן אֶכְלֶךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ").

¹¹¹ This, however, does not mean that there is never again immediate retribution, only that from now on there is also a new policy of deferred and delayed retribution. Moreover, it appears that the policy is instituted only gradually, as there are still many cases in the rest of the Wilderness period in which sinners appear to be smitten somewhat instantaneously (from the fire that kills the complainers in Tavera to the plague after the nation sins with Ba'al Peor).

¹¹² A similar phenomenon might have taken place during the revelation at Sinai. See Rashbam and Ibn Ezra in *The Decalogue: Direct From Hashem or Via Moshe* who suggest that the original plan was that the nation hear all 613 commandments straight from Hashem, but due to the people's fear, Hashem distanced Himself and allowed Moshe to act as intermediary.

¹¹³ See Sforno who makes a similar claim, but with regards to the sin of the calf: "כִּי אִמְנֵם בְּמִתֵּן תּוֹרָה לְלוֹי". "הַשְּׁחִיתוּ הִיתָה הַכוֹוֶנָה לְשׁוּם אוֹתָם בְּמַעֲלַת יְמוֹת הַמִּשְׁחָה וְעוֹלָם הַבָּא".

See also T. Granot "פרשת שלח - פרשת המרגלים כקו פרשת המים של התורה" who goes further to suggest that all the civic and political law discussed in the continuation of Torah would have been unnecessary had the spies not sinned, for the people would have been governed by Hashem with a theocracy rather than a monarchy.

¹¹⁴ See the discussion above that retribution in the judicial and monarchic period do indeed appear to be more natural and less immediate.

¹¹⁵ One might question this approach from the book of Daniel which also takes place in exile, close to the end of the monarchic period, but which is replete with miraculous intervention. The book highlights Daniel's exemplary observance and adherence to his faith and his subsequent salvation, clearly connecting deed and retribution. It is possible, though, that Daniel is simply an exception, for no accompanying miracles are evident on the collective level.

¹¹⁶ The many parallels to the story of Yosef (see Yosef and Megillat Esther), in which Hashem is repeatedly mentioned and the character's themselves recognize the role He plays (כִּי לְמַחְיָה שְׁלַחְנִי אֶל־לֵהִימ לְפָנֶיכֶם) might

highlight the point.

¹¹⁷ See R"m. Leibtag above.