

Teaching *Iyov* in a High School Setting

Rabbi Maury Grebenau

Rabbi Maury Grebenau is the Associate Principal of Staff Development at Yavneh Academy of Dallas.

As my months of teaching *sefer Iyov* came to a close I began to reflect on how happy I was that I had followed through on my decision to teach *Iyov*. Although *Iyov* is not a part of most high school curricula there are many reasons to include *Iyov* in a high school curriculum. *Sefer Iyov* provides a firm foundation for discussing a number of fundamental *hashkofic* topics which are dealt with directly in *sefer Iyov*. One of the first activities I did to introduce the *sefer* was to make a list on the board of questions that the students had about G-d and our relationship with G-d. Many of the issues mentioned were ones that we would deal with in our study of *sefer Iyov*¹.

The issue of theodicy, or *tzaddik v'ra lo*, is the main thrust of the *sefer*. This is an issue which should be addressed in the high school years. Teenagers are bothered by such philosophical topics and are searching for answers. The Rambam's approach to *sefer Iyov* includes a deep look at issues of the level of Hashem's *hashgocha* in the world. It is also imperative that the issue of nisayon be dealt with when teaching *Iyov*. The first few chapters of *Iyov* are fertile ground for a discussion of the different opinions regarding how and why Hashem 'tests' us and how they relate to *Iyov*². These are all fundamental issues which are not necessarily discussed in a typical high school classroom.

In Israel they have recognized the importance of teaching *Iyov* to high school students and have made it part of the 12th grade curriculum for the *Nach bagrut*. *Iyov* should be added to more high school curriculums in America as well. Students at the end of high school are at an age when they are ready to grapple with these issues and should begin to think about them before they leave high school. Once students are in college and beyond resources to help them understanding the Jewish perspectives on these issues become scarce.

Challenges

There are clearly challenges inherent in adding *Iyov* to a high school curriculum. It is a very long *sefer* and due to time constraints only a selection of *Iyov* can realistically be covered. Any time we are forced to choose, we inevitably face the question of which sections to cover. While the first three *perakim* and Eliyhu and Hashem's speeches at the end should be covered in more depth, the middle of the *sefer* can be looked at in a more general way. The Ramban (beginning of 11th chapter of *Iyov*) says that after the first round of speeches the major arguments have been laid out and the rest of the conversation between *Iyov* and his three friends are simply to strengthen what has already been stated.

Selections from the middle of the *sefer* which bring out specific arguments or points can be looked at in depth while the rest can be covered more superficially. One possibility is to have groups of students prepare sections on their own and present their findings to the rest of the class. This allows students to speak about the issues and the characters in groups but also allows the information to be covered without spending as much class time.

The language of *sefer Iyov* also presents a unique challenge. *Iyov* is particularly poetic and there are many words which do not appear anywhere else in *TaNach*. Although frequently there is not a consensus amongst the *rishonim* in translating a specific word, in general the thrust of each speech is unchanged by the differing translations. This would be a significant issue if the book of *Iyov* were to be covered with a focus on the linguistics. However, if one takes a more philosophical approach to the *sefer* then the difficulty in translation is not as much of a barrier to the goal of the class.

In addition to challenges in presentation, preparing the content of *Iyov* also presents obstacles. How does one go about choosing which *meforshim* to use? There are not a plethora of resources available on *Iyov* and even less designed specifically for teaching the *sefer* to a high school audience. In addition to the familiar commentaries on most of *TaNach*, Ramban and Ralbag are both commentaries which are clear and also give a general overview of each chapter, as well as translating specific phrases. For most of the *rishonim* it is imperative to look at their other works in order to get a broader sense of how they view *sefer Iyov*. The Ramban writes extensively about *Iyov* in *Sha'ar HaGemul* and briefly at the end of his drasha on *Koheles*³. Ralbag has a separate *sefer* named *milchamos Hashem* in which he lays out his general understanding of *hashgocha pratis*, among other issues. Artsroll has also put out a number of works on *Iyov* which are very helpful including a work based on classes given by Rav Shimon Shwab⁴.

A final issue from a philosophical and pedagogical standpoint is which viewpoints expressed in *Iyov* are considered to be proper Jewish responses to theodicy and the other questions *Iyov* is raising⁵. Ostensibly *Iyov*'s initial arguments represent a viewpoint which is not in line with the Torah viewpoint and Hashem's final speech to *Iyov* represents the clearest Jewish response. It is more difficult to characterize the arguments of the four friends in the middle. Hashem's chastisement of the three friends at the end of the *sefer* (42: 7-8) implies that their statements are lacking in some way. The implication of leaving Eliyhu out of the condemnation is that Eliyhu has expressed something true and the three friends have not. However, when we look into the *rishonim* we don't find a consensus. For example, the Rambam feels that Bildad is expressing the opinion of a misguided group of Arabic philosophers (Metzeleh), but the Ralbag (*Iyov* end of chapter 8) disagrees and says that Bildad is close to the truth. There is also discussion of the degree to which Eliyhu is correct. This may compound a teacher's feeling that they are unable to properly explain the 'Jewish' answer to *Iyov*'s challenges. This article is meant as a beginning to some of the tactics which may assist in preparing and teaching *Iyov* in a high school setting. My hope is that my experiences will assist teachers in undertaking the project of teaching *Iyov* despite the difficulties. This article is meant to spark more discussion of these issues and the creation of more aids in teaching *sefer Iyov*.

