

Teaching *from* Zion

Netivyah Bible Instruction Ministry, Jerusalem, Israel

"...for out of Zion shall come forth Torah
and the word of the Lord from
Jerusalem." – Isaiah 2:3



CONFRONTING EVIL

*"Bless those who persecute you
bless them, don't curse them!"*

Romans 12:14



נתיביה Netivyah
Teaching from Zion

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About Netivyah

Netivyah in Hebrew means "the Way of the Lord." "The Way" was one of the names by which the early community of believers was known in the Brit Chadashah (New Testament). Paul says, "I worship the God of our fathers in accordance with the Way (which they call a sect). I continue to believe everything that accords with the Torah and everything written in the Prophets." (Acts 24:14 CJB). As followers of "the Way," we believe in the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We try to be faithful to God's law (the Torah) and to the rest of Scripture—the Prophets and the Writings. We believe that the Messiah promised in God's word is Yeshua (Jesus), the one who "saves His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

More Information: www.netivyah.org

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News from Israel and from Netivyah

By Joseph Shulam

The state of Israel, both the people and the government are going through some of the toughest times since the war of independence in the late 1940's, more specifically the war for Israel's independence between 1946 and 1948 the declaration of the United Nations of the establishment of a Jewish State on the Land of Israel. The very existence of a Jewish state in the land promised and given to Abraham and his seed as an everlasting inheritance is on the balance of history and existence. Israel has allowed a cancerous foreign body with malignant origin, corrupt history, and bloody constitution with one aim and that is to destroy Israel as a Jewish state and a free and democratic society. Every day we have another few of our young men die and get wounded in the killing fields of Gaza and in the bombardments from Lebanon by Iran's proxy Hezbollah shooting hundreds of rockets and drones on civilian towns and cities and kibbutz settlements on our northern and north-eastern borders.

In Netivyah the challenges don't stop! In August we had to repair the whole roof of our building. The building is not that old, but the roof was leaking and water was running down from the roof (the fourth floor) all the way through three floors into our synagogue the place we pray and teach and worship God. We had to repair this water leak as soon as possible before the rainy season started. The cost of this roof repair was close to 100,000 US dollars. It included the uplifting and clearing of all the old roofing, including the tiles and the air conditioning units. Everything had to be moved by industrial-size trucks with lifts that could move the big air conditioning units. The workers lifted all the roofing up, sealed what needed to be sealed, and filled the whole roof with 120,000 liters of water, that is 40,000 gallons of water and kept that swimming pool quantity of water for almost a week to make sure that the roof is sealed and waterproof before cleaning and sizing and covering the roof of Netivyah with special synthetic deck. The Lord has provided from dear brothers in Germany about 25,000 dollars and another 25,000 dollars from Netivyah International, our brothers and sisters, and partners from the very beginning of the non-profit NGO in Israel. Yes, the name Netivyah International is a new name to Netivyah USA, we changed the name because our focus has changed from the USA only to international since we have established congregations in Brazil, Finland, and other places also. Our focus has shifted from the USA to the world. I, Yuda, and Daniel teach in Israel, but also in Finland, Papua in Indonesia, Brazil, Germany, and India, and in all these places and more we fight, publish, and engage with the growth of antisemitism around the world.

The tremendous amount of giving of tactical equipment to the Israeli military has slowed down some both because Netivyah has supplied a great amount of the needs of our men in the battlefields of Gaza and some also in the north. Now the focus of our ministry for the soldiers is for our women and some men who prepare hot meals that are fit for the King's table and drive to Gaza, open up tables, and feed our fighting men and women delicious hot Shabbat meals many of the Friday nights our soldiers get to enjoy delicious and healthy meals including very tasty and beautiful cakes that our dear board member Jai cooks and bakes with a set of volunteers from our congregation in Jerusalem and drive to the border with Gaza to feed our wonderful and courageous men in uniform. We give a small blessing to men who fight for our liberty and fulfillment of God's prophetic promises in the Bible.

We are overwhelmed by the support and love and desire to share with us your wealth of prayer and spiritual identification with Israel's causes and needs both in the realm of prayer and giving for the benefit and encouragement of our men in the battle fields of Gaza and northern Israel.

Pray for our fellowship and for our sick. Pray that our congregation in Jerusalem will have a revival and have new people join us and help with the burden of all the different ministries that Netivyah is doing, the Hamotzi food distribution program that feeds around 1000 people in Jerusalem with good, healthy, rich produce and dry food for seven days a week with three meals per day. If I do the math Netivyah staff and volunteers work hard to provide over 20,000 meals per week. This number is from approximately 1000 people, 7 days per week, 3 meals per day = 21,000 meals per week.

Yuda and other brothers raised in Netivyah served multiple times on the front lines and need your prayers. Pray for all our soldiers on the battlefields against the Hamas in the South and the Hezbollah in the North, who are battling sheer evil and antisemitic hate of all Jews and Christians as well.

Netivyah needs both your prayer support and special prayers for our sick including Marcia and Joseph Shulam, Ilana Anhiervi and Lea Kurky and Judy our oldest sister who is faithfully attending every Shabbat service. Don't forget Paul's admonition in Romans chapter 15: 23ff. We are one in the spirit and one in the Lord and we all live and worship God and serve Him in ONE ACORD.



FACES OF EVIL

HASATAN

ANTI-MESSIAH

& ANTI-SEMITITE

By Scott Fingerson

Anti-Semitism?
Does it appear in
a vacuum? Is it an
isolated expression of
hatred, or a specific kind
of hatred and rebellion?

Any discussion of evil in this present day will naturally be influenced by the atrocities of October 7. There is no greater visual aid for evil than the stories of that day, no greater demonstration of evil than the body camera footage that has been released as it was collected by the anti-human terrorists on that day. The connections between evil and anti-semitism are obvious and undeniable in the actions of Hamas and the actions of enthusiastic Palestinians on October 7.

