

Angels vs Humans

WHAT ROLE DOES TORAH PLAY IN OUR LIVES?

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

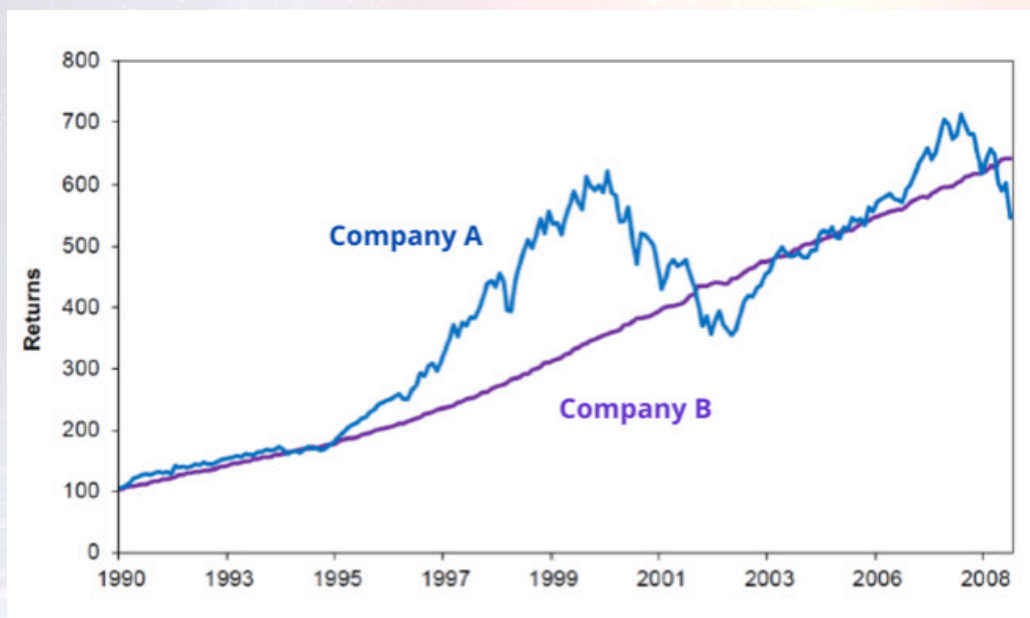
CENTRAL IDEAS

- 1 Being human means being imperfect. All aspects of life (including the stock market) reflect imperfection. Being imperfect is something to embrace, not reject.
- 2 Being imperfect means, we can improve throughout life, gradually getting better, stronger, and smarter. One determining factor in our success to accomplish this is our ability to push through struggle.
- 3 The Torah provides a pathway for growth and a 'how to guide' for our lives. Moshe explains that we need the Torah, not in spite of but rather because of our imperfections. If the Torah is meant to help us as humans and not angels, what does that mean for my interaction with and learning Torah?

PART 1: OPEN DISCUSSION ABOUT THE VALUE OF STRUGGLE

HOOK ACTIVITY: (5 MINUTES)

Show students the following graph and ask them the following: If you saw these two stocks would you choose to invest in Company A or Company B?



Reveal to students that Company A is “the market”, the general stock market over those years, and Company B is Bernie Madoff’s investment group which was a Ponzi scheme. You may need to explain Ponzi schemes and the idea that Bernie Madoff gave back steady, consistent returns on his stocks and never gave back negative returns.

DISCUSSION: (5-10 MINUTES)

Choose one of the following two scenarios to present to students.

- Who would you rather higher for your company? A student who grew up wealthy and had every advantage, scored a 1600 on her SAT's and went to an Ivy league college OR a student who grew up in poverty, scored a 1450 on her SAT's and went to a solid, state school?
- What do you think is more impressive, a student who improved from a B to an A OR a student who improved from a D to a B?

Goal of this conversation is to talk about the value of work ethic, grit and grinding. Is the goal to simply produce results or is to grow from the process? Are smaller gains that came from more effort more valuable or is perfection and high performance more valuable?

PART 2: HUMANS VS ANGELS - WHY WE GOT THE TORAH

TORAH SOURCE AND DISCUSSION: (15-20 MINUTES)

Learn the Gemara Shabbos (88a) with the students

גמרא שבת (פ.ח.)

And Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: When Moses ascended on High to receive the Torah, the ministering angels said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, what is one born of a woman doing here among us? God said to them: He came to receive the Torah. The angels said before Him: The Torah is a hidden treasure that was concealed by you 974 generations before the creation of the world, and you seek to give it to flesh and blood? "What is man that You are mindful of him and the son of man that You think of him?" (Psalms 8:5). Rather, "God our Lord, how glorious is Your name in all the earth that Your majesty is placed above the heavens" (Psalms 8:2). The rightful place of God's majesty, the Torah, is in the heavens.

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: Provide them with an answer as to why the Torah should be given to the people. Moses said before Him: Master of the Universe, I am afraid lest they burn me with the breath of their mouths. God said to him: Grasp My throne of glory for strength and protection, and provide them with an answer. And from where is this derived? As it is stated: "He causes him to grasp the front of the throne, and spreads His cloud over it" (Job 26:9), and Rabbi Naḥum said: This verse teaches that God spread the radiance of His presence and His cloud over Moses.