Introduction to *Iyov*

As with any *sefer* in *Nach*, it is important to give students an introduction before jumping into the narrative. This is especially vital for *sefer Iyov*. The Gemara and Midrash present over a dozen different opinions of when the story of *Iyov* took place. There are even two versions of an opinion that it never took place, at least the way it is portrayed⁶. The Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:22) seems to be partial to the opinion that *Iyov* did not exist and that the story is simply a parable meant to deal with some of the most basic philosophical issues. However, he does not come to a

clear conclusion and points out that these types of philosophical struggles occur in every generation and are relevant to all the time periods which the Talmud and Midrashim mention⁷. This is the take away message for the students. It is imperative for high school students to feel that what they are learning is impactful to their existence and religious experience. The Rambam's approach should strike a chord with them. His opinion is supported by the fact that no other character in *TaNach* is subject to the identity confusion we find with *Iyov*⁸.

Once the text itself is broached it is important to examine the presentation of *Iyov* as an individual. Students need to have an appropriate base-line reading for *Iyov* to get a real sense of his moral and philosophical growth throughout the *sefer*. Ostensibly, the initial characterization of *Iyov* is very positive. He is introduced in the first *pasuk* as a man who is 'wholesome and upright, he feared G-d and shunned evil.' Students need to be presented with other sources in order to get a more complex picture of *Iyov*⁹. The Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:22-23) points out that *Iyov* is not classified as a *chacham*. He sees *Iyov* as lacking a solid foundation of belief. *Iyov*'s belief in Hashem is based only on information he has been given and not because of his own independent understanding¹⁰. Similarly, the Ralbag contends that *Iyov*'s uprightness was little more than an insurance policy. He followed the commandments in case G-d really existed¹¹. Rashi (*Iyov* 1:3) puts *Iyov*'s characterization into perspective by pointing out that while *Iyov* is greater than the *dor haflogah* he is not as great as Avrohom¹². On the other side of the coin, the Ramban (beg. of 2nd *perek*) points out that *Iyov* must have been completely free of sin since Satan mentioned no sins when he tries to persuade Hashem of *Iyov*'s fickle nature. Students must try to understand *Iyov*'s motive, not just his actions. *Iyov*'s relationship with his children is also a fruitful case study for discussing *Iyov*'s character and motivations. Students should emerge from the discussion of *Iyov* with a more complex character than a quick perusal of the text might indicate.

Utilizing Structure

One of the most important tools for student understanding of *sefer Iyov* is the structure of the *sefer*. For the most part the *sefer* is comprised of long speeches made intermittently by *Iyov* and one of his friends, with very little narrative or conversation. Much can be culled from the organization of the speakers alone. The Ramban (beg. of Ch. 22) understands the presentation of the three friends to be in order of wisdom, making Elifaz the wisest of the three. Additionally, it is also very telling that Tzofar does not appear in the last round of debate among the original friends. This may help in understanding why the three friends stop trying to convince *Iyov*. Are they convinced by *Iyov* or do they feel that further arguments are futile¹³? This in turn is important in understanding Eliyhu's anger at, and Hashem's condemnation of, the three friends at the end of the *sefer*.

Another structural point of interest is the fact that Eliyhu's arguments are presented as separate from the first three friends. Both the structure and *Iyov*'s response seem to indicate that Eliyhu is saying something very different than the first three friends. However, when we read through Eliyhu's remarks we are hard pressed to find a new strand of argument. Ramban takes the approach that indeed Eliyhu has given the true answer but one requires a tradition to decipher it¹⁴.

Structure is also important on a more specific level. A study of the difference in structure between parallel sections of *Iyov* can yield important results. One example is the difference between *Iyov*'s first and second reaction to the troubles

that Satan brings about. Although both times the *pesukim* tell us that Iyov did not sin, the second narrative adds the words 'with his mouth.' The Gemara picks up on this slight change in language and understands it as a condemnation of Iyov's mindset¹⁵. Another example is the difference in the opening of Eliyhu's final speech as opposed to his first three speeches which the commentaries see as an allusion to a difference in approach¹⁶.

