

Understanding & Dealing with *Nisyonot* (Difficulties & Challenges) — Part 1 Introduction, Insights from the *Akeidah*, Understanding *Nisyonot*

Introduction:

There are many important issues and questions to clarify with *nisyonot* (tests):

Are there different types?

What is their purpose or purposes?

Is everyone given tests?

Should we view them as positive or negative?

Are they absolutely necessary for our growth and development?

Is it really the case that we are always capable of passing whatever tests we are given?

What does it actually mean to pass a test?

And, finally, how can we be most successful with our tests?

The classical examples of *nisyonot* (tests) in the Torah were the ten that Avraham went through. In fact, they are what transformed him from Avram, the child of an idolater, into Avraham, father of the Jewish people.

Insights from the *Akeidah* — When Hashem Commanded Avraham to Offer Yitzchak up on the Altar

Rabeinu Bachya writes on the verse (*Bereshit* 22:1) — “Hashem tested Avraham” —

Even though the *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avot* (5:3) tells us that Avraham was tested with ten tests, only the *Akeidah* is explicitly referred to in the Torah as a “*nisayon*.” This is because it was the greatest of all the tests. When Hashem wants to test a person with a big *nisayon*, He doesn't test him with that *nisayon* at the beginning. Rather, He initially tests him with small tests, to accustom him to standing up to tests. He will develop the strength to stand up to a big test through this, and the greatness of his love for Hashem will then be revealed.

The **Maharal** (*Derech Chaim* 5:2) discusses the fact that there were [a **complete** number of] ten *nisyonot* with which Avraham was tested —

Since the world was created complete and perfect, the *Mishnah* (*Pirkei Avot* 5:2) tells us that it was created with 10 *ma'amarot* (statements) — so it should include everything. For this same reason, Hashem tested Avraham with 10 *nisyonot*, in order that Avraham be tested with every type of *nisayon*. It is possible for a person to stand up to one type of a test, but not to a different type of test. And similarly, the 10 *nissim* (miracles) which were done for our forefathers in *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) were because Hashem wanted to do *nissim* of every single type for them.

The **Malbim** (*Bereshit* 26:1) clarifies —

The main point of a *nisayon* is for *ahavat Hashem* (the love of G-d) to grow within a person's heart to the point that all other loves he has are nullified to it, and whatever he loves the most will be sacrificed and dedicated to it [which is, of course, exactly what the *Akeidah* itself expressed]. Avraham was tested because he had come to recognize his Creator through philosophical thought and analysis. G-d wanted him to have complete *emunah* (belief), independent of his intellectual understanding — simply to follow after G-d's will in all circumstances. Therefore, He tested him with ten *nisyonot* to determine whether Avraham would question how G-d dealt with him. In contrast, Yitzchak, who had already received strong *emunah* from his father, did not need these tests.

The **Medrash Shmuel** explains the meaning of what the *Mishnah* (*Pirkei Avot* 5:3) says — “[Avraham] stood up to all ten tests [he was given]” —

The nature of people is to be pained when they have *yissurim*, even when they are *tzadikim gemurim* (completely righteous). Therefore, the *Mishnah* tells us that, even when Avraham was being tested with the ten tests, he fully stood up to all of them. He did not feel that their difficulty

pulled him down, but rather they established his stature, since he was emotionally settled with them.

The **Ktav V'HaKabala** (*Bereshit* 22:3) writes similarly that —

When the Torah tells us that “Avraham got up early” [for the *Akeidah*], it is teaching the remarkable enthusiasm of Avraham, who was then 137 years old. In fact, this was the main accomplishment of Avraham. The main *nisayon* of the *Akeidah* was not whether he was going to bring Yitzchak up as an offering, since Avraham was not going to disobey G-d. Rather, Avraham not only obeyed G-d's command, but he did it with great joy and enthusiasm. Therefore, our Sages learn from this verse that the one with excitement rushes to do *mitzvot*. Nothing expresses *simcha* (joy) as much as *zerizut* (enthusiasm).

The **Rambam** (*Moreh HaNevuchim* 3:24) emphasizes that —

The *Akeidah* is...to make us aware of just how far the love and fear of G-d reaches. The command in this area [with his own child] was beyond any comparison; more than giving his money or even his life. It was greater than anything else which could possibly happen to him, or what the nature of a person could ever imagine.

The **Ramchal** (*Derech Eitz Chayim*) explains —

Greatness does not happen through randomness. Rather, all happens through cause and determination. When we see the stature of the giants, the holy *Avot* (our forefathers), we understand that there is a path and approach to building oneself. What is this? With *nisayon* after *nisayon*, greatness after greatness. Because the power of greatness and actualization are the *nisyonot*. (*Da'at Tevunot* 1:136)

This explains to us the great wonder everyone is amazed by — how can it be that despite all of the challenges and difficulties which have come upon the Jewish nation, throughout all of the exiles these thousands of years, they are still existing and standing... The actions of the *Avot* are roots, and the tree of the Jewish people grows from them. We derive nourishment, life, and existence from the strong roots of our holy *Avot*, all throughout the *galut* (exile). All of the winds of the world will, therefore, not move us from our place, since our roots cannot be moved... *Nisyonot* have the ability to build a person. The *nisyonot* of Avraham Avinu were for the sake of creating and building his stature and completion... There is no doubt that there was an order to them, like there is an order to every structure. Only with all of them together did he achieve his perfection. It is thus certain that if Avraham would not have stood up to the final test, not only would he be missing that final step, but his entire perfection would have been lacking. And then, even the earlier tests [and achievements] would have been lost. (End of *Siftei Da'at* on *Pirkei Avot*)

The **Tosfot Yom Tov** points out the reason why Avraham is called Avraham Avinu (Avraham, our father) [in the context of the *nisyonot*] —

Because we (i.e., all future generations) merit and receive benefit as a result of him standing up to all of his *nisyonot*. (*Mishnayot Mesivta* on the *Akeidah* — #28)

The **Abarbanel** (on the *Akeidah*) writes —

An additional lesson which the *Akeidah* teaches is *emunah* (solid belief) in the continued existence of the soul, and its spiritual *s'char* (benefit). If Avraham would not have believed in the existence of spiritual *s'char* [and the world to come], he would never have been able to pass this test.

The **Shelah HaKadosh** points out a remarkable insight in the name of the **Zohar** —

At the time of the *Akeidah*, the *neshama* (soul) of Yitzchak flew away and a new *neshama* entered him. While his previous *neshama* had not been able to have any children, this new *neshama* was now fit to have children. The *Ohr HaChayim* points out that this is why the birth of Rivka [his wife that he would have children with] is mentioned immediately after the *Akeidah*. Now that he had become fit to have children, his soul mate was born.

We can learn a tremendous lesson from this. Avraham thought the *Akeidah* of Yitzchak was nullifying the promise that his descendants would come through Yitzchak, and there would,

therefore, be no continuation to *Klal Yisrael* (the Jewish people). However, it was actually just the opposite! The *Akeidah* was specifically what allowed Yitzchak to become fit to have children. And it actually fulfilled the promise that Avraham's descendants would come through Yitzchak. (*Ohr Gedalyahu — Vayera Hei*)

Understanding *Nisyonot*

The **Medrash Shmuel** (*b'sheim* HaRav Rebbe Yitzchak dei Leyon) explains very simply — Every occurrence which is difficult and painful for a person is called a *nisayon*. It tests and evaluates a person in terms of which level of perfection and completion he will be able to attain in his *avodat Hashem*. (*Mishnayot Mesivta — Pirkei Avot 5:3 — #27*)

The **Medrash Tanchuma** addresses the obvious question regarding *nisyonot* — At that time, Avraham asked Hashem — Master of the Universe, a person tests his friend since he doesn't know what is in his heart. But You do know what is inside the hearts and kidneys. [Therefore, why do] You need to do this [test]? (*Siftei Chaim — Parshat Va'era*)

The **Malbim** (*Bereshit 22*) explains —

There is a distinction between a *nisayon* and a *bechina*.

A *bechina* is an evaluation of what is...in terms of the nature of something. For example, one can evaluate gold to determine whether it is gold or counterfeit.

A *nisayon*, however, is testing whether there is some potential which is not presently known. Is a person, for example, completely dedicated to Hashem?... And will he stand up in righteousness beyond the nature of most people?

A *nisayon* has no limit. Avraham was tested with ten tests and each one was greater than the previous one.

The **Torat Avraham** (*Nisayon*) discusses the concept of *nisayon* —

The meaning of *nisayon* is not something which is simply hard for a person to do, since man was not created to do easy things. As the verse says — “*adam l'amal yulad* — a person was born to toil.” One who desires easy things is simply lazy or rebellious. The goal of a person in his life is *avoda* (service) and *ameilut* (toil). [Look] how much effort a person will put into physical matters [which people generally desire], without even tiring from it. The desire will lighten the effort until he barely feels it... And if the person would [also] have a will and desire for *ruchniyut* (spirituality), then he would [also] toil in it fully, without feeling the toil. Therefore, there is no *nisayon* for toil alone. This is something natural, what one was created for, which simply requires a decision... A *nisayon* is [rather] something which is against the *teva* (nature) of people... For example, the *nisyonot* of the *Avot*... Their *nisyonot*, even according to the simple perspective of the world, were against the *teva* of the creation.

The **Sefer Chassidim** (#13) explains that *nisyonot* are required for the sake of justice — Hashem would not bring things through *nisayon* except that when He speaks about doing good to man, the Satan, who is *midat hadin* (the trait of judgment), comes before Hashem. He says — “Master of the Universe, it is not possible to do good for him until he stands up to a test.”