When it comes to a discussion of Anti-Semitism, a common starting place is the narrative of Amalek, who attacked Israel at Rephadim. Israel is instructed to defeat Amalek in every generation, thus our current battle with Anti-Semitism continues to this day and always will. But what is the origin and nature of this

Let's begin with this question. What is the purpose of Israel? Of the Jews? The Jews are a people whom Adonai has chosen to represent His character and nature to all of humanity. This is accomplished through their ancestry, through their religion and spirituality, their laws and covenants as detailed in the Tenach, even through their traditions and customs. They are also the people to whom Adonai has brought the Mashiach. This Mashiach was then given to all the world, to as many as whom will receive him as Mashiach. "That they may know you...and the one you have sent, the Mashiach..." says Yeshua of himself in Yochanan (John) 17. The purpose of Israel is to bring Mashiach to the world. After the ascension of Yeshua, 40 days after His resurrection, and after the fiery anointing that came upon them at Shavuot, the early Talmidim began to do just that, to reveal Yeshua

Amalek is the most often referenced biblical character as a visual aid of Anti-Semitism. But there is a supporting cast of evil characters, who also tried to annihilate the people of Israel.

Israel is instructed to defeat Amalek in every generation, thus our current battle with Anti-Semitism continues to this day and always will.

HaMashiach to the world; first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. The revelation of this Yeshua HaMashiach is more than a spiritual revelation, He was a real living, breathing descendant of Yehuda, of Ya'akov, of Avraham. Yeshua is the real King in the line of David. At the time of his ascension, He declared all authority in heaven and on earth was His. This Yeshua HaMashiach is the Melech HaM'lachim, the King of Kings. But He left behind His Ruach, the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, as a helper and advocate to those who would judge and prophecy and heal and deliver on His behalf. We are all familiar with this.

What then of the Anti-Messiah, who is called the Anti-Christ in the Christian tradition? This is a figure most associated with apocalyptic texts, primarily Revelation and the Epistles of Yochanan. It is a person or being who comes to set himself up to oppose the Kingdom of Adonai in the last days. 1 John 2 refers to this Anti-Messiah "as you have heard..." giving us the understanding that he was expected at some point by the early believers.

If we start with the purpose of the people of Israel primarily to bring the Messiah-King to the world, and then we look at the actions of the Anti-Messiah, who would have been working and is still working, to thwart the purpose and work of Messiah, and by extension, to thwart the purpose and work of the Jews, then we start to see two threads running down through history, from the garden on to the present day. One is the thread of Yeshua the Messiah, and the other is the thread of HaSatan the Anti-Messiah. To this day, Yeshua and His followers have brought the gospel of restoration, deliverance, healing, and salvation to the world. Also, from the beginning and shall be until the end, the enemy has worked and is working to sabotage and destroy this gospel.

I can imagine that somewhere the Adversary must know that he cannot destroy the truth of Adonai, nor the word of Adonai, but like Pharaoh, believes he can destroy the people of Adonai. And that brings an interesting catch: if Israel is destroyed, will that ultimately thwart the plan of Adonai? If there are no longer a people of Israel to say "Baruch haba b'shem Adonai", will that defeat the return of Yeshua, the Messiah-King? And with that idea, we come to a possible motive for Anti-Semitism: that of defeating or thwarting Yeshua and His return.

Amalek is the most often referenced biblical character as a visual aid of Anti-Semitism. But there is a supporting cast of evil characters, who also tried to annihilate the people of Israel.

Pharaoh – who tried to kill all the boys, and thereby traumatize the mothers, and terrorize them into refusing to give birth to any children, unable to take the lottery risk of giving birth to a baby boy who is drowned in the river, or a baby girl, who can survive. In the face of that kind of terrorism, mothers would likely have chosen to not get pregnant. The intended effect of this was a kind of soft genocide, where the people die out for lack of children.

Herod - tried to murder Yeshua by murdering the babies in and around Beit Lechem, the village where Yeshua was born. Notice the similarities between Herod and Pharaoh.

Haman – who tried to annihilate the people of Israel in Persia. Incidentally, this may have taken place just before Ezra and Nechemya (Nehemiah) were dispatched back to Jerusalem to rebuild the altar, the wall, and the temple.

Bil'am – who tried to seduce the people of Israel into idolatry as a means of destroying them.

Nero – who was uniquely and especially cruel, but is known for sending Vespasian to Judea in 70CE resulting in the destruction of the temple.

In modern history, Hitler and the Nazi party, attempted to destroy the Jews in Europe.

It seems clear that all these, and the countless others that aren't mentioned here, were and are inspired by an inhuman force of evil, a force of intention to wipe out the people of Adonai.

Another character that could make the list, who desired to thwart the plan of Adonai is Lavan, the father of Leah and Rachel. A deeper look at the narrative of Lavan will give us more sense of what was happening, and an understanding the Anti-Messiah spirit that is apparent in the text. In the narrative, Ya'akov gathers his wives and children and flocks and herds and servants, and prepares to leave the land of Haran. Lavan is three days distant, and this gives Ya'akov and his family a good head-start. They flee towards Canaan but after 7 days, Lavan catches up with them. Then Lavan

begins his complaint upon Ya'akov.

B'resheet (Genesis) 31

"What do you mean by deceiving me and carrying off my daughters as if they were captives taken in war? Why did you flee in secret and deceive me and not tell me? I would have sent you off with joy and singing to the music of tambourines and lyres. You didn't even let me kiss my sons and daughter's good-bye! What a stupid thing to do! I have it in my power to do you harm..."

"I have it in my power..." The Adversary is also called the Prince and the Power of the Air. What are these daughters that Lavan is referring to? They are the mothers of the Tribes of Israel, from whom come the Kings and the Priests, Judges and Prophets, to Israel and to the world. Yet Lavan calls them "my daughters..."

Lavan continues, "Lavan answered Ya'akov, 'The daughters are mine; the children are mine; the flocks are mine, and everything you see is mine!'" At first, we might be inclined to dismiss it as deranged and irrational. But we should recognize this sentiment from another narrative in the bible.