Structure is also important from a pedagogical standpoint. The philosophical ideas being discussed are esoteric and a typical high school student will need a clear structure in order to begin to think about these issues. This categorization can be student driven or teacher driven, depending on the style of the teacher and the level of the class. It is easy to get lost in the poetic speeches of *sefer Iyov* without the proper filter to extract the philosophies. It is also immensely helpful in a teacher's preparation to examine some of the distillation of the arguments found in the rishonim. The Ramban (*Shaar Hagemul* 1:20 s"v v'ad) summarizes Iyov's complaints into three major ideas: A) If Iyov's difficulties are meant as a chastisement from Hashem it would seem pointless since they are too difficult to bear. B) Since man is so inconsequential isn't his short life and death enough of a punishment to obviate the need for more punishment. C) There is nothing Iyov can do that will affect Hashem so why should he be punished so severely, even if there was some sort of sin. This type of structured distillation of Iyov's arguments can be very helpful in organizing the major ideas in Iyov's many speeches. It is also very helpful in choosing which selections to cover in class.

The Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:23) also provides a helpful structure for differentiating between the first three friends. He understands them mainly as presenting different viewpoints of *hashgocha pratis*. This approach has the benefit of clearly differentiating between the arguments of the three friends¹⁷.

Another possible approach is to create a filter (not necessarily found in rishonim) to organize the arguments made in the *sefer*. One that I found very helpful in a high school setting is the difference between personal response to tragedy and philosophical questioning¹⁸. It is important, both in *Iyov's* questioning and in his friends' responses, to differentiate between points which are general philosophical issues and remarks which are focused on *Iyov's* personal response to his situation. Analyzing the text from this perspective allows students to use higher order thinking skills by classifying statements as visceral responses to difficulties or philosophical approaches to evil in the world.

Examining Tone

One of the most effective tools in analyzing *Iyov* is to focus on the tone of the speakers. Approaching Iyov's development by looking at not just the substance of his comments, but the tone, is very helpful.

Iyov's general mindset and tone are also fundamentally important in understanding the points he makes. The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 16a) seems to have two very different approaches to what Iyov's mindset is. Abayee and Rava express two divergent approaches. Rava says that Iyov sinned with his mouth and that he expresses a belief in predetermination and a lack of control on Hashem's part¹⁹. Rava also comments that (*Bava Basra* 16b) a person is not blamed for what they say out of pain²⁰. This reflects one approach to *Iyov*; he begins to doubt Hashem but only out of the tremendous difficulties he experiences. Abayee takes a different approach

to *Iyov*. He understands that *Iyov* is simply exploring these issues and feels passionately about them. *Iyov* is not convinced of the veracity of the view he expresses, he simply wants to explore and debate these issues²¹. R' Schwab takes the second approach to its extreme and claims that *Iyov* is in fact very righteous throughout the book. R' Schwab understands *Iyov*'s comment, 'were He to kill me I would still yearn for Him, but I will justify my ways before Him (13:15)' to mean that all of *Iyov*'s questions are purely theoretical. These are two fundamentally different approaches to the character of *Iyov* and should be explored carefully. Students must be aware of statements made in the text which may form the basis of these two approaches.

One area where it is important to examine tone is the difference between Eliyhu and the other three friends²². Rashi (36:9) comments that Eliyhu offers consolation to *Iyov*. The implication being that the first three friends are trying to condemn *Iyov*. Ramban (36:14) disagrees with this approach. Approaching this discussion by looking at the tone of the friends as opposed to the tone of Eliyhu can help foster substantive comments from students. Asking the students to back up their view of the tone with *pesukim* will ensure that they think through their responses²³.

The friends are taken to task by *Iyov* in chapter 13 (*pasuk* 16) and Rashi (*Iyov* 13:16) comments that Hashem agrees with *Iyov*'s chastisement at the end of the *sefer*. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 58b) also lists speaking to someone the way *Iyov*'s friends spoke to him as an example of *Onaas Devarim*, hurtful speech²⁴. This is an issue of both content and tone. Understanding Hashem's displeasure with the friends will also be important in deciding if the views expressed by the friends regarding Hashem's interaction with the world are acceptable in Jewish thought. Is Hashem condemning their manner or their content as well? Ramban (42:7) says that *Iyov* is excluded from Hashem's anger only because he made his comments out of pain and the friends expressed their incorrect views without any excuse. The Ramban feels that in terms of content they were all equally mistaken. In addition, *Iyov* has come to the truth but the friends have not yet recanted²⁵.