The **Siftei Chaim** (*Parshat Vayera — Akeidah*) quotes the *Gra* who asks a question on the benefit of *nisyonot* —

The truth is that — “*s'char mitzvah b'hai alma leika* — there is no *s'char* for a mitzvah in this world.” If so, how are we benefiting from the *zechut* (merit) of the *mitzvot* which were done by our *Avot*? The explanation is that we are not benefiting from the *guf* (body) of their *mitzvot* in this world. However, the *zerizut* (enthusiasm) and the *hidur* (beautification) of the *mitzvot* of our *Avot* is what we are consuming in this world.

The **Tiferet Yisrael** (chap. 38) writes very succinctly — The expression of love is standing up to tests (Maharal on *Pirkei Avot 5:3* — note #130).

Understanding & Dealing with *Nisyonot* — Part 2 — 6 Purposes of *Nisyonot*

First — *Nisyonot* Actualize Potential

The **Gemara Menachot** (53b) asks —

“Why is *Yisrael* (the Jewish nation) compared to an olive? To tell you that, just like an olive gives forth its oil only through being squeezed, similarly *Yisrael* doesn't return to the good except through difficulties and challenges.”

The **Siftei Chaim** (*Parshat Va'era* — *Akeidah*) explains the Ramban's commentary on the *Akeidah* to understand the concept of *nisyonot* —

The concept of a *nisayon* is that a person has complete choice with his actions; if he wants [to do something] — he will do it, and if he doesn't want to — he won't do it. It is, therefore, called a *nisayon* in terms of the one being tested.

For the person who is making the choice, it is called a *nisayon*, since he is standing between two paths [to see] if he will choose the good or not.

But Hashem, Who is testing us, is commanding us to bring the matter out from potential to actuality, so we will have *s'char* (benefit) for the *ma'aseh tov* (the good action), and not only *s'char* for the *lev tov* (good heart)...

[After the end of the *Akeidah*, G-d says — “For now I know that you fear Hashem...”] —

Initially, his fear [of G-d] was in potential; it had not actually been expressed in this great action. Now, however, it had become known in action, his *zechut* (merit) became complete, and his benefit was full from Hashem, the G-d of Israel.

Hashem is not giving the *nisayon* in order to know what the person will do. It is clear to Him what the person will do. Rather the *nisayon* is for the person to bring the matter out from potential to actuality. Hashem knew that the level of Avraham was *yerei Elokim* (G-d fearing), and filled with love and dedication to Hashem. However, as long as he hadn't actually stood up to this test, it was within the heart of Avraham only in potential. The purpose of the *nisayon* was, therefore, [in the words of the Ramban] to bring the matter out from potential to actuality, in order to give him *s'char* (benefit), not only for the *lev tov* (good heart), but also for the *ma'aseh tov* (the good action).

The **Ramban** (*Sha'ar HaGemul* #3) spells this point out —

The benefit of actually expressing *emunah* is greater than its benefit in potential alone. Therefore, G-d gives the *tzadik* the ability to demonstrate it in his positive actions.

The **Ohr Gedalyahu** (*Va'era Hei*) writes similarly —

The purpose of a *nisayon* is to bring out the qualities of a person, from potential to actuality, so they are openly expressed. Avraham was certainly created with great abilities; they simply needed to be expressed openly. Through the ten tests, the form (*tzura*) of Avraham was completed, like the *tzura* of Avraham which was above, complete, and with all of its powers... After Avraham was tested with these ten tests and had stood up to all of them, all of his qualities had been transformed from potential to actuality.. he reached the ultimate in *shleimut* (completion), which is indicated by the number ten, and he had no need for any further tests.

The **Seforno** (on the *Akeidah*) also explains this —

G-d was testing Avraham not to determine whether he would sacrifice his son or not [which was obvious]. Rather He was drawing forth the potential inner powers of faith and trust which were latent in Avraham, bringing them to the fore, and translating them into actuality through the *Akeidah*. In this manner, man also fulfills his purpose, which is to imitate his Creator, Who also manifests Himself in this world *b'po'eil* — through the actual (i.e., His works), and not only *b'koach*, in potential. The goal is that a person be as similar as possible to his Creator, as the verse testifies when it says — “He made man in His image, and like His form.” (*Sha'arei Aharon* on the *Akeidah*)

The **Maharal** (*Pirkei Avot* 5:3) elaborates on this —

We need to know that Hashem tests a *tzadik* with a *nisayon* in order that his righteousness be expressed openly, and that he not remain a hidden *tzadik*. Avraham was fit for all of the elevations which Hashem gave to him only because his righteousness was expressed.

Therefore, the verse says — “*Elokim* (*midat hadin* — the quality of judgment) tested Avraham,” and not “Hashem (YKVK) (*midat harachamim* — the quality of mercy) tested Avraham.” The *nisayon* meant that Hashem wanted the righteousness of Avraham to be known through *midat hadin* (justice), not *midat harachamim* (mercy). And knowledge through *midat hadin* is only when it is completely open and revealed, which is certainly good for the person.

The **Menorat HaMe'or** (5:3:1:3) points out — Before a person performs his action, he thinks in his mind how he will go about it. But [even] after he thinks this in his mind, he [still] needs to actually do the action.

The **Akeidat Yitzchak** (#21) explains —

The *shleimut* of everything is [only] through its expression. A matter is called complete [only] when its actions are complete.

Rav Aryeh Kaplan (Handbook of Jewish Thought — 3:53, 3:54) writes —

G-d sometimes tests a person in order to give him *s'char* (benefit). This is because there is no *s'char* for potential alone, as it is written, “Your **work** shall be rewarded” (*Divrei HaYamim* II 15:7). A test may also make a task more difficult so as to increase its *s'char*. Moreover, a test is often needed to make a person's potential and ability known to himself, so as to increase his self-confidence.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz (*Da'at Chachma uMussar* — 2:39) elaborates on this —

The foundation of this world is *midat hadin* (the quality of justice). And the outgrowth of this is the concept of “*adam l'amal yulad* — people are born for toil,” since we can't attain anything without toil and exertion...

In terms of this, we need to understand the importance of *ma'aseh* (actions). The entire Torah is filled with this foundation of *ma'aseh*, and this world is referred to as the world of action. Since the foundation of the creation is exclusively toil and exertion, this is expressed specifically through *ma'aseh*.

According to this, we can explain the whole concept of *nisyonot*...

Even before the *ma'aseh*, nothing was lacking in Avraham — his fear [of G-d] was complete, and nothing at all was added afterwards. However, the principle is that Hashem wanted to create the world with *midat hadin* (the quality of judgment), and it is impossible to attain and merit anything through *midat hadin* except through toil and exertion. And while it is true that nothing was lacking in Avraham even before the *Akeidah*, the fear of G-d which was [exclusively] in his heart, was not really worth anything... Only once he had actually gone through the *nisayon*, with toil and exertion...only through this did Avraham merit all that he gained through the *Akeidah*.

[**Rav Yerucham** (*Da'at Chachma uMussar* — 3:244) says further that] most people misunderstand the concept of bringing something from potential to actuality. They think there is no difference at all whether something is in potential or in actuality. And it seems [initially] that they are right, since there is nothing in the actualization except what was in the potential. However, this is really a serious mistake. The distance from something in potential until it is expressed in actuality is more distant than from east to west. And the truth is that we see the complete difference in both form and appearance, even from good to bad, and sweet to bitter... There are many people whose intentions and thoughts are always good, and stand only for good. But even though they really want to do good, the actions which they express are bad and very lowly... This is truly a great wonder. How can we reconcile their initial [positive] thoughts with their final [negative] actions?...

We see this with every case of potential being expressed in actuality, such as fire coming out of flint or when we light a match. At the time when it is in actuality, we see the fire, in its form and appearance. And when it was only in potential, as a piece of flint or a match, it was a completely

different entity. It had no warmth at all, it was only cold... So how did it go out from this potential to be expressed as fire?... We are necessarily forced to conclude that the middle stage here, like hitting the rock or igniting the match...is what brought the potential to actuality. And through this process, it became transformed into a different existence, into actual fire. And this is similarly true with the entire creation...

There is a remarkable treasure in our world — that each and every one of us has been given the ability and knowledge to be a creator — to transform things from quality to quality, situation to situation, and from one world to another. This is the great gift which Hashem has bestowed upon His creations, that they, too, can be a part of the creation, as partners in *ma'aseh bereshit* (the creation of the world)...

Every *tzelem Elokim* (person who was created in G-d's image) was given power, in potential, and the purpose of man in his *avodah* (service) is to express these potentials of being *b'tzelem Elokim*, into actuality... That is to say, it is incumbent on the person to create himself — to bring out his potential, his *tzelem Elokim*. Then he will truly be called man...

And now let's explain what we began with in terms of *nisyonot*. We asked what the distinction is between before a *nisayon* and afterwards. And according to what we said, it is literally like two different worlds. Initially it was the world of creation, and afterwards the world of doing... [This explains the unfortunate reality why,] even when the potentials [within a person] are very good, this is not necessarily what will be expressed in actuality.

The ***Siftei Chaim*** (*Parshat Va'era — Akeidah*) addresses a seeming contradiction with this — On the one hand, the essential quality of our *avodat Hashem* (service of G-d) is the *penimiut* (internal), as the Rabbis teach — “*Rachmana liba bouy — G-d wants the heart.*” However, on the other hand, the *penimiut* alone is not sufficient. We also need to bring the *lev tov* (good heart) out into *ma'aseh tov* (a good action)...