Yeshua was immersed by Yochanan, and then was led into the wilderness to be tested by Satan, the Adversary. In Luke 4 we see this: "The Adversary took him up, showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world, and said to him, 'I will give you all this power and glory. It has been handed over to me, and I can give it to whomever I choose. So if you will worship me, it will all be yours.'" It strikes me that Lavan and the Satan are speaking with the same voice here. Both Lavan and the Satan said variations on "I have it in my power..."

The answer I believe is described in the comparison between the Satan, the Anti-Messiah, and the Anti-Semite. There is a common spirit behind each expression. It is expressed in opposition and rejection of Adonai, rejection of the Mashiach as King and Redeemer and Atonement, and a presumption of ownership and authority.

The expression that is so mindlessly repeated in protests and propaganda around the world is "From the river to the sea..." It is an expression of opposition to and hatred of the people of Adonai, but in greater truth, it is an expression of rejection of Adonai himself, and a presumption of ownership over a land that is simply defined as another sovereign nation, that of Israel. Even if you reject Adonai's proclamations of ownership of the land, you are still infringing and presuming upon the land of another nation.

The Anti-Semitism that is being revealed that is so common around the world right now, can only have one explanation: that it is inspired by a rational hatred of Adonai, and a delusional deception that Adonai can be conquered, that His plans can be thwarted. It is a rational hatred in the mind of the Anti-Semite. If you engage with them, they may act and speak in crazy ways, but you have to acknowledge that they think they are the ones who are rational and they think you are the irrational one. This deception in the mind of the Anti-Semite creates a real bondage of belief, in that all views in opposition to the Anti-Semitism is labeled as irrational and delusional. This is consistent with the Anti-Messiah (Anti-Christ) as well. The Anti-Messiah will reject the authority of Adonai and will be the biggest believer in his own destiny and importance. As Lavan said, "Everything is mine..."

days? First there is much to be lost in trying to "understand" the reason for the hatred expressed by the Anti-Semite. It has been said in many places lately (pardon my lack of attribution), that when the Jews were poor, they were hated, when they were wealthy, they were hated, when they were religious, they were hated, when they were secular, they were hated, when they were subjugated, they were hated, and when they were influential they were hated. When they were landless, they were hated and when they were in the land they were hated. The conclusion is that there is nothing the Jews are doing to engender hatred. Therefore, we must look beyond the natural, and look to the spiritual to understand this animosity.

Where then is the understanding? The understanding lies in knowing the real agenda. The real agenda, the real end game for Satan, and the Anti-Messiah is the same: the opposition and thwarting of the plan of Adonai, and the usurpation of the Messiah-King, Yeshua. Yeshua said "All authority has been given to me..." On that basis, on that very public proclamation, there remains only one option for the Adversary: to kill Adonai, and to conquer his people. The entire historical narrative of the biblical record is a case study of the strategy and desperation of the Enemy-Adversary. There is no surrender, there is no retreat. Even in death Pharaoh was still pushing to destroy, to annihilate the people of Israel. The hardened heart of the Adversary is on display in the pages of history. But Adonai has promised us "I will take your heart of stone (hardened), and I will give you a heart of flesh (softened)." In the same way that Adonai fought the battle against Pharaoh, with the people of Israel as bystanders, Adonai also spoke to Lavan "do not say anything to him..."

Is there a substance to this connection?

How then are we to respond to these

Notice in Genesis 31 Ya'akov becomes



Battle of Rephidim by John Everett Millais 1871

angry. It says he argued with Lavan. Ya'akov is indignant, wants to plead his case, to defend himself. And surely anyone would recognize Ya'akov's case, justice ought to be on his side. Notice Lavan's response "The daughters are mine; the children are mine; the flocks are mine, everything you see is mine..." Lavan is belligerent. The lesson is you can't appeal to justice to defend your case when you are dealing with the presumptuousness of the Anti-Messiah or the Anti-Semite, who I maintain are coming from the same spirit.

The conclusion, the narrative in Genesis between Ya'akov and Lavan details a pile of stones, as a marker, a witness. Notice Lavan's vow in the closing verses. I will not pass beyond this pile to you and you will not pass beyond this pile to me, he says, and he swears by the God of Avraham and the gods of Nachor. Most translations emphasize that Nachor was a pagan and would have worshipped other gods, while Avraham worshipped El Shaddai, God Almighty. On the other hand, Ya'akov swore that

he would not cross this boundary and return to the land of Nachor with these words: Vayishavah Ya'akov b'pachad avi Yitzchak, Jacob swore on the "fear" of his Father Yitzchak.

There are two times that Ya'akov refers to Adonai as the "Fear of my Father Yitzchak". It is even more obvious earlier in the text, at the end of Ya'akov's self-defense against Lavan, he says "If the God of my father, the God of Avraham, the fear of Yitzchak had not been on my side..." meaning that Adonai protected him from the abuse and exploitation of Lavan. What is this fear of Yitzchak? If it is viewed in contrast with the attitude of Lavan, who saw all the earth as his, then the "fear" is the Fear of Adonai as an expression of obedience and submission and trust. An expression of love even. D'varim (Deuteronomy) 10 says "Adonai asks you to fear Adonai your God...love him and serve him" This is what the Anti-Messiah and Anti-Semite will not be able to resolve: they are incapable of living in the Fear of Adonai.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 50

*Who among you fears Adonai?
Who obeys what his servant says?
Even when he walks in the dark,
without any light,
he will trust in Adonai's reputation
and rely on his God. (CJB)*

"Even when he walks in the dark..." We live in times of great darkness. But even in these days of darkness, especially in the increasing darkness, we will choose the fear of Adonai.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 50

*But all of you who are lighting fires
and arming yourselves with firebrands:
go, walk in the flame of your own fire,
among the firebrands you lit!
From my hands this [fate] await you:
you will lie down in torment. (CJB)*

The Anti-Messiah and the Anti-Semite, one and the same, are trying to burn it all down. But Adonai will be the one to be ultimately victorious. The nations rage, kingdoms rise and fall, but our God, El Shaddai, El Elyon, Almighty, Most High God, will be victorious over all His enemies. We will overcome our enemies with the Fear of Adonai, and our love for Adonai. Bo Melech HaM'lachim, Come King of Kings, Bo Yeshua HaMashiach, Come Yeshua the Messiah, the Christ, our Redeemer and Lord.