Tone is also an excellent way to bring out the difference between the *Iyov* presented in the final chapter and his earlier comments. *Iyov* himself (42:5) says that previously he just 'heard' but now 'he has seen it'. Rashi (42:5-6) and Ramban (there) both point out the difference between having just a *mesorah* (tradition) regarding Hashem and actually experiencing *nevuah* (prophecy). *Iyov*'s tone is very contrite and apologetic here. This point can be brought out by contrasting this selection with earlier points where *Iyov* demands that he be answered and challenges Hashem to a debate²⁶. The tone here is clearly very different.

Tone is also a component of trying to understand Hashem's speeches from the storm (מן הסערה) which appear at the end of the *sefer*. Ramban does not seem to interpret the storm imagery as Hashem's anger. He compares it with the experiences of other prophets who also experienced Hashem as wind²⁷. One could also interpret the storm as showing anger towards *Iyov*'s remarks. R' Schwab takes the approach that *Iyov* complained about the randomness of the world exemplified in a storm so Hashem speaks to him from the very randomness which he questioned. Focusing on the tone of these speeches is a wonderful way to bring out each of these possibilities from the text itself.

The Sound of Silence

Another theme in *Iyov* is interpreting different character's silence. Earlier we mentioned that the fact that Tzofar does not speak in the last round of conversations with *Iyov*. A question which can spark discussion or a journal entry is how to interpret this silence. *Iyov* is also silent in chapter 40 after Hashem first speaks to him. Is *Iyov* recanting? Has he completed his journey of faith? Ramban (39:26) points out that at the beginning of chapter 40, *Iyov* is not spoken to from the storm; he hears the *kol demama dakah* (still silent voice) because he is finally silent. *Iyov* (40:5) seems to be recanting on certain statements. Rashi (*Iyov* 40:5) explains that *Iyov's* statement that he will not speak 'once' or add 'twice' is actually a reference to earlier statements where the same words were used. '*Achas*' is a reference to 9:22 where *Iyov* claimed that both the good and evil are treated the same way. '*Shtayim*' is a reference to 13:20 where *Iyov* begs Hashem not to heap difficulty upon him in both worlds. *Iyov* is certainly realizing that he is not able to question Hashem, but his journey may not be complete. The Ramban (40:6) notes that even after *Iyov* seems to acquiesce, he is still spoken to from the storm in Hashem's final message²⁸ (and we can add the fact that is another message at all). The implication is that *Iyov* is not fully convinced; rather he just realizes he can't challenge Hashem.

The same type of silence appears earlier at the end of chapter 33 when Eliyhu is finished speaking. Ramban (33:30) understands *Iyov's* lack of response to mean that his questions are answered²⁹. This is consistent with Ramban's general approach that Eliyhu is giving the true response which can only be understood with a tradition³⁰. The Ralbag (end of 33) seems to disagree and interprets the silence differently. Perhaps in the Ralbag's mind *Iyov* does not bother formulating a response to Eliyhu's rehashed old arguments.

Using other characters in *TaNach*

Using other characters with which students are more familiar, can help as a point of comparison to evaluate *Iyov* and his dynamic role in the *sefer*. It is also a great way to have students use the higher order thinking skills of comparing and evaluating. The question of the appropriateness of questioning G-d runs through the entire *sefer*. Avrohom's discussion of Sedom with Hashem is a fantastic comparison source for this issue. Students can be asked to reflect on the difference between what Avrohom did and what *Iyov* is doing³¹.

Similarly the question of the plausibility and appropriateness of understanding the way Hashem runs the world can be fleshed out through a comparison to Moshe. The Gemara (*Brachos* 7a) understands that Moshe was also bothered by the issue of theodicy and he to asked Hashem for an explanation³². Here as well, students can be encouraged to comment on why Moshe is not taken to task for his questions and yet *Iyov* seems to be in the admonished³³.

Noach can be compared to *Iyov* to accentuate *Iyov's* growth throughout the *sefer*. The *Navi* Yechezkel (14:14) connects Noach, *Iyov* and Daniel. Although the prophecy seems to be positive, the Seforno (*Bereishis* 6:8) gives a compelling explanation that this is a list of those who are only righteous enough to save themselves. He contrasts this with those who are righteous enough to save others as well³⁴. The approach that *Iyov* is too insular dovetails well with Rashi (*Iyov* 42:10) who says that *Iyov* got everything back in the final chapter once he davened for his friends. It is only once *Iyov* is able to help those outside of himself that his own suffering can end³⁵.

Journal Entries

One of the most important goals of any Navi class is to have the ideas covered be relevant to the students. This is the meaning of the Gemara (Megilla 14a) that there were many prophets but only the prophecies which were applicable to the generations were written down, kept, and canonized into *TaNach*. *Sefer Iyov* is rich with important issues and lessons which are easily applicable to a teenager's life. With this in mind, assignments should be geared towards facilitating student self-reflection. One type of assignment which is both versatile and effective is the journal entry. Students can be asked to write about a topic in order to have them consider concepts covered in class. Journal entries also allow individual checks for understanding and insights into each student. It can be beneficial to use technology when utilizing journal entries. Using email can facilitate an individualized conversation about what each student is writing about. Alternatively, setting up a wikispace³⁶ or other type of bulletin board or chat where the entire class can participate in a conversation can yield very positive results.