The *Sefer HaChinuch* (#16) [explains] — “*Adam nifal k'fi pe'ulotav — A person is formed according to his actions*”...whether positive or negative.

While “*Rachmana liba bouy — G-d wants the heart,*” the heart [itself] is drawn after and affected by the actions of the person — for both good and bad...

And, therefore, Chazal (our Sages of blessed memory) say — “*Ratza HaKadosh Boruch Hu l'zakot et Yisrael, l'fichach hirbah lahem Torah uMitzvot — Hashem wanted to give Israel merit. Therefore He increased Torah and mitzvot for them*”...since it is our good actions which transform us to be better, and to merit eternity.

This great foundation, which we learn from the *Sefer HaChinuch*, that we should increase our Torah and *mitzvot*, was not referring to an extreme case of an evil person, where the additional Torah and *mitzvot* are needed to transform him from a *lev ra* (bad heart) to a *lev tov* (good heart). It was said even about one with a *lev tov*, like Avraham!... Why would [even] he need an increase in Torah and *mitzvot*? Wouldn't it be sufficient that he have a *lev tov*?... [This shows us that] only through actual *ma'asim* of Torah and *mitzvot* will the [good] thoughts become stronger in [a person] and his *penimiut* (internal) become more and more elevated.

Second — *Nisyonot* Lift Us Up

Rav Hirsch (*Bereshit* 22:1) discusses the verse — “**G-d tested (*nisah*) Avraham**” — *Nisah* is related to *nasah* (with a *samech*), *nasach*, *nasah* (with a *sin*): to move far away, to cast far away, to raise on high. The common denominator of these three roots is — *to advance something to a further or higher point*. So, too, *nasah* (with a *samech*), as regards physical or moral powers, means “to try” or “to test”; that is, to subject these powers to challenges they had never faced before. Thus, every trial or test is an ascent, in that it strengthens and energizes powers that already exist but have not yet withstood the test of further or higher challenges. A cable that has already withstood the strain of carrying 50 pounds is tested to determine if it can also carry 51 pounds. In the case of physical and moral powers, testing strengthens and elevates them.

Rashi comments on the verse (*Shemot* 20:17) — “**For G-d has come in order to test (*nasot*) you.**” Based on the *Mechilta*, he explains —

“*Nasot*” means — “To exalt you and make you great in this world. Your name will then be known among the nations, since Hashem revealed Himself to you.” In other words, “*nasot*” is [being used as] an expression of elevation and greatness, as in “erect a flagpole (*neis*),” “I will hoist my banner (*nisi*),” “and like a pole (*neis*) on top of the hill.”

The **Netziv** (*HaEmek Davar* — *Bereshit* 22:1) explains that there are other meanings to the word “*nisah*” —

Similar to what it says in *Tehillim* (60:6) — “*Natata lireiyecha nes l'hit'noses* – You gave a banner to be raised high for those who fear You” — [Avraham] was lifted up like a banner. Chazal explain this language of “*nisah*” — that the abilities or powers of Avraham were lifted up and raised to the ultimate spiritual greatness of the Jewish nation... Hashem lifted him up bit by bit, higher and higher.

Rav Yehoshua Hartman, in his notes on the Maharal (*Pirkei Avot* 5:3), points out that — The word *nes* is explained as an *ote* or a *mofet* (a sign or a wonder)... This teaches us that Chazal equated *nisayon* with *mofet* (something wondrous). (Note #350)

The **Abarbanel** writes —

The term *nisayon* comes from “*nes*” since *nisonos* are like a pole. They establish a person on an elevated place as a sign and a proof. (*Mishnayot Mesivta* — *Pirke Avot* 5:3)

The **Sefat Emet** (*Lech Lecha* — pg. 44) adds that —

A person is elevated to a higher level through a *nisayon*. The term *nisa* is a term of *ramah* (elevation).

Rav Dessler (*Michtav M'Elizahu* 1:222) describes the process of how people grow — *Isarusa d'l'eila* (inspiration from above) [eventually] ceases and then a *nisayon* comes in its place. Every *aliya* has two aspects — *Isarusa d'l'eila* is given initially with great *rachamim* (mercy), but one needs to acquire it afterwards, once it is removed, through receiving a *nisayon*. One then acquires it with *din* (justice) once one has stood up to this difficult *nisayon*.

Third — *Nisyonot* Are beyond *Teva*

The **Sefat Emet** (*Rosh Hashanah*) explains —

In truth, every *nisayon* is a *nes* (miracle) which is happening through the person. It is a sign (*ote*) that this person is clinging to the upper root, above the *teva* (nature)... Every deviation from the natural order is called a *nes*. (Maharal — *Derech Chaim* — *Pirkei Avot* 5:3 — # 351)

Rav Yehoshua Hartman, in his notes on the Maharal (*Pirkei Avot* 5:3, #352), explains — The very essence of a *nisayon* is whether a person will overcome his nature, and thereby stand up to the test, or be drawn after his nature, and fail the test. The *nisayon* involves the person standing in a situation where he needs to choose between two possibilities — *teva* or not *teva*.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz (*Da'at Chachma uMussar* — 3:119) discusses the concept of *teva* (nature) —

What is *teva*? The creation with inherent confusions built into it. The Ramchal tells us, in *Da'at Tevunot*, that the entire creation is with *hester panim* (G-d being hidden)... And the first chapter of the *Mesilat Yesharim* says similarly that the whole world is nothing but a *nisayon*...entirely built on confusions, to test man...

The entire *avodah* of man is to remove...these confusions, and to understand and recognize the absolute truth... People need to contemplate the depth within every aspect of the creation, and to recognize the *nisayon*. And if one doesn't recognize it, one needs to accept that the confusions are in him.

The term *nisayon* (test) is always related to *nes* (miracle). Just like a *nes* is beyond *teva* (nature), a *nisayon* is also beyond *teva*. If the one being tested wouldn't act beyond *teva*, he would be unable to stand up to the *nisayon*.

The **Sha'arei Aharon** (on the *Akeidah*) says in the name of **Rav Dessler** —
When a person succeeds in a *nisayon*, he raises the level of his *nekudat habechira* (point of freewill). In other words, his *bechira* will no longer be in this area where he was tested and succeeded. From now on, his *bechira* will be only in a more elevated aspect. The word “*nisah*” (tested) is thus explained according to its simple meaning, since he has now become elevated [which is also “*nisah*”].

Fourth — Publicity to Others

The **Rambam** (*Moreh Nevuchim* — 3:24) writes —

Realize that the purpose of every *nisayon* in the Torah is for people to know what they need to do, and what is proper for them to believe. The concept of a *nisayon*, where someone does something, is not [only] for the sake of that particular action, but its purpose is [also] to be a lesson, which we should learn from and follow after.

The Rambam points out that the word *l'nasot* means “to make an example of something.” (Notes in Artscroll commentary on Ramban — *Shemot* 16:4)

The **Pirkei Moshe** adds, to explain the words of the **Rambam** —

The main purpose of a *nisayon* is to make known and to publicize the righteousness of the *tzadikim* in order for others to learn from them. (Notes in *Mishnayot Mesivta* — *Pirkei Avot* 5:3)

The **Maharal** (*Pirkei Avot* 5:3) agrees —

The *nisayon* of the *tzadik* is to make known to the world that he is a *tzadik*... And, similarly, the *tzadikim* are evaluated and tested so that people will know their accomplishments, and why Hashem gave them benefit.

The **Meiri** explains the purpose of a *nisayon* —

So that others will learn from him, do, and walk in his ways. They will know just how fitting it is for a person to do, to persevere, and to trouble oneself for the honor of his Creator. (Note #36 in *Mishnayot Mesivta* — *Pirkei Avot* 5:3)

The **Ran** (*Drush* #6) also discusses the concept of tests —

One type of test is for the benefit of the group. For example, the group should see just how great the love of those who love G-d reaches, and they should take this as a lesson for themselves.

The **Zohar** (*Bereshit* 140a) explains —

The *nisayon* will end up glorifying them (i.e., the *tzadikim*) even more. The verse (*Bereshit* 22:1) tells us — “*v'haElokim nisah et Avraham* — G-d tested Avraham” — The term “*nisah*” can also refer to a *nes*, meaning that G-d raised Avraham's banner throughout the world.

Rav Aryeh Kaplan (The Handbook of Jewish Thought — 3:54) adds —

In some cases, G-d also tests a person in order to make his good qualities known to others. It is for this reason that G-d often tests a person before choosing him for greatness or leadership.

The **Menorat HaMe'or** (5:3:1:3) writes —

Although Hashem checks a person's heart, and knows whether he will stand up to his *nisayon* or not, he still tests him, to reveal his heart and his actions before people who don't recognize what he has in his heart, and to make him great in their eyes.

Rabbeinu Bachye (*Shemot* 13:17 — Intro to *Beshalach*) discusses the purpose of *nisayonot* — G-d tests the heart through bringing people to a *bechira* and a *nisayon*. Besides examining the heart for His own sake, G-d also evaluates a person to publicize the merit of his heart to others... Tests are needed for the sake of others who don't know what is concealed, but only what is

revealed before their eyes... Therefore, when a *tzadik* has been tested, so his thoughts are now manifest to all, that demonstrates the full extent of how to serve G-d. It thus serves to sanctify G-d's name in the world.

And, finally, the **Ramban** (*Shaar HaGemul* #3) cautions us — G-d benefits the *tzadik* by allowing him to manifest his positive actions... G-d's testing is positive, and not revenge or affliction [G-d forbid]... It increases benefit to the one being tested, and it elevates G-d's name by showing the extent that He is beloved and feared, and how much people want to do His *mitzvot* and His will.