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Defining, Understanding & Confronting Evil

By Ariel Berkowitz

Introduction

We all know that the age in which we live is extremely troublesome. At times it seems that evil and ungodliness prevail unchecked. Almost every corner of the world is filled with confusion about sexuality, abortion, drugs, lawlessness — not to mention almost unbridled terrorism. How are believers in Yeshua to respond to such rampant evil? How do we confront such things? That is what this issue of this magazine is about. The articles contributed in this issue of the magazine are addressing the question of confronting evil in our present world.

We would like to offer this article as a part of what we are exploring in this issue of Teaching From Zion. We are believers

— ones born from above who were part of the evil of this world but are no longer part of the evil of this world. The Scriptures emphasize this reality to us and instructs us. For example, Ephesians chapters 4–5 give specific instructions about the evil of our world contrasted with who we are as believers in Messiah saying, “Therefore do not be partners with them.” (Ephesians 5:7). And in 5:8, we read “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in The Lord. Live as children of light.” Then in 5:15–16, it says, “Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” In light of this instruction, what about the sins of the flesh that we as ones born again still deal with? In this article, let’s continue to explore.

When ra is used to refer to something that is evil or wicked, therefore, it is not functioning the way God created it to function.

¹ Koehler, Ludwig and Baumgartner, Walter. The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of The Old Testament. (“halot,”) 1250–1251.

² R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr.; Bruce K. Waltke, Eds. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, 854



*When we listen and see,
and then speak it back
to Him and to ourselves
without excuses of
making it less than what
it actually is or making
excuses, we are being
“transformed by the
renewing of our mind.”*

I. Understanding the Word “Evil”

The main Hebrew word that we render “evil” is ra (רָע). Ra is a common word that has to do with something that is “badly made, of little worth: poor, or not beneficial.” However, it is also used to designate something that is “contemptible, wicked, morally depraved, or something unacceptable to the Creator.” We first encounter ra in Genesis when it seems to be used to speak of the opposite of good (tov). Indeed, “The essential meaning of the root can be seen in its frequent juxtaposition with the root טוֹב [tov].” In Genesis chapter 1 God said that His creation is tov when it functions exactly the way He created it to function. For example, Genesis 1:12 says, “The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and

trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good.” Here we catch a glimpse of God’s creation functioning as He created it to function. God made the seeds, they bore fruit, which in turn produced more seeds and so on. That is tov.

Ra is the opposite. When God’s creation malfunctions that is also ra. When ra is used to refer to something that is evil or wicked, therefore, it is not functioning the way God created it to function. Evil is, then, an abnormality. It is something that is not natural to creation as the Creator fashioned it. It is something that runs contrary to the Creator’s design and His intention.

In the LXX, and therefore, the Apostolic Scriptures, the Greek equivalent for

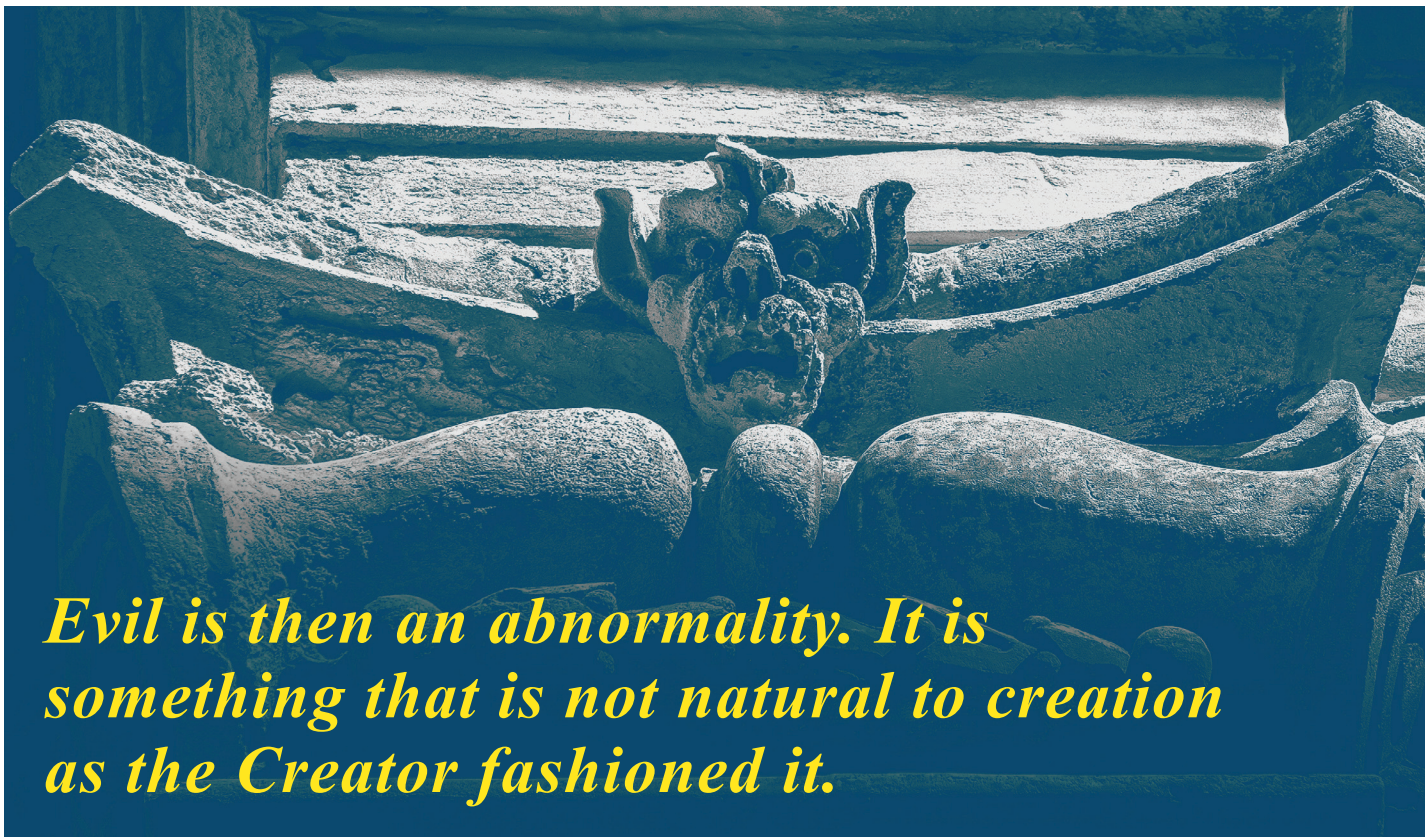
ra is porneiros, ponhros. It also carries the idea of being morally or socially worthless, wicked, evil, base, vicious, degenerate and pertaining to being morally corrupt and evil. As we can see, the Hebrew/Greek word “evil” needs to be carefully defined. In this essay, we are using the word to speak of the opposite of tov in terms of moral, ethical, and behavioral goodness.

