

**Shayla:** What about those who've never heard of Jesus?

**Meforshim:**

In view of this perennial question, the first thought that comes to mind is the assurance that Hashem surely does not play favorites.

- **Acts 10:34-35 HCSB** Then Peter began to speak: "In truth, I understand that God doesn't show favoritism, (35) but in every nation the person who fears Him and does righteousness is acceptable to Him.

I believe that it is critical to keep in mind Peter's teaching that God has people in EVERY nation who fear him and do righteousness. We recognize that they may be few in number.

- **Matthew 7:14 HCSB** **How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it.**

However few they may be, they can be found in every nation, which means that God must have a plan for them. Paul speaks of this plan.

- **Romans 2:11-16 HCSB** There is no favoritism with God. (12) All those who sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all those who sinned under the law will be judged by the law. (13) For the hearers of the law are not righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be declared righteous. (14) So, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, instinctively do what the law demands, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law. (15) They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences testify in support of this, and their competing thoughts either accuse or excuse them (16) on the day when God judges what people have kept secret, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus.

Those who are outside the pale of the Law are judged accordingly. Those who have had the tremendous privilege and responsibility of receiving the revealed Law of God are also judged accordingly. As it is written:

- **Luke 12:48 HCSB** **But the one who did not know and did things deserving of blows will be beaten lightly. Much will be required of everyone who has been given much. And even more will be expected of the one who has been entrusted with more.**

By what are those who are "outside the law" judged? Paul says that they are judged according to their obedience to their consciences (Romans 2:15) and Peter argues that God accepts those who fear Him and do righteousness according to their best understanding of what that means.

Do not mistake my meaning. I am NOT saying that there is salvation outside of the Messiah. Had He not atoned for our sins, not one of us would ever get to heaven.

- **Romans 3:23 HCSB** For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

As Jesus Himself said,

- **John 14:6 HCSB** Jesus told him, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**

Those who have heard the Gospel find themselves under an increased load of responsibility. They must respond appropriately to what they know. Those who have never heard the Gospel must also respond appropriately to what they know. There is no favoritism with God.

What may those who have never heard of Jesus know?

- **Romans 1:19-20 HCSB** since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. (20) From the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse.

- **Psalms 19:1-4 HCSB** For the choir director. A Davidic psalm. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims the work of His hands. (2) Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge. (3) There is no speech; there are no words; their voice is not heard. (4) Their message has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the inhabited world. In the heavens He has pitched a tent for the sun.

If someone has never heard of Jesus, but recognizes that there is a God in heaven, who created all things, and to whom they are accountable, and responds with a humble and obedient desire to behave in a righteous manner in accordance with their conscience and the promptings of the Holy Spirit (who can access them even if no missionary ever does), Peter tells us that God accepts them.

- **Hebrews 13:16 HCSB** Don't neglect to do good and to share, for God is pleased with such sacrifices.  
"Then what is the advantage of missionary work?" You may ask.
- **Romans 2:15 HCSB** They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences testify in support of this, and their competing thoughts either accuse or excuse them
- **Romans 8:1-4 HCSB** Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus, (2) because the Spirit's law of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (3) What the law could not do since it was limited by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending His own Son in flesh like ours under sin's domain, and as a sin offering, (4) in order that the law's requirement would be accomplished in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

In chapter two, Paul says that these poor souls, living without the knowledge of the Gospel, struggle in their condition. At times, their consciences excuse them, and at other times accuse them. They are never sure of their salvation. In this state, they remain like the Old Covenant saints upon whom the Spirit would come and go, come and go.

The singular gift of the Messiah is the Holy Spirit (John 14:16) who, as our Seal (Ephesians 4:30), grants us permanence and assuredness of salvation (Romans 5:5; Titus 3:5-7. Beyond salvation, the Spirit grants us continuous guidance and teaching (John 15:26; 16:13; Acts 13:2). The Spirit enables us to know how to live as El Ch'uw'l's children (Romans 8:1-8; Galatians 5:16-25). There is every advantage to coming to the knowledge of the truth and being sealed to the day of redemption by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

I'm just saying that God is fair and He has a plan for those who through their isolation or through the sinful incompetence of His followers never get to hear the Good News.

This should also be taken into account when struggling with spiritual complacency. If we fail to show fruit, fail to truly act according to our conscience and consistently do what is right, perhaps (though we have heard) we have failed to heed the Gospel.

- **James 2:14-17 HCSB** What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works? Can his faith save him? (15) If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you don't give them what the body needs, what good is it? (17) In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself.

In spite of the blessed truth of God's loving compassion even for those who have never heard of His Messiah, the command for those of us who HAVE heard remains:

- **Matthew 28:19 HCSB** Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,