Fifth — Nisayon Relates to Hergel (Habituation)

The **Ramban** (*Shemot* 20:17) discusses the verse — “**For G-d has come in order to test you**” —

It is possible to say that [it means] — G-d has come to **habituate/accustom** you to have *emunah* in Him. Since He showed you the revelation of His Divine Presence, His *emunah* entered your heart to connect to Him, and your soul will not separate from that *emunah* forever... Based on other verses, we see that *nisah* means to be accustomed to something.

The **Rambam**, in *Moreh Nevuchim*, explains this verse (*Shemot* 20:17) similarly — Moshe told the nation — Hashem has now come to test you in the future, and in order that you will be able to stand faithfully with Him through every test you have. (Notes in Artscroll commentary on Ramban — *Shemot* 16:4)

HaR'am Alashkar points out — The language of *nisayon* also relates to the concept of *hergel* (being used to something); meaning that Hashem got Avraham more accustomed to His service. (*Medrash Shmuel* on *Pirkei Avot* 5:3)

The **Biur Yosef Bamerkavat HaMishnah** says similarly — The *nisayon* comes to accustom a person to fulfill the will of his Creator. The language of *nisayon* is related to *hergel* (being used to something) and *limud* (to learn something). (*Mishnayot Mesivta* — *Pirkei Avot* 5:3)

Sixth — Nisyonot Evaluate and Strengthen Our Emunah

The **Rambam** (*Moreh HaNevuchim* 3:24) writes — It appears that the *nisyonot* mentioned in the Torah are coming as a test and evaluation, until the degree of *emunah* for both a particular person and nation will be known, along with their spiritual ability... As it says (*Devarim* 13:4) — “G-d your L-rd has tested you to know whether you love Hashem.” And also (*Devarim* 8:2) — “To know what is inside your heart”... The purpose of the entire Torah, with everything it contains, with its positive *mitzvot* and its prohibitions, its aspirations and stories, are all about one thing — fear of G-d. The verse (*Devarim* 28:58) tells us — “Guard to do all the words of this Torah which are written in this book, to fear this exalted and awesome Name.”

Rabbeinu Bachye (*Shemot* 13:17, 15:22, *Devarim* 8:16) says similarly — Everything which happened to the Jews in the desert was a deliberate trial, to increase their level of *bitachon* (trust in G-d), [which is] the source of *emunah* (belief in G-d), through rational awareness. This was done so they would be fit to receive the Torah.

They were also tested with the manna which fell from Heaven daily, but only an amount sufficient for that day, and not for several days. All these experiences were trials to develop and implant *bitachon*... There was never such a test of a nation, traveling three days without water in the desert, in the hot summer, with their wives and children... It also served to implant in them the attribute of *bitachon* — trusting G-d.

The verse tells us — “In order to afflict you, to test you, and to do good for you in the end.” All the difficulties they experienced in the desert were only for the purpose of testing them. This was to

train them in the aspects of trust in G-d, and to bring *emunah* in G-d into their hearts, until serving G-d would become an inherent part of their nature.

The **Ramchal** (*Da'at Tevunot* 124) writes — Tests are relevant for the *tzadikim*, but not in terms of being an enticement to transgress. Rather, the essential *nisayon* comes from the Master hiding His face. That is because G-d has told us through all of His prophets that He is the *Mashgiach* (Supervisor) over all of His creations. And His eyes are on all the ways of man in order to give to every person, according to his behavior and actions — “*Keil emunah v'ein avel* — G-d is reliable and without iniquity.”

After we have understood all of this, Hashem guides His world with [seeming] confusions and mysteries, which, G-d forbid, appear to be the opposite of this. Sometimes it looks as if everything is random, while at other times it seems that the wicked are successful, and we don't [always] see that the righteous who serve Hashem receive and benefit from all of their efforts... The *nisayon* is to see if people will stand firm in their *emunah* (belief)... Will we say that “*Keil emunah v'ein avel* — G-d is reliable without iniquity” is definitely true, even though we don't understand His ways?... A huge space was left open in the *Shleimut* (Perfection) above, and a place was left for evil to darken the face of the world for this great test... However, even this enormous darkness of hiding the face of His goodness is exclusively for His *Kavod* (Honor), and will [ultimately] result in much more *s'char* (spiritual benefit) for the *tzadikim*.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz (*Da'at Chachma uMussar* — 3:37) discusses tests —

It is amazing for the verse (*Devarim* 13:4) to explain [why a false prophet is given the ability to perform authentic miracles] — “Because Hashem is testing you”...

We learn the ways of Hashem from this — To what extent can a person be tested? To the point that a false prophet is able to do real signs and wonders! And this has been the situation from the day that Adam HaRishon first transgressed in *Gan Eden*. People have been given tests in every place where they could err, and it is up to them to stand up to these tests, to recognize the truth, and to separate between truth and lies. The power which is given to the *yetzer* is remarkable, almost complete control, to the point that people are able to imagine that he is the ruler of the world...

This teaches us the *avoda kasha* (very difficult work) which is placed on people. To stand up to great and exalted tests all of one's life...

The concept of tests is that they are beyond our [intellectual] understanding...and even so, we should not question Hashem about them...and our hearts should still be complete with *emunah* (belief) in Hashem. And this was the level of the *Avot* (forefathers).

The **Chafetz Chaim** (*Shem Olam* — Chap. 3) explains —

“You should not be bothered that, since there is *hashgacha* (Divine Supervision) in the world — How can this person be poor and this person wealthy?... Even our difficulties are not for nothing... The Sages teach us that there is no person who doesn't have to deal with tests... [Since our awareness and perspective is so narrow and limited] we [simply] need to walk with G-d wholeheartedly, and to have *emunah* (complete belief) that all which G-d does is entirely for the good.”

And, finally, the **Klausenberger Rebbe** spells this out —

We all need to know that G-d tests us with one test after another, to reveal whether we have proper *emunah*. (**Shefa Chaim**)

Understanding and Dealing with *Nisyonot* — Part 3 — 3 *Mashalim* (Analogies), Tests for *Tzadikim* (Righteous) vs. Everyone

Medrashim with the three *Mashalim* (Analogies)

Bereshit Rabba (32:3) tells us:

“Hashem tests the *tzadik*, but He hates the soul of the *rasha* (evil one) and the lover of violence.” The craftsman does not test defective **vessels** because they cannot withstand even a single blow without breaking. And which ones does He check? The strong vessels — even if he would bang on them many times, they wouldn't break. Similarly, G-d does not test the wicked but only the righteous...

When a flax worker knows that his **flax** is good, [he knows that] the more he beats it the more it improves and changes. And when he knows that the flax is bad, [he knows that] it will not be able to withstand even a single blow without breaking. Similarly, G-d does not test the wicked but only the righteous...

When a person has two **bulls**, one of which is strong and the other weak, upon which one does he place the yoke? Isn't it on the strong one? Similarly G-d tests only the *tzadikim*.

Also Bereshit Rabba (Parshat Noach — 32:3), Bereshit Rabba (Parshat Noach — 34:2), Bereshit Rabba (Parshat Vayera — 55:2), Shir HaShirim (2:35), Medrash Tehillim (Socher Tov #11), Yalkut Shimoni — Tehillim (247/654)

The **Meforshim** (commentaries) discuss these *medrashim* —

The concept of these three *mashalim* (analogies) is to teach us that a *nisayon* has three different aspects. A *nisayon* could be for the sake of the tester — the one being tested — or for the onlookers. And since these *medrashim* tell us that Hashem tests only the *tzadik*, they bring *mashalim* which are fitting specifically for a *tzadik* to be tested.

The *mashal* of the **vessels**, where the good one is hit, is not to improve it, but rather to see **how strong** it is. This is for the sake of the buyers who see that the merchandise is good [i.e., for publicity]. The righteousness of the *tzadik* needs to be completely expressed in terms of *midat hadin* (the quality of justice), and not remain merely in potential. The *tzadikim* are evaluated and tested so that people will know their accomplishments, and why Hashem gave them benefit. This is also [so to speak] for the sake of Hashem, the Tester — to publicize His love, without any suspicion that He was [unfairly] favoring the *tzadik*, G-d forbid. This is the matter of Avraham and requires the *nisayon* to be on a *mitzvat aseï* (positive commandment), so that others will see what a wondrous thing he actually did, like the *Akeidah*, to fulfill the *mitzvat aseï*.

The *mashal* of the **flax**, where it is struck, is not to see how strong it is, but rather to **improve** it and fix it. Through the banging, it becomes white and pure. With this *nisayon*, which Hashem uses to test the *tzadik*, He will bring **yissurim shel ahavah** (difficulties from love) upon him to cleanse and purify his soul. This *nisayon* is for the sake of the person himself. His actions should improve through the *nisyonot* which he stood up to, to purify and prepare him in terms of his *avodat Hashem* (service of G-d).

This will remove impurities of the *yetzer hara* (negative inclination) from him, to purify him, like one purifies silver. This could [even] involve bringing him to [a situation where he may be tempted to] transgress, and then beginning a war between his *yetzer hatov* (positive inclination) and his *yetzer hara* (negative inclination). In his righteousness he will be able to conquer the *yetzer hara*. This is a *nisayon* through [the temptation of] a transgression. [And, for example,] this is the matter of Yosef, and similar cases.

And, finally, the *mashal* of the **bull** is neither to see how strong it is, nor to improve it. Rather, it is referring to a situation where its owner has many **burdens** and is testing his bull — perhaps it can carry more [for the sake of the world], which will [also] be good for it. The more the bull can carry, the more food [i.e., *s'char* (spiritual benefit)] the owner will give it afterwards.