II. Understanding the Word “Sin”

It goes without saying that all evil is a result of sin. It originated in the Garden when our first parents sinned against their Creator, were dismissed from the Garden, and gave birth to people whose identity is bent to continue that rebellion away from God. This rebellion, this evil against God is often described in

³ Arndt, William F., and Gingrich, F. Wilbur. Bauer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (“bdag”), 851.

⁴ HALOT, 800. | ⁵ HALOT, 981. | ⁶ HALOT, 305.



Evil is then an abnormality. It is something that is not natural to creation as the Creator fashioned it.

the Bible as “sin.” However, sin is not always sin!

To Trespass

Biblical Hebrew has at least four main words that we translate as “sin.” They share common ground in that they are all forms of evil. Not in any particular order, one word to speak of sin in Hebrew is usually translated as “trespassing.” This is the term, ‘avar, rsg. ‘Avar has to do with passing over something, like a border. When it is used to describe sin, it stresses the idea of God setting up a boundary. When someone crosses over that boundary he/she trespasses into territory where they are not intended to be. This is what evil does, it is something that one does when they walk in territory in which God did not intend them to walk.

A Mistake

A second Hebrew word rendered sin is the term ‘avon, iug. One common lexicon describes ‘avon as “an act, or mistake, which is not right.” ‘Avon can also speak of the guilt that comes as a result of a mistake or doing something that is not right.

To Rebel

The third common word to speak about sin is best rendered as rebellion. It is pesh’a, gap. Pesh’a means to break with someone, including to break with God.

Missing It

By far the most common word to designate sin in Hebrew is the word chatah vtyj. Though it is rendered “sin,” it is more specific than that. It means

The next step in our exploration of confronting the unseen evil within us is to explore exactly what is inside of us.

to “miss the mark or target.” It is sometimes used in the realm of archery when someone shoots an arrow and misses the target. The Greek equivalent in the Apostolic Scriptures is hamartia, amartia, which has been described as “a

⁷ BDAG, 50.

⁸ Ariel and D’vorah Berkowitz, The Good News of the Good News, 64.

When a person rebels, trespasses, makes an ethical or moral mistake, or walks in a lifestyle where they are missing what God has planned for them by missing the behavior in which He designed them to walk.

departure from either human or divine standards of uprightness.” In other words when a person sins, they are exactly missing it! They are missing the creation that they are created to be. When a person rebels, trespasses, makes an ethical or moral mistake, or walks in a lifestyle where they are missing what God has planned for them by missing the behavior in which He designed them to walk. These are all versions of what we call sin. To say it in a different way, these are all versions of what can be referred to as “evil.”

III. Understanding Our Relationship to Sin

The next step in our exploration of confronting the unseen evil within us is to explore exactly what is inside of us. This section is full of surprises! Let us explain.

We have often heard of the expression, “I am just a sinner saved by grace.” Believers sometimes say this to describe their basic unseen identity in Yeshua. They state it this way because they are confronted with what seems like a contradiction. On the one hand they know that Yeshua died for them, took their sin away (took their unseen evil away), and forgave them for it. On the other hand, they are trying to come to terms with the reality that they still sin! If we can understand this confusing dynamic, we can more easily confront the evil that lies within us.

Studying Romans 6–7 is essential to

understand this dynamic and it is the key to helping us to confront that unseen evil that we call sin.

United with Messiah’s Death

The first thing to know from Romans 6 is that, according to 6:5, by means of the Spirit of God, we were united with Messiah’s death. Simply put, when He died our “old man” died with Him. It does not seem possible! We did not necessarily feel a death occurring. That is why Paul appeals to our minds. He introduced this concept by saying in 6:3, “...or do you not know...” Indeed, Paul wants us to trust that it is so simply because that is what God’s Word says. The reality we are to know is that we died in Messiah.

We Were Buried.

When someone dies, they are buried. That is a sure indication that they, indeed, died. Romans 6:4 says that we not only died with Yeshua, but we were also buried with Him. He truly died and that was signified by the fact that they buried Him. In like manner, we were buried with Him. We truly did die.

We Rose with Him!

Now, the best news! Romans 6:8–9 declares that when Yeshua rose from the dead, we also rose with Him. We became alive for the first time! Paul states it differently in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation; the old has gone; the

new have come” (NIV). We are now new creations in Messiah. Elsewhere, Paul refers to new creations as “saints.” “Believers in Yeshua are called ‘saints’ over forty times in the Apostolic Scriptures. Being called a saint means the same as being called holy. In short, God’s people are those who are set apart for the Holy God. We do not just have holy attributes; we are holy at the core. That is our identity.” Hence, our basic identity as believers in Yeshua is that we are no longer sinners. Instead, we are saints! We are saints saved by grace!