These devices can be used either to have students review and consider past discussion or to serve as a hook for upcoming class discussions. Having students write on a topic which relates to a future discussion is a great way to have them be more prepared which in turn enhances class discussion.

Conclusion

There are critically important *hashkofic* issues which aren't being addressed in many high school curriculums. These issues are critical for a student's development as a thinking Jew and should be addressed before the completion of high school. Teaching *Iyov* is a way to address some of these gaps within the context of a *Nach* class.

Although there are certainly challenges in preparing and teaching *sefer Iyov*, there are ways to overcome these challenges. Through thorough preparation and lesson planning teaching *Iyov* can be a way to help student analyze complex texts while also contemplating fundamental philosophical issues. Continued discussion of ways to present *Iyov* is necessary and should help expedite the process of adding *Iyov* to high school curriculum. It is my belief that both teachers and students will find the study of *Iyov* challenging but even more rewarding.

¹ A colleague of mine, Rabbi Avery Joel, conducted a similar informal survey of parents and high school students to determine which issues were most important to each of these groups. R' Joel discovered that the issues of G-d, free will and theodicy were the top three topics picked by high school students.

² The main issue regarding *nisayon* is that since Hashem already knows the outcome of the test then what is the point? Ramban (*Bereishis* 22:1) is of the opinion that tests are for the benefit of the one being tested and are designed to bring out latent potential which otherwise would not surface. Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:24) takes the approach that the audience who witness (or hear about) the test and learn from it are the motivation for a test. This would seem to be a disagreement which goes to the core of what a *nisayon* is all about. These perspectives are reflected in the etymology of the word *nisayon*. Kli Yakar (*Bereishis* 22:12) understands that it is related to '*nes*', meaning pole, where something is raised up for all to see. The Maharal (*Derech Chaim* 5:4) says that root is '*nes*', as in miracle; both are a conquering of nature. A test is when we break through our previous nature and abilities to realize untapped potential. A third approach is that of Rashbam (*Bereishis* 22:1) that the *akeidah* specifically was a way to remind Avrohom that he was not as secure as he might think. How this approach would fit with *Iyov* is an

interesting class discussion to have.

³ Both works of the Ramban can be found in the Mosad Harav Kook edition of *kisvei haRamban*. The *kisvei haRamban* also contains the Ramban's commentary on Iyov.

⁴ *Rav Schwab on Iyov* is published by Artscroll-Mesorah, ISBN 1-4226-0090-4. The reader should be aware that many times R' Schwab's translations and commentary are somewhat different from the classic *rishonim* and he does not always indicate when he is deviating from the more classic approach.

⁵ All five of the characters in the *sefer* express viewpoints regarding basic points in *hashkofa* and each of their statements need to be examined. Iyov expresses many thoughts which seem to be problematic, beginning with his cursing of the day of his birth in the third chapter. By blaming his fate on the stars he is expressing a belief in predestination (*mazal*). The Raibag (end of 3rd perek) sees this as a statement of philosophy (not simply a complaint). The Ramban (*Iyov* 2:14) agrees, although he paints Iyov as questioning the extent to which we are subject to *mazal*, instead of expressing an established philosophy. Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:23) also matches Iyov with Aristotle in terms of his understanding of *hashgocha pratit* which is not in line with the Jewish perspective. Additionally, the Gemara (*Bava Basra* 15a) classifies Iyov's statements as 'overturning the plate' (implying a lack of Hashem's control over the world) and 'absolving the whole world' by claiming that all is predestined. Rashi and Ramban (*Iyov* 14:11-12) add that Iyov denies the creed of resurrection of the dead. This interpretation is also found in the Gemara (*Bava Basra* 16a). The Raibag (end of Ch. 7) makes a blanket statement that Iyov's friends are not '*meAnshei Toraseinu*' as an explanation for the fact that they don't confront Iyov over his denial of *techiyas hamesim*. Eliyhu's stand will be explored later in this article.