Yissurim and *nisyonot* sometimes come upon a *tzadik*, [instead of] Hashem bringing negative decrees **upon the world**. The *tzadik* is able to bear the decrees for the sake of the entire world, to atone for them, and to protect them. This is compared to the two bulls, where the yoke is placed on the stronger one. Similarly, when Hashem wants to bring the yoke of His decrees for the transgressions of the world, He brings it on the strong ones, who are able to stand up to His decrees and His yoke.

Hashem tests the *tzadik*, by bringing *yissurim* upon him, to test whether he will accept them with love, for the sake of the generation, without rebelling. This is learned from Noach, since the yoke of *yissurim* were placed upon Noach in the ark.

Any one of these three aspects could explain why a *tzadik* is given a *nisayon*.

Sometimes he is tested like a **vessel**, to know how strong he is in his righteousness.

Other times he is like the **flax**, which is able to be improved by the *nisayon*.

And he can also be compared to the **bull**. When Hashem needs to give a large *onesh* (negative consequences for bad behavior) to the generation, He may place a large amount on the *tzadik* (righteous person) and afterwards give him much *s'char* (benefit).

(**Netziv, HaEmek Davar** — *Bereshit* 22:1 — *Akeidah*, **Malbim** — *Bereshit* 22 — *Akeidah*, — *Derech Chaim* — *Pirkei Avot* 5:3, **HaMarzu** — quoted by Maharal in *Derech Chaim* — *Pirkei Avot* 5:3, and **Alshich** — *Bereshit* 22:1 — *Akeidah*)

***Yissurim shel Ahavah* (Difficulties and Challenges from Love)**

The **Maharal** (*Pirkei Avot* 5:3) writes:

There is another [type of] *nisayon* which Hashem uses to test the *tzadik*. He will bring *yissurim shel ahavah* upon him to cleanse and purify his soul through *yissurim*.

These are only relevant for a *tzadik* where Hashem desires to purify his soul.

The Maharal (*Netiv HaYissurim* — *perek aleph*) explains that *yissurim shel ahavah* involve a *tzadik* who is fitting for a lofty elevation, but in terms of his body, there is an aspect which is not appropriate for that level. Since the limitation of the *tzadik* for that level is because of his physical orientation, Hashem brings *yissurim* upon him to purify his soul, which is clinging to physicality. This will minimize his physicality, and thereby bring him to that upper level which he would [otherwise] not be able to merit... These are, therefore, called *yissurim shel ahavah*, since Hashem loves him, and wants to bring this *tzadik* close to Him, and to cling to Him.

The **Torat Avraham** (*Simcha b'Yissurim*) points out —

It is specifically because of G-d's great love for the *tzadik* that He gives him *yissurim shel ahavah* — as a *nisayon* (test), and to elevate him through the *yissurim* to a much higher level than he could have ever gotten to without them.

Nisyonot (tests) are the path to elevation for the greatest of human beings. This elevation can also involve *yissurim*, and is included in the verse — “*et asher ye'ehav Hashem yochiach* — G-d chastises the one whom He loves.” A special love can be seen in *yissurim*.

***Nisyonot* Are Sometimes for the Sake of the Generation**

The **Alshich** (*Bereshit* 22:1 — *Bereshit Rabba* (*Parshat Vayera*) — 55:2) writes:

Hashem tests the *tzadik* by bringing *yissurim* upon him to see whether he will accept them with love for the sake of the generation... He is bearing *yissurim* to atone for them and to protect them, regarding their illnesses and their pain.

The **Maharal** (*Chidushei Aggadot* 3:156) adds:

The *tzadik* receives an *onesh* (negative consequences for bad behavior) since he is part of the *klal* (community), and the community went bad. And although there was no transgression within the *tzadik* as an individual, he does have a transgression in him in terms of being a member of a community which transgressed.

The **Rambam** (*Moreh HaNevuchim* 3:24) disagrees with this, and says:

The concept of *nisayon* is very unclear, and is the greatest of the mysteries of the Torah. The Torah mentions it in six places...

What is well known to people in terms of *nisayon* is that G-d will bring afflictions and occurrences to a person, even without that person having transgressed beforehand, in order to increase his *s'char* (benefit). However, this point is not mentioned in the Torah in a clear manner at all... In fact, the Torah actually [tells us] the opposite of this idea. It says — “*Keil emunah v'ein avei* — G-d is reliable without any iniquity.” Additionally, not all of the *Chachamim* agreed with this understanding. They have already said — “*Ein misah b'lo chet v'ein yissurin b'lo avon* — there is no death and no difficulty without transgression” (*Shabbat* 55a). This is the understanding that every intelligent *ben Torah* (Torah scholar) needs to have. Not, G-d forbid, to associate any imperfection with G-d, [i.e.] to believe that someone was innocent from transgression and still got paid [with difficulties], even though he was not obligated for what befell him.

We Are Never Tested without the Ability to Pass the Test; G-d Tests Only *Tzadikim*

Rav Saadya Gaon (*Emunah V'De'ot* 5:3) spells this out:

G-d does not test a person who cannot endure it — because it would then serve no purpose.

Rabbeinu Bachye (*Shemot* 13:17 — Intro to *Beshalach*) adds:

It is well known that “G-d tests only the righteous” (*Tehillim* 11:15).

The **Ran** (*Derashot* #6) also writes —

A test occurs only with a *tzadik* who will be able to stand up to it.

The Zohar (*Bereshit* 140a) explains:

G-d is very strict with the *tzadikim* in all they do since He knows that they will not deviate to the right or left, and therefore he tests them...to glorify them even more. For example, concerning Avraham (*Berishit* 22:1), it says — “*V'haElokim nisah et Avraham* — G-d tested Avraham.”

The **Ramban** (*Bereshit* 22:1, *Sha'ar HaGemul* #3) quotes the verse (*Tehillim* 11:15) — “Hashem examines [only] the *tzadik*” —

When He knows the *tzadik* will fulfill His will, and He wants to enhance his righteousness, He commands him to do some *nisayon*. But He does not examine the *resha'im* (wicked) who would not listen. Therefore, all *nisyonot* in the Torah are for the benefit of the one being tested.

The **Siftei Chaim** (*Parshat Va'era* — *Akeidah*) discusses the same verse — “Hashem tests only a *tzadik*” —

He knows that the *tzadik* can pass it and bring his potential out to actuality. With a *beinoni* (middle type of person), however, who is equally likely to choose good or bad, and it is doubtful whether he will pass the test, Hashem doesn't test him.

The **Malbim** (*Iyov* 36:7) brings in a deeper point —

Hashgacha Pratit (Divine Supervision) is continually with the *tzadik*, and not removed [from him] even for an instant. Furthermore, the nature of this *hashgacha* is related to the deeds of the *tzadik*. To the degree that he increases his righteousness and attachment to G-d, the *hashgacha* will apply to every detail of his activities. However, there is an additional aspect of this intense personal *hashgacha* — he is exposed to constant testing. Since G-d attends carefully to every

aspect of his existence, like one who supervises his dearly beloved only son, his righteousness, perfection and spiritual aspirations are fully examined, and this is the issue of *nisayon*.

And, finally, **Rav Aryeh Kaplan** (Guidebook to Jewish Thought — 3:55) explains — Although G-d might guide or test man, the final choice between good and evil ultimately rests with the individual [himself]. Every normal person can always control his actions, if he only tries hard enough. Man was created to be master of his fate, and as such, he bears the full responsibility for it.

Everyone Is Tested

The **Medrash** (*Shemot Rabba* 31:3 — *Parshat Mishpatim*) tells us:

Fortunate is the one who stands up to his *nisayon*, since there is no person whom Hashem doesn't test. The wealthy one is tested whether his hand will be open to the poor, and the poor one is tested whether he will be able to accept his *yissurim* (difficulties and challenges) without anger... This world is like a wheel. Not everyone who is wealthy today is wealthy tomorrow, and not everyone who is poor today is poor tomorrow...as it says in *Tehillim* 75:8 — “Hashem is the Judge, this one goes down and this one goes up.”

The **Ramchal** emphasizes (in *Mesilat Yescharim* — Chapter 1):

Everything in this world, whether for good or bad, is a test for a person. Poverty on the one side and wealth on the other...tranquility on one side and *yissurim* on the other side, until you find that there is a battle upon him, [both] in front and from behind.

He elaborates on this (in *Derech Hashem* — 2:3:1):

We have already discussed the fact that man's task is to exist and choose good in a world containing both good and evil...

In order for these qualities to exist, it was necessary that individuals be divided into different situations in life. Each of these circumstances is then a test for a particular individual...

The rich person is tested by his wealth if he will be cruel towards the poor person who needs him, or if he will be merciful towards him. And similarly, the poor person is tested to see if he will be satisfied with the little in his hand, and thank G-d, or the opposite...

The Highest Wisdom divided these challenges among the human race in a manner decreed fitting and proper to fulfill its profound plan.

Every individual has his particular *nisayon* and battle against the *yeitzer*. This is his task and responsibility in this world...his deeds are then judged by G-d's attribute of Justice with true precision, depending on the particular responsibility which was given to him.

Rav Dessler (*Michtav M'Elizahu* — 1:23) writes:

Every person is surrounded by what is required for his particular situation... There are those who need to stand up to the *nisayon* (test) of wealth and pleasures in *Olam Hazeih* — not to become overly involved in physicality to the point that they completely forget their Creator... And there are [others] who need to withstand the *nisayon* of poverty and many difficulties, and even so, not to challenge how G-d deals with them.