One More Piece to the Puzzle

Before we draw some important implications for confronting sin of us, we have one more piece of biblical information to consider. What about sin? As a new creation, we often find ourselves walking in sin or involved in sin. Does that not mean that we are still sinners?

In Romans 7:17–18 Paul says, “So now, no longer am I the one doing it [committing sin], but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.” Paul states that a different dynamic takes place when we as believers sin. First, it is not the new creation that sins. Paul said, “no longer am I the one doing it [committing sin], but sin which dwells in me.” Secondly, where then, is sin? Paul says that it is “in my flesh.” Yes, we still have that which is called flesh, and that is where sin is.

The flesh, though residing in the body, is separated from us. It is not us!

This leads us to the last important fact to know. Again, we call upon Paul. He writes in Colossians 2:11, "...and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Messiah..." Here, Paul states that while we do have this entity called "flesh," it is circumcised from us! Like in a physical circumcision where a part of the body is separated from the body and removed, so it is with this unseen circumcision. The flesh, though residing in the body, is separated from us. It is not us! We are told clearly that sin dwells in the flesh and that flesh has been separated from the new creation that we now are. The new creation person that we are dwells in Yeshua and He in us (John 17:23). Therefore, the place that sin dwells is not able to exist within the person that we now are. Nor is it able to touch the person that we now are. It is crucial that we come to understand these truths of God's Word. That is the purpose for Paul using the word "circumcise." We are circumcised from the flesh because the new creation person that we now are, exists inside Messiah. Inside Messiah is a place where sin cannot touch. Therefore, the flesh is that which is out of the new creation. We can recommend a book that explores how to understand where the flesh resides and how it functions. That book is called *The Good News of the Good News*, by Ariel

and D'vorah Berkowitz and available from Amazon.

IV. Understanding Some Important Implications

We just described in a nutshell some of the basics of the dynamics that happen when a believer in Yeshua carries out sin in their members. We need to know these dynamics when we attempt to confront the enemy called sin. Let us summarize these implications.

A. A Different Relationship to Sin

What Paul was describing in Romans 6–7 is that as believers in Yeshua we now have an entirely different relationship to sin that we did before Yeshua. We are new people. Although it might not feel like it nor at times it might not look like it, nevertheless, we are new creations in Messiah.

B. Responsibility, but Not Ownership

Because our flesh sins, we must take responsibility anytime we yield our members to it. However, we need to understand that the sin in the flesh does not define our identity in Messiah! We are not sinners. This leads us to...

C. Easier to Confess it

One of the important steps to confronting our own sin is to confess it to the Lord — or to those against whom we might have sinned. Hence, 1 John 1:9 can become our motto passage. Let us look at it. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

First, the "if." The Greek conditional clause leaves us a choice: we can confess, or we choose to not confess. The choice is ours. Second, the Greek word confess is a translation from *homologeō*,

omologew. It means literally "to speak the same thing." Hence confessing means to say the same thing about our sin that God is saying. If God says it is *ra*, then we need to say the same. We might be embarrassed, or ashamed that we committed that sin, but we can say what God says about it because it is no longer who we are. We can deal with it honestly knowing that it was sin in the flesh which is circumcised from us.

Third, forgiveness is already waiting for us. We do not have to spend time praying for

forgiveness and seeking forgiveness. In Messiah forgiveness is ours already. God is faithful to forgive because that sin was nailed to The Tree with Yeshua — all of our *ra* was nailed to The Tree! When Yeshua died, we died there with Him. The sinner was nailed to that Tree. Moreover, God is just to forgive us because justice has been meted out on Yeshua, our substitute. Finally, with confession and forgiveness, comes cleansing. Our Creator does not leave it up to us to make our own definitions of what confession is.

He is very specific when He uses *homologeō*, *omologew*. He tells us the truth about what we have done or what we could have done and didn't do. Keep in mind the majority of times that we read in the Hebrew of His Word the word sin; it is *chatah vtyj*. In the original languages of The Scriptures, we find that our Creator is always trying to give us our true and authentic life as He created life to be. Individual life, family life, and community life. When we are missing it, He says we are missing it. He shows us how we are missing it and what we are missing. What damage we are causing in someone else's life. Damage we are causing in a family unit and in a community of families. When we listen and see, and then speak it back to Him and



One of the important steps to confronting our own sin is to confess it to the Lord — or to those against whom we might have sinned.

to ourselves without excuses of making it less than what it actually is or making excuses, we are being “transformed by the renewing of our mind.” That is a cleansing of unrighteousness. This process of homologueo is to be a normal part of our daily walk. To live this instruction from the mouth of God is a life of transformation. Remember the 1 John is written to believers in Yeshua. The awesome thing for those of us who are believers in Yeshua, we are a new creation! God is showing us how we are missing it! Missing our new and true life. Missing ourselves and each other! Speak the same as He is speaking! Be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:2). In homologueo, omologew, He is always speaking two things. He is showing us that we are “missing it” and he is also saying: This is who you were! This is

who you would still be if Yeshua hadn’t taken you to The Tree in Himself! BUT it isn’t who you are anymore! Don’t miss who you are. Know who you are and live your new life in Him.

D. Handling Our Brothers and Sisters in Messiah

The final implication of knowing the truths of who we are in Messiah is that we can relate in a different way to others in the Body of Messiah who offend us. Look again at 2 Corinthians 5. In 5:16 we read, “Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Messiah according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.” Here Paul is giving us a great piece of wisdom. He reminds us that just as we are no longer sinners, but

changed in Messiah, this is also true for fellow believers in Yeshua. When we sin, it is yielding our members to our flesh, which was circumcised from us. It is the same with others in Messiah. When they offend us and sin against us, we are not to look upon them as sinners. We are not to relate to their flesh, that is, we are not to relate to them in the same way they related to us. Thus, Paul says, “we recognize no one according to the flesh...”