⁶ The Gemara can be found in *Bava Basra* 15 where there are numerous opinions as to when Iyov lived. This is also the source of the opinion (*hahu meRabanan*) that the story of Iyov is a *mashal* which never occurred. R' Shmuel bar Nachmeni argues with this point because there is too much biographical information which would be unnecessary if it was simply a *mashal*. The Yalkut Shemoni (*Iyov* 1[891]) also quotes these opinions as well as a few more. The *Yerushalmi* (*Sotah* 5:20) also quotes a number of these opinions as well as an augmented opinion of the fact that the story of Iyov is a *mashal*. In order to explain a contradiction within R' Shimon ben Lakish, the *Yerushalmi* explains that he felt that Iyov did in fact exist but that the difficulties he went through were a *mashal*. In other words, a real character was used for a story which did not in fact take place. The text of the *Yerushalmi* reads as follows:

רבי שמעון בן לקיש אמר איוב לא היה ולא עתיד להיות מחלפה שיטתיה דר' שמעון בן לקיש תמן אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש בשם בר קפרא בימי אברהם אבינו היה והכא הוא אמר הכין אלא הוא היה וייסורין לא היו ולמה נכתבו עליו אלא לומר שאילולי באו עליו היה יכול לעמוד בהן

⁷ The language of the Rambam is:

סוף דבר בין היה בין לא היה, בכמו ענינו הנמצא תמיד נבוכו כל המעיינים מבני אדם, עד שנאמר בידיעת השם ובהשגחתו מה שכבר זכרתי לך, ר"ל היות האיש התם השלם הישר במעשיו הירא מאד מן החטאים יחולו בו רעות גדולות ותכופות בממונו ובניו וגופו ללא חטא, יחייב הענין ההוא

⁸ The debate itself seems to mean that the story of Iyov could have occurred at any of these times. Part of the human condition is to experience suffering and to come to terms with how there could be evil and suffering in a world that Hashem created. R' Schwab (introduction pg. xxiv) comments that *sefer Iyov* is the only *sefer* to begin with the word '*ish*.' This also points to the fact that this is a *sefer* which is in fact about every human being, not simply one person who lived at some point in the past.

⁹ Some sources look at the positive characterization of Iyov and read negative implications between the lines. The Mishna (*Talmud Bavli Sotah* 27b) has a debate if Iyov served Hashem out of *yirah* or *ahavah*. The source of the opinion that Iyov served Hashem only out of *yirah* looks at the fact that Iyov is classified as *yirei Elokim* in a negative light (see Rashi on the Mishna).

¹⁰ The Rambam (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:51 & 54) further develops his idea of *chacham*. For the Rambam this is the epitome of a human's position in this world. See also the Rambam in *Hil. Deos* (1:4-5) and *Shmoneh Prakim* (Ch. 4) where he outlines the path of a *chacham* and a *chasid*.

¹¹ To flesh out this idea I gave my student a selection of Blaise Pascal's wager (Pascal's *Pensees* Part III — "The Necessity of the Wager") and we discussed it. We evaluated how true they felt it was but also discussed if this was the ideal motivation for acting in a religious way.

¹² There is a general theme in chazal of comparing Iyov and Avrohom. Avrohom is understood to have been greater than Iyov. See, for example, *Bereishis Rabbah* (49:9). Although the Gemara (*Bava Basra* 15b) says that the *pesukim* are more complimentary of about Iyov than they are about Avrohom, the Maharsha explains this in light of the other sources. He opines that the reason better things are said about Iyov is because his praise is not in the presence of Iyov (*shelo bifanav*) and so it is his complete praise. However, due to the principle of '*mikztas shevacho bifanav*' Avrohom, who is present when being praised, does not get as full a compliment.

¹³ The Ramban (*Iyov* 32:1) says that since Iyov is a *Tzaddik* in his own eyes and not in the friends' eyes they stop arguing. The Raibag (there) also says that they could not find anything to convince Iyov and so they give up.

¹⁴ The Ramban speaks about this in *Sha'ar HaGemul* (1:24) as well as his commentary on *Iyov* (32:2). He points out that Eliyhu does not seem to even mention *Olam HaBah* at all but Iyov's reaction is a clear indication that Eliyhu is saying something Iyov has not heard before. He refrains from going into too much detail, since the explanation is '*assur b'kesav v'haremez oveid haToeles*.' In his *drasha* on *Koheles* (Mosad HaRav Kook's *kisvei Ramban* vol. 1 pg. 197), the Ramban explains that the first three friends were giving logical answers while Eliyhu speaks with prophecy. This approach can be contrasted with Rambam (*Moreh*

Nevuchim 3:23) who says that Eliyhu is basically a rehash of Elifaz with the added point that we really can't properly judge Hashem's interaction with our world.

¹⁵ Rava (*Bava Basra* 16a) sees the additional words of 'with his mouth' as implying that he sinned in his mind but did not verbalize his heretical views. The Maharsha explains that it was the fact that the pains and difficulties were on Iyov's body which was too much for him to bear. Rashi quotes Rava's statement on the pasuk. The Ramban (*Iyov* 2:10), interestingly, understands that Iyov's sin begins later, only once his friends begin to argue with him. It should also be noted that Abayee argues with Rava and feels that Iyov did not sin. This will be developed later in this article.