Rav Yehoshua Hartman, in his notes (#334, 354) on the Maharal (*Pirkei Avot* 5:3) discusses an apparent contradiction between two different *medrashim* —

One *Medrash* (*Tehillim* 11:5 — “Hashem tzadik yivchan — Hashem evaluates the righteous”) says that Hashem tests only the *tzadik*. However, a different *Medrash* (*Shemot Rabba* 31:3) tells us — “Fortunate is the one who stands up to his test, since there is no person whom Hashem doesn't test.”

Rav Hartman explains —

Hashem does test every person, and not only *tzadikim*. *Nisyonot* which are given within the context of one's *avodat Hashem* (service of G-d), are certainly given to all people as a necessary part of their *avodat Hashem*. No one is exempt from that. The whole concept of life is for a person to bring his potential to actuality, and this happens only through standing up to tests.

However, *nisyonot* which are given in order that one's righteousness be completely and openly expressed within *midat hadin* (the attribute of justice), are certainly done only for *tzadikim*, and not for other people. Regular people are tested [only] with *nisyonot* which don't deviate from the principles of *teva* (nature), according to their level which is within *teva*. The *nisayon* is the result of the level of the one being tested, while it is also the cause to bring the level of the one being tested from potential to actuality.

Understanding & Dealing with *Nisyonot* — Part 4 — Tests Are Essential for Growth, Dealing with & Passing Tests, The Meaning of Passing Our Tests

Nisyonot and *Yissurim* Are Good for Us, We Need Them to Grow

The **Medrash Tanchuma** (*Nitzavim* 1) asks:

"Why are we (the Jewish people) still existing, while many of the non-Jewish nations have been destroyed? Because, when *yissurim* come upon them, they rebel from them and don't mention the name of G-d... But when *yissurim* come upon *Yisrael*, they are humbled and *daven* (pray)... Therefore, G-d says to them — Although these difficulties come upon you, they are what establishes you, as it says (*Devarim* 8:16) — 'In order to afflict you, and in order to **test you**, to do good for you in the end.'"

Rav Yerucham Levovitz (*Da'at Chachma uMussar* — 1:101) discusses the concept of *nisyonot* (tests):

The secret and essence of *avodat ha'adam* (the work of a person) is specifically through the *yetzer hara* [to challenge us], which is an integral part of the creation. And if the *yetzer hara* would be nullified, then human beings would necessarily also be nullified, since people attain greatness and completion exclusively through the *yetzer hara*. While this matter is among the secrets of the Torah and the creation, our experience also demonstrates its truth to us...since the secret to success for all of the great people is specifically from the *yetzer hara*. Their greatness and elevation, higher and higher, is from the *yetzer* and *nisayon* (challenge). This principle, that the entire work and success of a person is through the *yetzer*, needs to be clear to a person from experience alone, even without any type of religious belief. Life itself testifies to this matter as a basic understanding...

There is a common mistake in thinking that the *yetzer* was created to hurt people. Rather...this is the principle with the *yetzer*: If one is not meritorious — it opposes him, but if one is meritorious — then all of his love, *Olam Haba* (world to come), and perfection come exclusively from the *yetzer*...

The essence and reality of this world is like a swamp, and in terms of this swamp, we are told (*Pirkei Avot* 4:21) — "This world is compared to a corridor leading to *Olam Haba*." It is specifically through this swamp, exclusively from this filth, that a person is able to reach *Olam Haba*...

Every aspect of this world is a huge challenge for the soul of a person. The work of a man is to go specifically through the swamp. Not only should one not hold himself back from entering the swamp, but the entire secret of his *avodah* (service of G-d) is specifically to walk through the swamp... In other words, the whole secret of his success is specifically when he is surrounded by *nisyonot* on every side. According to this, not only should one not run away from a situation of difficulties and *nisyonot*, but on the contrary, all the aspirations of a person should be to sit and long for when a situation of *nisayon* and *yetzer hara* will come upon him, since that is all which will lead him to success... And the greater the challenge, *nisayon*, and *yetzer* will be, the greater will be the success...

This is the entire foundation of Torah and *mitzvot* — the beginning of a person is only in a place of *nisyonot* and the *yetzer*...

As we have explained, all the *avodah* (service of G-d) of a person and his success is specifically in a situation of difficulties. And the more *nisyonot* one has...only in these situations is the holy Torah. This is where all of the *avodah* of a person is, and this is what the verse means when it says — "*adam l'amal yulad* — man was born to toil."

[**Rav Yerucham** (*Da'at Chachma uMussar* — 1:102) explains further:]

The greatness of man [among all of the creations] is that only he has the ability to walk through the challenges...

The *Gemara Eruvin* (65b) tells us — “A man is recognized through three things — *b'kiso* (with his money), *b'koso* (with his drinking), and *b'ka'aso* (with his anger).” Specifically at the time of one's anger, at the moment when he is burning up inside, at the time when it [may even be] permissible for him to be angry, that is where he is recognized. To the degree that he overcomes this challenge of anger, as much as he is able to continue on his way, and transcends his character traits, that is the degree that he is human...

Character traits are appropriately known as “*middot*,” meaning “measurements,” since they need to be measured very exactly. Even in a situation of difficulty and *nisyonot*, we need to act within all of the guidelines of the Torah to the utmost precision...

This is the greatness and elevation of a person, particularly at a time of challenge, when anger is permissible, and when one needs to deal with difficulty. In a situation like this, to attain one's goal without deviating even a hairsbreadth, is the entire secret of the elevation of a person...

We see the incredible guidance, in terms of how great and serious our *avodah* (Divine service) is, which comes out to every person from this. We explained that the foundation of our *avodah* is exclusively in a situation of difficulty, *nisyonot*, and obstacles...

The essence of every person is particularly in a situation like this where one really embraces this challenge. If so, how truly great and awesome is this *avodah*?! **{#59}**

Rav Yerucham (*Da'at Chachma uMussar* — 1:101) also points out:

Chazal (our Sages of blessed memory) faulted Yaakov Avinu for requesting to dwell in tranquility (*bikeish leisheiv b'shalvah*)... [They explained that] a person's aspiration not only needs to completely avoid *shalvah*, but one should actually long and wait for difficulties and challenges — “When will they come upon me so I will be able to fulfill them?”

And, finally, **Rav Yerucham** (*Da'at Chachma uMussar* — 2:44) concludes:

The concept of *nisyonot* is not incidental in the world. Rather, every day of a person's life, one stands regularly in *nisayon*, since the whole concept of *nisayon* is from the principle of “*Eretz nitna b'yad rasha* — the land is given to the hand of the evil one.” In fact, there is no detail at all within the creation which is not involved in *nisayon*...and it is impossible to achieve anything except through *nisayon*. It is specifically from the negative that we attain all of the good.

However, the **Sifsei Chaim** (*Parshat Va'era* — *Akeidah*) cautions us:

Although one needs to prepare himself for a *nisayon*, one also needs to distance himself from a *nisayon*... We should be afraid of a *nisayon* since we don't know if we will be able to stand up to it... Just like with *yissurim*, the Sages in the *Gemara* (*Brachot* 5b) said — “*lo hein v'lo s'charan* — We want neither them nor their benefit”...even though their benefit may be enormous. Because of their *yirat Shamayim* (fear of Heaven), they worried that they might not be able to stand up to the *nisayon* of *yissurim*.

And while we should never ask for a *nisayon*, and we even *daven* (pray) every morning that Hashem should **not** give us a *nisayon*, **Rav Dessler** (*Michtav M'Eliyahu* — 1:23) offers a fascinating insight:

While we are in this world we [certainly] can't know, but it is very possible that if we could ask a *neshama* (soul) before it would descend to here — “Which portion will you choose — to pass through the passageway [of *Olam Ha'zeh* — this world] with wealth and comfort, or [will you choose] the path of poverty and difficulty?” — it is very easy to understand that it would choose the path of difficulties, because a person whose heart is broken is much closer to thinking what his purpose is with his soul.”

Tests Allow Us to Fulfill Our Purpose in This World

Netivot Shalom — Parshat Va'era — Inyan HaNisyonot:

Aleph — Just like Avraham Avinu was tested with ten tests, similarly every Jew is given ten tests during his lifetime...and through these tests he fulfills his *shlichut* (mission) in this world. We see from the words of the Ramban, that the true greatness of Avraham Avinu was not his fulfillment of the entire Torah, but rather that he stood up to his ten tests...

And similarly, with every Jew, who needs to deal with ten tests, it is possible that he will fulfill the entire Torah but still not begin to fulfill the *shlichut* for which he came down to this world...

The purpose of the entire Torah and all of the *mitzvot*, is *ahavat Hashem* (love of G-d) and *devekut* (clinging) to Hashem. The ten tests are what reveal and demonstrate one's love and *devekut* to Hashem.

Beit — The Baal Shem Tov wrote on the verse — “Hashem is testing you” — that this world is called *Olam HaNisayon* (the world of tests). And the entire goal of the *neschama* of a Jew descending to this world is to stand up to tests. Tests surround all the different stages of the life of a Jew. In one's early years one has tests which are relevant to that stage, aspects of desire and inconvenience. And with the later years, whatever is relevant to that time. The greatest *nisayon* of all is...for a person not to rebel from all of the *yissurim* (difficulties and challenges) which come upon him, but rather to accept them with love.

Gimmel — With all the tests of life which a Jew passes through...if he realizes that they are all connected to the lofty *shlichut* which he came down to this world to fulfill, then it is already easier for him to strengthen himself to stand up to these *nisyonot*...