Confronting our own ra takes on a different dynamic when we understand who we are now in Messiah. It also takes on a different dynamic when we understand that our brothers and sisters in Messiah are also new creation. We can choose to relate to the new creation that they are instead of relating to their flesh.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ariel received a B.S. from West Chester State University and Philadelphia Biblical University, and he received his M. Div. from Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, PA, USA. He also attended Rodef Torah School of Jewish Studies and was an instructor at Israel College of Bible, Jerusalem. Presently, he is an adjunct Professor with the “IBEX” program of The Master’s University. He is also an instructor with Torah Resource Institute and with Torah Resource International.



CONFRONTING EVIL

By Joseph Shulam

Introduction:

Many years ago, I read a small book: "When Bad Things Happen to Good People!" This book was written by Rabbi Harold Kushner. Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote this book when his three-year-old son was diagnosed with a degenerative disease that meant the boy would only live until his early teens. He was faced with one of life's most difficult questions: Why, God? Years later, Rabbi Kushner wrote this straightforward, elegant contemplation of the doubts and fears that arise when tragedy strikes. In his book, Rabbi Kushner shares his wisdom as a rabbi, a parent, a leader, and a human being.

There is a difference between BAD and EVIL that is seldom distinguished by those who suffer from illness and tragedy or accidents or persecution for whatever reason. The most striking example and lesson and philosophical and physical literary exposition on this subject is one of the more ancient books of the Bible, the book of Job. The reason that I chose to deal with evil with a perspective of Job is because there is a difference between BAD and EVIL. The person who is suffering from bad might not always distinguish between those two unpleasanties and difficulties. In the month of March this year I was discovered to have cancer in four places in my body! It is for sure BAD, but the

*It's most
important to
not let the
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to compromise
your own
integrity.*

question is this: Is the cancers that I have in my body EVIL.

The first thing that comes to mind is the source difference between these two unpleasant and undesirable things, or events, or experiences. On December 1, 1968, my wife and I had a bad car accident in Tennessee, USA. I was driving our green VW Bug to go to Holt's Corner, Tennessee, to teach. Just as I was about to turn to a small country road to the church, I stopped to make a left-hand turn. A car came from my left and didn't stop in the corner before making the turn. A new Chrysler, New Yorker was driving from the other direction and to avoid the car running the intersection, ran, going 60 miles per hour straight into my little green VW. Marcia my wife, was ejected out of the VW and landed on a wire fence. She was lightly wounded. I was pinned in the car and unconscious for nearly 24 hours. I woke up in the Baptist Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. At the foot of my bed there were a few doctors discussing if to cut my leg off or to use a new procedure and implant in my upper hip a new prosthesis from metal. The decision was to implement the new procedure in the year 2024, I am still walking without help on both of my legs. This event and the insurance that we collected from it make it possible for Marcia my wife and I to return to Israel and to start Netivyah Bible Instruction Ministry! The event was bad, but not evil. The man who didn't stop at the stop sign and caused the wreck might be bad, even might be evil, or stupid, or drunk at 9:00 A.M.!!! But I don't know that man and can't judge him. What happened from that bad wreck was a living demonstration of the Apostle Paul's statement in the book of Romans: "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28 NKJV)

Accidents are BAD, and their consequences are almost always bad, but Paul's statement in Roman's 8:28 and the whole Biblical narrative from Genesis chapter 1 to the end of the book of John's Revelation is a demonstration of the truth of this text.

Just look at the crucifixion of Jesus! One Jew is crucified in Jerusalem by the Roman soldiers by the request of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem or at least some members of the Sanhedrin. Was this event evil? Was this crucifixion of an innocent Galilean Jew a bad thing or a good thing? Were the Jews who shouted, "crucify him, crucify him!" bad or evil? I would say that they were both bad and evil, but is my judgment, right? I am not sure! Is the whole Jewish nation for ever guilty for encouraging the Romans to kill Jesus? What are they guilty of? Did any Jew hold a hammer and a nail in his hand and hammer that nail into the hands and feet of Jesus, the lonesome Galilean Jew, called Yeshua?

WE all must remember that the death of Yeshua (Jesus) on the cross was not an accident, it was a premeditated and meticulously planned and exactly executed event. It was planned and predicted even before the creation of this world, by the very creator Himself. It described over eight hundred years earlier by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 53 of the book of Isaiah. When I say described, I mean with detailed account. King David in Psalm 22, also predicted much earlier than Isaiah, the crucifixion of Yeshua! Is that event of one Jew crucified by the Romans a unique event in those days? No, not at all. Before the crucifixion of Yeshua (Jesus) in Jerusalem there were many Jews crucified by the same Roman Legionnaires. In Ashkelon eight hundred Jews were crucified in one day by the Romans. In the year 70 A.D. 1000 Jews were crucified in one day on both sides of the Road from Jerusalem to

Confronting evil often requires a thoughtful strategy, considering both short-term and long-term consequences.

Jericho. These were evil, bad, horrible, abominable. They were used for horror and intimidation by the Romans against the Jewish population of Israel.

I write the above text in order to demonstrate that it is not so simple to distinguish between Good and Evil. Cutting a women's breast because she has a deadly cancer hiding inside is bad, but it is not evil. In fact, it is good if the surgery is successful and this woman will live for many more years a happy life and see her children and her grand children grow and get married and bring good fruit for their families and the world. All this was an introduction to make things clear and complicated at the same time. This in fact is a very Jewish thing to do and I am proud of this God given ability to me and to my fellow Jews. This is the only way to make things clear, make things as clearer as mud and clear and clean. To discover the truth and God's good, even in the plagues that He delivered on Egypt before Pharaoh released Moses and all the Israelites.

My first analysis of how to deal with evil in this world has nothing to do with faith or the Bible. The reason why I chose

this path to deal with evil in this article is because not all people know God or believe in God. Those people are totally secular and also have to cope and deal with evil in this world of ours. There are many intelligent people that are not religious and don't know God, that face the same evil things that the disciples of Yeshua have to cope with in their lives.