¹⁶ Eliyhu's first three speeches (Ch. 32-35) are introduced with '*vaya'an*' and his final speech (Ch. 36) is introduced with '*vayosef*.' Ramban (intro to *perek* 36) explains that in the first number of speeches Eliyhu condemns Iyov and at the beginning of chapter 36 he begins instead to praise Hashem. Rashi (*Iyov* 36:1) similarly states that the final speech is called a '*tosefes*' since the first three are Eliyhu's version of the arguments of the three friends and this fourth speech is Eliyhu's own argument. R' Schwab also comments on this point.

¹⁷ It may be advisable to present the Rambam as a distinct opinion rather than base ones entire structure of preparation on the Rambam's layout. His approach is very valuable in terms of the question of *hasgocha pratis* but is difficult to apply when working through the sefer. See the Ralbag at the end of chapter 8.

¹⁸ R' David Aaron has a wonderful article on this topic at:

http://www.isralight.org/assets/Text/RDA_vayikra08.html

¹⁹ The text of the Gemara is :

אמר רבא: בקש איוב להפוך קערה על פיה

אמר רבא: בקש איוב לפטור את כל העולם כולו מן הדין

²⁰ Interestingly, Rava is also the one who explains that when Hashem speaks to Iyov out of the storm it is a sign of anger.

²¹ Abayee's statement is:

אמר ליה אביי: לא דבר איוב אלא כנגד השטן

²² One important idea to explore is the proper translation for the word *tochacha*, which appears frequently. Ostensibly *tochacha* brings with it a harsher implication. However, Rashi (6:25) seems to understand that when used in *Iyov* it does not mean 'rebuke', as much as, 'explanation'. This is very important as it will set the tone in many sections. For example Rashi at the beginning of the fifth chapter says that at this point the *tochacha* begins once Elifaz has completed relaying his prophecy. Rashi's opinion on the tone of Elifaz's speech will hinge on the implications of the word *tochacha*.

²³ One approach is to find examples of different interpretations of the same passage. At times these different perspectives are a function of different tone rather than different translation of the words. Examples such as these help students to appreciate the complexity of *Iyov* in a way which is accessible to them. It also is helpful for a teacher to be aware of these differences in order to identify the basis in rishonim for more than one approach within the class. In our example the Ramban actually mentions tone of voice as a possible way to differentiate between the friends and Eliyhu but dismisses it since he feels there is no way for Rashi to know this. Another example of utilizing tone is the beginning of the 4th chapter where the Ralbag (4:2) seems to interpret Elifaz's comments to be far harsher than the Ramban or Rashbam (*Bereishis* 19:11). Similarly, Iyov's response at the beginning of chapter twelve to the friends that 'with you dies wisdom' can be understood in different ways. We find that Rashi takes Iyov at his word that he is in fact complimenting the three friends. The Ramban quotes opinions that Iyov's statements are biting sarcasm. In the end, he sides with Rashi, but such arguments underscore the importance of understanding tone. Additionally, one can look to compare the friends in terms of tone as well as content. The Ramban (beginning of chapter 8) feels that Bildad is harsher than Elifaz. Frequently, when I gave assignments I would ask the students to evaluate the tone, as well as the content, in order to bring out these subtleties.

²⁴ Rashi (42:7) comments that Hashem's anger at the three friends is over their treatment of Iyov. Although Iyov was expressing incorrect philosophies, it was a product of the difficulties he was facing. The friends, according to Rashi, should have taken the approach of consolation (*nechama*), as Eliyhu did. Ramban (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:23) also makes the comment that Iyov should not have been given *tochacha* since a person is not faulted for what they say in the time of their pain. This may be the reason that the friends of Iyov are included in the list of examples of *Onaas Devarim* (hurtful speech, see *Bava Metzia* 58b). R' Schwab (13:6) also comments that Iyov feels that his friends are not listening. He uses this as an example of the importance of listening as a friend and a Rav. This is a good way to bring out the tone of frustration in Iyov's speeches. This approach may mean that it is more the manner in which they speak to Iyov, than the content of their speeches, which is problematic. See next note.

²⁵ The Ramban and Rambam both point out that it is only Iyov's new position which Hashem is pleased with. Ramban uses the fact that Hashem specifically says what Iyov has spoken to Him is correct ('*ellai*') to bolster this point. He understands this to mean that it is only Iyov's comments to Hashem which were proper, not any of his earlier statements. Ramban (*Sha'ar HaGemul* 1: 25) further suggests that the proper approach of the friends would have been to admit their lack of knowledge since they didn't get prophecy (like Eliyhu did). The Ramban offers a second approach that Hashem is upset that the friends have accepted Iyov's arguments. The Ramban is assuming that it is their content which is objectionable not just their manner. Additionally, the Ramban's second approach assumes the meaning of the friend's

silence is an acceptance of Iyov's views.