Moses said before Him: Master of the Universe, the Torah that You are giving me, what is written in it? God said to him: "I am the Lord your God Who brought you out of Egypt from the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2). Moses said to the angels: Did you descend to Egypt? Were you enslaved to Pharaoh? Why should the Torah be yours? Again Moses asked: What else is written in it? God said to him: "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3). Moses said to the angels: Do you dwell among the nations who worship idols? Again Moses asked: What else is written in it? "Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it" (Exodus 20:8). Moses asked the angels: Do you perform labor that you require rest from it? Again Moses asked: What else is written in it? "Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" (Exodus 20:7), meaning that it is prohibited to swear falsely. Moses asked the angels: Do you conduct business with one another that may lead

ואמר רבי יהושע בן לוי בשעה שעלה משה למרום אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבוננו של עולם מה לילוד אשה בינינו אמר להן לקבל תורה בא אמרו לפני חמודה גנוזה שגנוזה לך תשע מאות ושבעים וארבעה דורות קודם שנברא העולם אתה מבקש ליתנה לבשר ודם מה אנוש כי תזכרנו ובן אדם כי תפקדנו ה' אדנינו מה אדיר שמך בכל

הארץ אשר תנה הודך על השמים אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה החזיר להן תשובה אמר לפניו רבוננו של עולם מתיירא אני שמא ישרפוני בהבל שבפיהם אמר לו אחוז בכסא כבודי וחזור להן תשובה שנאמר מאחז פני כסא פרשו עליו עננו ואמר רבי נחום מלמד שפירש שדי מזוי שכינתו ועננו עליו אמר לפניו רבוננו של עולם תורה שאתה נותן לי מה כתיב בה אנכי ה' אלהיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים אמר להן למצרים ירדתם לפרעה השתעבדתם תורה למה תהא לכם שוב מה כתיב בה לא יהיה לך אלהים אחרים בין הגוים אתם שרויין שעובדין

עבודת גלולים שוב מה כתיב בה זכור את יום השבת לקדשו כלום אתם עושים מלאכה שאתם צריכין שבות שוב מה כתיב בה לא תשא משא ומתן יש בייניכם שוב מה כתיב בה כבד את אביך ואת אמך אב ואם יש לכם שוב מה כתיב בה לא תרצה לא תנאף לא תגנב קנאה יש ביניכם יצר הרע יש ביניכם מיד הודו לו להקדוש ברוך הוא שנאמר ה' אדנינו מה אדיר שמך וגו' ואילו תנה הודך על השמים לא כתיב

you to swear falsely? Again Moses asked: **What else is written in it? "Honor your father and your mother"** (Exodus 20:12). Moses asked the angels: **Do you have a father or a mother? Again** Moses asked: **What else is written in it?** God said to him: **"You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal"** (Exodus 20:13) Moses asked the angels: **Is there jealousy among you, or is there an evil inclination within you? Immediately they agreed with the Holy One, Blessed be He,** that He made the right decision to give the Torah to the people, and **as it is stated: "God our Lord, how glorious is Your name in all the earth"** (Psalms 8:10), while **"that Your majesty is placed above the heavens"** is **not written** because the angels agreed with God that it is appropriate to give the Torah to the people on earth.

מיד כל אחד ואחד נעשה לו אוהב ומסר לו דבר שנאמר עלית למרום שבית שבי לקחת מתנות באדם בשכר שקראוך אדם לקחת מתנות אף מלאך המות מסר לו דבר שנאמר ויתן את הקטרת ויכפר על העם ואומר ויעמד בין המתים ובין החיים וגו' אי ללא דאמר ליה מי הוה ידע

Immediately, each and every one of the angels became an admirer of Moses and passed something to him, as it is stated: **"You ascended on high, you took a captive, you took gifts on account of man,** and even among the rebellious also that the Lord God might dwell there" (Psalms 68:19). The meaning of the verse is: **In reward** for the fact **that they called you man,** you are not an angel and the Torah is applicable to you, **you took gifts** from the angels. And **even the Angel of Death gave him something,** as Moses told Aaron how to stop the plague, **as it is stated: "And he placed the incense, and he atoned for the people"** (Numbers 17:12). And the verse says: **"And he stood between the dead and the living,** and the plague was stopped" (Numbers 17:13). If it were **not that** the Angel of Death **told him** this remedy, **would he have known it?**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Why does God direct Moshe to respond instead of responding Himself?
- What is Moshe's general message about the role of Torah in our lives?
- How does this shape our perspective on learning Torah and why we do it?

PART4: CONCLUSION

HOLD UP A MIRROR AND CONSIDER:

- Do I have imperfections?
- Do I struggle to work through them?
- Can the Torah be a source of help?

The things that make us human, make the Torah meaningful and necessary for us. We need the Torah as a guide for us to grow and develop, whereas the angels are perfect without any effort. Who is greater after all? Those who work to improve or those who are perfect all along?

STEP ONE:

We looked at the stock market and realized that imperfection is actually a staple of being human. Madoff's numbers were too perfect, which is what got him caught.

STEP TWO:

We thought about the role of effort and struggle in growth, and what makes us better, stronger, and wiser. Think back to a time that you pushed through a struggle, how did it make you better?

STEP THREE:

We learned the Gemara that relates Moshe's struggle in receiving the Torah and how he explained that humanity needs the Torah, more than the angels. His argument is that we need the Torah, because it speaks to us and our imperfections.

STEP FOUR:

Have I considered that Torah is not just a subject, but also a source of help in my life?