The advice regarding *nisyonot* is to know the teaching of the Baal Shem Tov on the verse — “*V'anochi hasteir astir panai* — And I will surely hide My face (literally — And I will hide-hide My face)” — [the verse is referring to] a double hiding. Hashem is even hiding the hiding, until we don't feel there is any hiding here at all... When a Jew has a clear *emunah* (strong belief) that Hashem is hiding Himself in the midst of the darkness, he is then strengthening himself to be able to stand up to all of the tests...

Hashem never gives tests to a Jew which he is not able to stand up to. Rather, at the good times, one needs to prepare one's strength for all situations. And, at the time of the *nisayon*, the main thing is clarity of *emunah*, that a Jew realize that Hashem is found in the midst of the darkness.

Through this, he will be able to get through everything...

With every *nisayon* which comes upon a person, one needs to stand up in *tefillah* (prayer). He needs to know that there is no solution other than to ask Hashem to help him so he will be able to overpower his *yetzer*.

Daled — There is a special elevation with *nisyonot*, since from *nisyonot* a Jew moves forward, grows, and is elevated. We see this in the *Medrash (Rabba 55:6)* on the verse — “*V'Elokim nisah* — And G-d tested” — Rebbe Yossi HaGalili says — He grew like the mast (*neis*) of a ship, since he was very elevated and visible from a distance...

The *nisyonot* which Hashem gives to a Jew are a gift from Heaven for his benefit, since through the *nisyonot* which occur to a Jew, he moves forward and grows. They are a present for him and his descendants after him, like the *nisayon* of the *Akeidah*, the power of which we live from until today. And in all times of difficulties we mention the *Akeidat Yitzchak* to awaken mercy...

The entire life of a Jew is filled with *nisyonot*. He needs to know that whatever happens to him is a test, it is an opportunity to elevate himself and grow, according to his level. And, on the other side, he could also fall through this, G-d forbid. This very knowledge, that a Jew knows this is a test from Heaven, gives him the strength to persevere and stand up to the *nisayon*...

The entire life of a Jew depends on tests. For one person there are easier conditions, and his life flows in a pleasant stream; for another one, the conditions of his life are very difficult; and there is [even] one who can't acquire anything without great difficulty. All of these are the tests of life which Hashem gives to a Jew according to the *shoresh* of his *neschama* (the root of his soul).

Dealing with and Passing *Nisyonot*

Rav Yerucham Levovitz (*Da'at Chachma uMussar* — 1:104) writes:

Yesod gadol b'avodat Hashem — The entire work of a person is only with what is natural and the simplest for him. Through guarding these natural areas, which would seem to be very easy, since they are part of his nature from his conception, and he has a leaning towards them in terms of his natural qualities, this is the secret of one's *shleimut* (perfection)...

Guarding these inborn *ma'alot* (positive qualities), without deviating to the right or left, will give him the ability, bit by bit, to strengthen himself and overcome his natural negative qualities, until he turns them all to the good...

The foundation of this is that the Creator never gives a person anything superfluous... Every single *ma'alah* which is given to him for his task is necessary for him to express. Wisdom, wealth, and strength are all *ma'alot*...and without them, it would be impossible to achieve a recognition of Hashem...

We find [therefore,] that one's *ma'alot* are the very obligations he needs to express...

And, in contrast, if one doesn't perfect his *ma'alot*, by expressing all which needs to be expressed from himself, this will lead to all of the *onesh* (negative consequences for his behavior).

Therefore, Yosef, who was inherently *kadosh* (holy), was tested specifically through this [*kedusha* — holiness] with the wife of Potifar... He didn't deviate from his *ma'alah*, and actually fulfilled it with all of its obligations.

And similarly, Yehuda who had the inherent *ma'alah of hoda'ah* (admitting a mistake), was required to express it [in the *nisayon* with Tamar]... And the greatness of Yehuda was [specifically] through utilizing this *ma'alah* and fulfilling it completely.

We find that the fulfillment of every *ma'alah* is only after withstanding the *nisayon* which expresses it properly. This encompasses the *avodah* of a person, and it determines all of the *gemul* (positive consequences) on the one side, and all of the *onesh* (negative consequences) on the other side...

A very elevated person who doesn't utilize his *ma'alah* to its full obligation, will end up much lower than one who never actually received that *ma'alah*. We can bring a proof to this from the obligation to give *ma'aser* (10%) of one's crops. The one to whom G-d gave 100 *kor* of grain is obligated to give 10 *kor*, while the one to whom G-d gave 10 *kor* is obligated to give only 1 *kor*... Accordingly, this explains what is said in the name of Rav Yisrael Salant — "I know that the intelligence I have is equal to that of 1000 people, but corresponding to this, my obligation of *avodah* (service) is that of 1000 people."

Together with the greatness of the *ma'alah* is also the enormity of the *avodah*...

And, in the future, we will need to give a *din v'cheshbon* (full accounting) for every *ma'alah*, quality, and positive ability which has been placed within us.

[**Rav Yerucham** (*Da'at Chachmah uMussar* — 2:49) says furthermore:]

When Hashem expects something of a person, He gives him whatever He will need to fulfill it ahead of time... A person is never tested unless he is first given the ability to stand up to that test...

We imagine that we were given *Ma'amad Har Sinai* (the Revelation at Mount Sinai) for the sole purpose of experiencing the revelation itself... [But, in fact,] the [deeper] purpose of *Ma'amad Har Sinai* was that, afterwards, we would be able to be tested... This is, after all, the true purpose of everything — only to be tested.

[Similarly,] when a person experiences much enlightenment, he may imagine that its purpose is the enlightenment which he has right then. He doesn't understand that the purpose of the awareness he is experiencing now is only for the time when he will be tested with darkness afterwards... Since he previously saw everything with such a great degree of clarity, [he should understand that] the darkness he has now is because Hashem is testing him. We [often react] in the opposite manner. When the darkness comes, we don't connect it to the past. Rather, the previous [enlightenment] is forgotten completely, and we are left with only darkness. This is because we are completely unaware of this concept that Hashem is [always] testing us.

The **Sifsei Chaim** (*Parshat Va'era — Akeidah*) elaborates on this —

When a person knows from the outset that Hashem is able to test him with difficulties...and he prepares himself for this, he will then have the ability to stand up to the *nisayonot*.

Rabeinu Tam (*Sefer HaYashar — Sha'ar Vav*) wrote — “A person has *yemei ahavah v'yemei sinah* (days of love and days of hate), days which are good and smooth...and [days] when one is struck by all types of difficulty. During the *yemei ahavah*, one needs to prepare himself for the *yemei sinah*... [Therefore,] he needs to prepare himself to increase his *yirat Shamayim* (fear of Heaven) in order to be able to stand up to the difficult situation afterwards... If, however, one seeks out advice on how to increase his *yirat Shamayim*, in order to stand up to this *nisayon*, only in the midst of the *nisayon* itself, it [may] already be too late. But if he prepares himself right away during the *yemei ahavah*, and thinks about the situations where he will need to strengthen himself to be able to stand up to these [later] difficulties, then he will have the strength to stand up to the *nisayon* during the *yemei sinah*.

The nature of people is to imagine that things will always be good when they are going well, and not to prepare themselves [for future challenges]. And, during difficult periods, we [may] think that things will always be difficult, and give up on ourselves. We, therefore, need to hang onto the good times in order to prepare ourselves to deal with the difficult times [afterwards].

The **Sifsei Chaim** (*Parshat Va'era — Akeidah*) adds:

The *yetzer hara* challenged Avraham before the *Akeida* — “Will you be able to stand up to another *nisayon* [afterwards] even greater than this one?”

Avraham responded — “I will be able to stand up to one even greater than this.”

It is difficult to understand this attempt of the *yetzer hara* to prevent Avraham from the *nisayon* [of the *Akeidah*] by claiming that — tomorrow you may be tested with an even greater test that you will be unable to pass. If, and when, the bigger test does come tomorrow, that should be when [Avraham will try to] overcome that second *nisayon*.

The *yetzer hara*, who is well skilled in combat, recognizes very well...that people are [sometimes] afraid to rise to a higher level. Why? Perhaps this will cause them to become bigger *tzadikim*, and a greater degree of *avodat Hashem* will then be demanded from them. The *yetzer hara* came with this claim [to try] to stop [Avraham] before the *nisayon* of the *Akeidah*...

When a person knows clearly what a *nisayon* is, it makes it easier for him to stand up to it. The job of the *yetzer* is to give the person doubts, and to dispute the necessity of the *nisayon*.

The **Sefer Chassidim** (161) cautioned us —

Even if you succeed in overcoming a big *nisayon*, still, **don't believe in yourself until the day of your death**, to say — “Since I didn't transgress in this big thing, I won't transgress any more.” The *yetzer hara* of today is not the same as yesterday. Therefore, even in the same matter, perhaps tomorrow you won't be able to withstand it...

Hashem, Who knows what will be in the future, doesn't [even] believe in His angels and holy ones. You, that your thoughts change from good to bad, all the more so, you shouldn't believe [in yourself]. As the verse says (*Mishlei* 28:14) — “Fortunate is the one who is always afraid,” since he won't transgress.

The **Gemara Sanhedrin** (107a) warned:

A person should never bring himself to a *nisayon*. For David, king of Israel, brought himself to a *nisayon*, and he stumbled.

David said — Master of the Universe, why do people say [in their prayers] — “*Elokei Avraham, Elokei Yitzchak, Elokei Yaakov* — G-d of Avraham, G-d of Yitzchak, G-d of Yaakov”, but they don't say — “*Elokei David* — G-d of David”?

