

Is God Fair?

Nehemiah 9:7-8 HCSB You are the LORD God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, and changed his name to Abraham. (8) You found his heart faithful in Your sight, and made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Girgashites--to give it to his descendants. You have kept Your promise, for You are righteous.

Often, when things don't go our way; when we face hardships – the challenges and tribulations of life – we are tempted to yell up to heaven “Is this any way to run the universe?” At the point in history we have been studying, the people of Israel had fallen on hard times. They had once been a great, sovereign nation. Now, though they had worked hard to rebuild the walls, the truth of the matter is that they were still subject to foreign powers, surrounded by enemies, struggling with poverty, and unsure of their future.

Notice however that they take a day to say “God, you are faithful. You keep your promises. You are righteous.” That’s certainly not the response one would expect from most people today, is it? Lowlanders, and unfortunately many of God’s children, respond to difficult times by crying out, “I don’t deserve this grief, this hardship, this loss. I deserve the good life, a long life, filled with comfort and respect.”

In contrast, the Apostle Paul tells us, “All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”¹ and “the wages of sin is death.”² He assures us that our sins mean we deserve *death* – not a long life filled with comfort and respect! If we got what we deserved in this life... none of us would survive.

Lowlanders can't accept this view. When faced with tough times, they often reject or condemn God. How do you think God responds? I think perhaps Job 40 has the answer for us. Turn if you will to,

- **Job 40:7-8 HCSB** Get ready to answer Me like a man; When I question you, you will inform Me. (8) Would you really challenge My justice? Would you declare Me guilty to justify yourself?

We have all seen people who have lashed out at God, harbored their bitterness, their loss, their grievances. Hashem tells us that they do this; they condemn God, in order to justify themselves.

Some people who are handicapped or born with deformities may yell, as the Apostle Paul put it, “Why have you made me thus?”³ Again, Adonai answers in,

- **Romans 9:20-21 HCSB** But who are you--anyone who talks back to God? Will what is formed say to the one who formed it, “Why did you make me like this?” (21) Or has the potter no right over His clay, to make from the same lump one piece of pottery for honor and another for dishonor?

Many (some who are even Christians) are tempted to walk away from God when tough times come. God’s people must rise above that mentality. Consider how the great men of God responded to adversity:

- Job lost all he had at the hands of Sabeans and Chaldeans yet said: “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away.”⁴
- Joseph told his brothers – “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.”⁵

¹ Romans 3:23

² Romans 6:23

³ Romans 9:20

⁴ Job 1:21

⁵ Genesis 50:20

- David said of his tormentor Shimei, "leave him alone; let him curse, for the LORD has told him to."⁶
- Jesus said "forgive them for they don't know what they do."⁷ He knew that for all their wicked murderousness they were still unwitting agents in God's plan.
- James said, "Rejoice when tough times come. Humble yourself under His mighty hand."⁸

Notice that the Jews of Nehemiah's day revered God: they spent the better part of the day worshipping Him; they openly declared their praises; they recited the many mighty deeds they could remember of His power.

In contrast, notice how they viewed themselves:

- They clothed themselves in sackcloth and ashes (9:1). Fasting, wearing sackcloth, and putting dust or ashes on the head were public signs of sorrow and repentance.
- They separated themselves from the distractions of bad company (9:2). They were thus admitting that even in this spiritual and emotional condition they were STILL subject to the temptation of running with the wrong crowd.
- They confessed their sins. (9:2) They unabashedly declared "We have sinned" (9:33).

They were not demanding God's blessings. They were pleading for mercy. The only way to enter into God's presence is to humble ourselves. It is when we humble ourselves, pray and seek Hashem's face, and turn from our evil ways that He will hear from heaven, forgive our sin, and heal our land.⁹

It is by realizing that we have nothing to offer God and deserve nothing good by His hand, but instead concentrate on what He has already done for us in the past that we can receive healing.

Let's look at all that the eight Levites leading worship that day had to say.

1. God created heaven with its entire host.
2. God created the space/time continuum.
3. God created the Earth and its biosphere.
4. God created the Seas with all that lives within them.
5. God created life itself.
6. God chose one man named Abram and began working with him.
7. God made the covenant that had the land grant for the territories of Israel.
8. God kept His covenant in spite of our unfaithfulness.
9. God sees when we are oppressed.
10. God acts against the oppressors.
11. God made a name Himself, Yahweh, which lasts to this very day.
12. He performed signs and wonders:
 - a. By bringing the plagues of Egypt
 - b. By dividing the sea
 - c. By killing all the pursuing soldiers
13. He led Israel with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
14. He visited Israel at Mt. Sinai
15. He gave us not only the Ten Commandments but all of Halakha, His righteous laws.
16. He revealed His will as to the Sabbath rest.
17. He provided manna from heaven.
18. He provided water from the rock.

⁶ 2 Samuel 16:11

⁷ Luke 23:34

⁸ James 1:2; 4:10

⁹ 2 Chronicles 7:14

19. He gave us the mandate to go and claim the land grant He had made to Abraham.
20. When we balked He did not abandon us.
21. When we worshipped the golden calf and committed blasphemies He did not abandon us but continued to lead, feed and water our ancestors through the wilderness.
22. He sent the Holy Spirit to teach us.
23. He did this for forty long years!
24. He miraculously provided for even our clothing and shoes!
25. He maintained our health!
26. He multiplied us and then brought us back again to His covenant promise – the Promised Land!
27. Through His power our ancestors conquered the land.
28. Through His grace we ate, were filled, and became prosperous.
29. When in our satiated gluttony we rebelled He patiently taught us the error of our ways.
30. He did this again and again and again.
31. He was patient with us for many years and sent us many prophets.
32. Though we gave Him more than enough cause, He never destroyed us.
33. In fact, after we rejected and killed most of His prophets, He sent His only begotten Son to die on a cruel cross to pay the penalty of our sins!
34. He made it possible for the Gentiles to join His nation and be assured of a place in heaven!
35. He sent His Holy Spirit to not only teach us but to live in us and empower us, giving us the possibility of power over sin.
36. He prepared good works for us to perform, allowed us to become His co laborers in the redemption of the world.
37. He prepared a place for us in heaven.
38. He gave us the possibility of becoming co-heirs of the universe with His Son Jesus.
39. He answered Jesus' prayer that we might become one with the Trinity and enjoy that holy fellowship.
40. He promised that one day He would reward our good works with increased responsibility and that we would even judge the angels!

What a great God! Hallelujah! The title of the sermon today is "Is God Fair?" I submit to you that He is not. Thank God that He is not fair. Thank Him and praise His holy name that He does not give us what we deserve! Worship His holiness and stand in shattered awe over your own sinfulness. Bow before His majesty and thank Him again and again for not destroying you.

Stand up with me church! Stand up bless the Lord your God from everlasting to everlasting. Praise His glorious name and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise!

**He didn't halfway save me*