²⁶ Iyov (16:19-22); Iyov (23:1-11)

²⁷ Yechezkel (1:4) experiences Hashem as a '*ruach searah*' when he first begins his prophecy. Eliyahu (Melachim Alef Chapter 19) also has a vision involving a strong wind '*ruach gedola v'chazak*.' The example of Eliyahu needs further study since the point of the prophecy that Eliyahu gets seems to be the fact that Hashem is not in the wind, rather Hashem is the still small voice (*kol demamah dakah*). If so, then perhaps the example of Eliyahu is a proof against the Ramban that the powerful wind is not just a manifestation of Hashem, but one of anger.

²⁸ The Ramban points out that the first time Hashem spoke from the storm it was '*HaSearah*' and this time the *heh hayediah* is dropped. He interprets this as a lessening of Hashem's anger.

²⁹ Additionally, Ramban later (beginning of chapter 38) also comments that when Hashem comes to Iyov now it is because Iyov has attained the level of prophecy. Despite the fact that he initially erred in questioning Hashem (*chatah*) he has now become closer to Hashem since he accepts the words of Eliyahu.

³⁰ Ramban (*Drasha on Koheles* pg. 195-7) says that Eliyahu's response to Iyov can only be understood through a *kabalah* (i.e. a tradition). He says that Shlomo also hints to this secret at the end of Koheles with '*sof davar...*' The idea which is being expressed is that the level of *hashgocha pratis* in fact dependent on how 'close' one is to Hashem. This theme is present in the Ramban (first chapter of Iyov) when he comments on the role of Satan. He suggests that the reason Hashem commands Satan not to touch Iyov is to hint that if one cleaves to Hashem they can't be touched by any evil (see also his comments at the end of Chapter 11). The Ramban (*Moreh Nevuchim* 3:51) also develops this theme without directly relating it to the book of Iyov. Elsewhere (*Sha'ar HaGemul* 1:19) the Ramban links Eliyahu to a second secret which explains why even full *Tzaddikim* can get punishments. He says that most do not understand it, which is what the Gemara (Munachos 29b) regarding R' Akiva's death means. He calls this secret the *Sod halbbur*. It would seem from other writings of the Ramban and Ricanti that this is a reference to the concept of *gilgul neshama*, or reincarnation. See Ramban (*Bereishis* 38:8) regarding yibum and footnote 12 in the mosad haRav Kook edition which equates *sod Halbbur* with *sod HaGilgul*. See also Ramban (*Devarim* 7:9) that this is the secret of why '*el panav*' is singular, instead of plural, since it is the same *neshamos* of the sinners themselves (not just their descendents).

³¹ An important difference would seem to be Hashem's comment that he must not hide what he is doing from Avrohom (*Bereishis* 18:16-17). The Seforno (there) seems to take the approach that Hashem simply wants Avrohom to understand the way He works. So Avrohom is questioning and not challenging. R' Schwab (*Iyov*, pg. 347) comments that it is only appropriate to question Hashem when one is invited to do so, as in the case of Avrohom. Elsewhere R' Schwab (*Mein Beis haShoevah Bereishis* 18:33) gives a different answer. There, he explains that it is only because Hashem descended (*airayd*) to the level of human comprehension and so it was appropriate to question.

³² Other sources where this question is dealt with are the 73rd chapter of *Tehillim* and the 7th chapter of *Koheles*. Rav Schwab discusses this issue in his introduction to *Iyov*.

³³ One can develop the theme that probing to understand Hashem is laudable, using both Avrohom and Moshe as examples. It is when the respectful questioning turns to challenging that the problem develops. The same differentiation could be made between the questions of the *chacham* and *rasha* at the seder.

³⁴ This approach also works well with the idea mentioned above that there is a contrast between Avrohom and Iyov. Avrohom is mentioned by the Seforno as one of the paradigms of one who is righteous enough to save others. We find a similar comparison of Avrohom and Noach in chazal. The *Mishna* in *Pirkei Avos* (5:2) contrasts them saying that Avrohom received the reward of the previous generations while Noach was only saved. Similarly, we have Rashi's famous comments at the beginning of Noach in terms of the contrast between Avrohom and Noach.

³⁵ This approach is expanded upon by the Seforno (*Bereishis* 21:1) who also relates it to the fact that Sarah finally becomes pregnant immediately after Avrohom davens to reopen the orifices, including the womb, of the household of Avimelech. Rav Soleveitchik also uses this approach (*Kol Dodi Dofayk* pg. 16-19).

³⁶ <http://www.wikispaces.com/>; wikispaces are free for educators.