He answered — Because they were tested by Me, and you have not been tested by Me.

David said — Try and test me.

Hashem said — I will test you, and I will do something [special] with you. I didn't tell them [that they would be tested], but I am telling you that I will test you [specifically] with a *d'var ervah* (act of illicit relations).

Rabbi Akiva Tatz (in a talk on *Nisyonot* in simpletoremember.com) explains that the essential mistake of King David was to have asked for his own test. His real test was to have kept quiet. We are not allowed to give ourselves *nisyonot*. In fact, every morning in our davening (prayers) we explicitly ask Hashem to **not** give us *nisyonot*.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz (*Sichot Mussar* — 5733:6) explained:

The *Gemara Sanhedrin* 107a tells us — “A person should never bring himself to a *nisayon*. For David, king of Israel, brought himself to a *nisayon*, and he stumbled.”

When Hashem gives a *nisayon* to a person, along with the *nisayon*, He [also] **gives** him the strength to stand up to it. Therefore, one should never bring oneself to a *nisayon*. In this situation, where Hashem is not giving the person the *nisayon*, He will also not be giving him the special strength to stand up to it.

This is similar to what the *Gemara Kiddushin* (30b) says:

The *yetzer* (negative inclination) of a person [tries to] overpower him every day, and [even] seeks to kill him...and if Hashem would not help the person, he would be unable to [stand up to] him [the *yetzer*].

In other words, we need to remember that if not for this special help from Hashem, we would be unable to pass **any** of our tests.

***Nisyonot* — Part 5 — What Does It Actually Mean to Pass a Test?**

Sometimes the *Nisayon* Is Not to “Pass It,” but Simply to Deal with It

Rabbi Meir Kahane, a Rebbe at *Aish HaTorah*, discussed, in an essay (*I Want to Be Better but Can't*) what one should do if he finds himself in a situation where it seems he is unable to spiritually improve or grow. And why would Hashem give such a situation to a person, particularly, since the point of challenges is specifically to improve and grow?

He wrote that *Klal Yisrael* (the Jewish people) likely had such questions while in *Mitzrayim* (Egypt). Spiritually, they were sinking lower and lower, to the point that they were on the verge of the fiftieth, and final, level of impurity. The point of *Mitzrayim* was to prepare them to receive the Torah, but the opposite seemed to be happening.

Rav Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the Piaszencer Rebbe, described this exact situation in *Aish Kodesh* (*Nitzavim* — 1941), which was compiled in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Holocaust:

What can we do when [the Germans] don't permit us to cry out, or even to gather together to pray, and we are forced to pray in secret, and every Jewish heart must lament this alone? In any case, we must cry out about this from the depth of our heart.

Rav Shapira also wrote (*Parshat Vayeishev* — 1941):

We see the destruction of religion and *avodat Hashem* (service of G-d) which the *yissurim* (difficulties and challenges) are causing. And not just that, but all the aspects of Torah and service that our forefathers etched into us as second-nature, and we [did as well] with our children and grandchildren, and so on. The pain is destroying and uprooting the foundations of [Torah and *mitzvot*], in terms of kosher food, *Shabbat*, *mikva*, *chadarim* (schools for children), education in general, and so on.

Be careful and safeguard that, G-d forbid, your *emunah* doesn't get injured even a hairsbreadth... This may be why our Sages (*Mechilta*, *Beshalach*, *Parsha Vav*) told us — Israel was not redeemed from Egypt except through the merit of *emunah*.

Rabbi Kahane continued:

Rav Shapira emphasized that our enemies can take virtually all of our *mitzvot* away from us. But the one thing they cannot take away is our *emunah* (deep belief in G-d). The way for us to grow when it is the most difficult for us to do so, is by working on *emunah*.

When G-d takes away the regular levels of *avodah*, He limits a person's *avodah* to this one area.

Sometimes one's *nisayon* is not to “overcome his challenge,” but rather to keep on trying. Only if he would stop trying would it be considered as if he had failed. And since one can never know if his challenge is to actually overcome the test or simply to keep on trying, either way he has to keep on doing the best he can to try to overcome it.

Esther Baila Schwartz spoke to a **Mother's Support Group** in a talk called — **Life: A Nisayon in Progress:**

There is a special *chashivut* (importance), something potentially wonderful, in coping with an ongoing, painful challenge, as raising a child with a disability surely is. I stress *potentially*, because a challenge which one does not manage to meet, can easily destroy a person. It is imperative to recognize that there is no such concept as “once and for all!” in our spiritual endeavors. “Once and for all I am going to get a handle on this situation,” and it's not going to bother me anymore... Even when a person feels she has worked out her *nisayon* and knows how to deal with it, or react to situations or comments thrown her way, some unexpected curve might set her off and she's right back at the beginning. Does that mean she hasn't accomplished anything? Of course she has!

Life, as I see it, is a roller coaster ride. It has its ups and its downs. Have you ever noticed on a roller coaster — how hard it is to get up and how quick and easy it is to get down? You inch your way up and then, because you're human, you crash right down again, and then you start all over. And, that is the goal...to [continually] work on getting there. The ups and the downs is an inevitable aspect of life. It's a struggle and an ongoing process, and the goal is, with G-d's help, to keep struggling.

Because there is a commonly known belief that nobody is given a challenge that cannot be overcome, people make a fundamental mistake in their attitude toward overcoming their *nisyonot*. They wrongly assume that passing a *nisayon* requires a score of 100%. But 100% is not a passing grade; it's a PERFECT grade. A passing score is 65%... How that affects our spiritual challenges is not certain, but passing a *nisayon* does not mean attaining perfection! It doesn't mean never feeling angry, bitter, overwhelmed, or like crawling into bed and staying there forever...

This fact is an unbelievably liberating idea, because to be perfect is very overwhelming; I don't have that kind of energy level. The bottom line is nobody can be perfect. Except Hashem, and none of us are He...

A *nisayon* is not [merely] a test; it is life itself. If we ask not to have *nisyonot*, we are in fact asking not to be alive. The mere act of living is a *nisayon*. What is a *nisayon*? A *nisayon* is the opportunity presented to us, to actualize our potential. We all came into this world with tremendous potential, to be wonderful, kind, compassionate, forgiving, accepting. This exists within each of us in “potential.” But that is not a productive way for us to exist. After 120 years, Hashem will say, “Tell me something about yourself,” and a person may say, “Well, potentially, I was very patient.” And Hashem will say, “Tell me when you [actually] displayed patience.” And your response could be, “Well it never actually happened, but I know it was there in potential!” That is not going to get us very far... He doesn't want us to spend our lives in “potential.” Hashem wants us to actualize our potential in this world.

Our *nisyonot* are given to us by Hashem for the same purpose. Our *nisyonot* are not given to us [merely] to test us, not to make life difficult, to prove that Hashem is the Boss, and we are just helpless victims. [Rather we are tested] because He loves us so much, and He wants us to experience the ultimate joy we are capable of experiencing for the rest of eternity. That is why He is sending us *nisyonot*...

Hashem wants to bring out our potential, so that after 120 years, when He watches the video of our lives, all those magnificent *middot* will be on the screen...

We do not live in a spiritual vacuum. Every single one of us is part of the whole of *Klal Yisrael* (the Jewish People). Every single one of us, through our actions, is impacting the entire world, although we may be within the four walls of our house, with not another human being around. Every time we do anything in *avodat Hashem* — in the service of our Creator, it saturates the entire world with *kedusha*... *Chazal* (our Sages of blessed memory) say — “*L'fum tz'ara agra* — according to the effort is the benefit.” For people who are living with ongoing challenges, where

making it through every single day can be an overwhelming job, every act of *avodat Hashem* is a zillion times greater. Therefore, we are saturating the world with significantly more *kedusha* and greatness than the average person, for whom every day is not such an ongoing challenge... Our ultimate goal is not that we win every battle — the ultimate goal is that we win the war...that when we leave this world after 120 years we can hold our heads high, and we will be able to say, "Hashem, I gave this battle the best of my best... I kept on struggling and I kept on picking myself up"... That is what He wants from us; not perfection, but the willingness to invest in the struggle. Hashem should give us the *siyata d'Shmaya* (Heavenly assistance) to view our *nisyonot* as the gifts that they are; not to be broken by them, but to grow from them. May we merit elevation to that plane. (Excerpted from a speech at a *Yedei Chesed* Mothers Support Group)

Conclusion

While the classical sources tell us very clearly that we never get a test we can't pass, a central question with *nisyonot* (tests) is — **What does it actually mean to pass a test?**

Rav Dessler (*Michtav M'Eliyahu* 1:114) speaks about the *nekudat habechira* — the exact point where one's free will is most relevant. He wrote:

Everyone has free choice at his *nekudat habechira* (exact point of free will), but the position of the *nekudat habechira* itself is determined by various factors. It may be affected by one's previous choices which either raised or lowered his *nekudat habechira*. Or it may be affected by factors outside of his control. [And] *Hashgacha Pratit* (Divine Supervision) may have placed him from childhood in a certain environment, higher or lower, as the case may be.

In fact, "passing a test" may involve a separate *nekudat habechira* for every single person and every specific *nisayon*. The principle of "*onnes Rachmana patrei* — One forced by circumstances is exempt [from negative consequences]" is certainly relevant with *nisyonot*, and not only in extreme cases.

Hashem should help us to see the value in our *nisyonot*, to understand what they are demanding of us, and to succeed in passing them to the very best of our ability.

This should be *I'zechut ul'iluy nishmat Ruchama Rivka, a"h*, bat Asher Zevulun