Therefore, I was thinking how such an intelligent person who is seeking to live a life of moral clarity and balance and strategic thinking, with courage and good honest intention to be a good person, ought to deal with our opening

First, knowledge of what is really happening. Try to understand what are the causes for what is happening, and do you have the tools to cope with what is happening to you and may be even around you.

Second, maintain your integrity. Stay faithful to your ethical values and principles. Remember what Solomon said in the book of Proverbs: "a good name is more precious than precious oil." It's most important to not let the evil that is happening to you or around you to lead you to compromise your own integrity. Stand firm in your convictions

the broader context. I must share with you the following events: I walked right into the lion's den, into the office of Uri Loypoliansky, the head of Yad LeAchim organization that was persecuting us for many months non-stop by day and night. "If you want to kill me, kill me! Let us get it over with now! He was shocked and said: "We don't want to kill you but we want you to stop preaching Jesus! If you stop preaching Jesus, we will stop persecuting you and your family!" I said, fine I will stop preaching Jesus for three months if you stop persecuting me and my family for those three months. Uri said, "there is one more condition that is you

Collective action is often more effective than standing alone. Build a network of support to strengthen your position and broaden your influence.

question of confronting evil; from inside of himself, (and we all have that seed that was planted in us in the garden of Eden.)

Here are some things to consider as an intelligent person, generally speaking, with good intentions:

The first and most important part of confronting evil is to recognize and understand, what is Evil? Identify the nature and scope of what you are confronting. As Paul's statement in Romans 8:26 states "all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord." It requires discernment, understanding of the root causes, motivations, and consequences of what you are experiencing. Don't react impulsively; Don't jump to conclusions. Take time to gather information and assess the situation with a clear mind based on three factors.

and faith in God and grounded in what is right and just. To trust God and His promises and face the pressure or threats.

I can say this about my wife Marcia and my mother Dora. When we were persecuted horribly for months and damage to our property was caused by radical ultra-orthodox semi criminal organization, (just because we believe in Yeshua as the Messiah), Marcia stood firm and stayed composed. In fact on a phone conversation from a person who was harassing and telling Marcia my wife that they have killed me and chopped me up to pieces, her response was, "Fine Joseph is in Heaven now, but you are going to hell!"

Third, is plan your actions carefully. Confronting evil often requires a thoughtful strategy, considering both short-term and long-term consequences. Think about how your actions will affect not only the immediate situation but also

must study with a Rabbi that I will assign to you for those three months." Fine gladly, I will enjoy to study with a good Rabbi those three months. Let us write a contract and sign it together. Uri got two pieces of paper and wrote the contract, "Yad LeAchim organization will stop persecuting Mr. Joseph Shulam and his family on these conditions." He signed and put the stamp of the organization and I signed also – shock hands and got the phone number of the Rabbi that I was supposed to study with. I walked out of Uri's office directly up the hill and to the Police Headquarters in the Russian compound. I went into the office of the chief of police in Jerusalem, Mr. Arie Schnidzer. I was welcomed by Arie, my best friend from kindergarten through high school. I gave him the paper, and he read it carefully and said, "Joseph, the police has been trying to find out who is persecuting you and breaking the front glass window in the Baptist House in the middle of your worship service every



Saul and David – Contrasting Foundations – Rev. Kendell Linh Healy

If David would have killed King Saul – he could have never been the King of Israel.

Saturday evening. We didn't succeed to find out exactly who is behind these horrible things! "Now we have a signed confession of who is persecuting you and your fellow disciples of Yeshua!" Thank you, dear friend." This was the last time that Yad LeAchim persecuted us and our family physically.

Fourth, don't be quiet. Speak out against evil, using facts and evidence. Persuade others by appealing to the truth with facts and appeal to people's sense of justice, morality, and logic. Silence is never an option in the face of evil nor is indifference. Darkness and ignorance will allow evil to persist! Always scream when someone steps on your toes. This is deeply ingrained in our Jewish mentality. It comes naturally to me!

Fifth, use your friends. In our case in another situation of persecution years later, I had to use friends in the United States to help stop the serious physical persecution and attempts on my life. I remembered that I had a good friend in the White House in Washington D.C., Mike Adams, a fellow Lipscomb University debate team partner. Mike was Senator Howard Baker's congressional assistant.

I found out his phone number. I talked to him and told him what was going on here. He took it to Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee. He took it to the office of the president of the USA. Some one from the president's office called the Israeli Embassy in Washington, 24 hours later there was peace and quite on the Eastern front! End of story! Collaborate with others who share your values and are committed to confronting the same evil. Collective action is often more effective than standing alone. Build a network of support to strengthen your position and broaden your influence.

The next issue is important in every and all endeavors in life. Perseverance and Patience! I confess that this is one of my most anemic qualities. However, some people say that I have enough of it for a whole football team. Don't be discouraged by setbacks or the greatness of the task. We all must understand that confronting evil is often a long process. We all must remember that change may take time.

Seek justice, not revenge! God is our avenger, and my life is a proof of this principle from birth till now. Only God

can restore justice and avenge with supreme justice and pain to the enemy, rather than me seeking revenge. Since I know that God always seeks justice, and His justice can be much more painful and right than anything that I or my friends can do! History has proven this principle to be true!

The Bible provides various teachings and examples on how to confront evil, emphasizing faith, righteousness, and reliance on God's guidance. Here are several biblical principles and examples:

Here are a few examples from the Bible:

Joseph and Potiphar's Wife!

(Genesis 39:6-12)

Joseph, a servant in Potiphar's house, is tempted by Potiphar's wife to have sex with her. Joseph chooses to maintain his integrity rather than succumb to sinful desire. Joseph resisted evil and went to jail for many years. He resisted evil by adhering to righteousness. Yes, he went to jail, but this illustrates best the principle that Paul states in Romans chapter 8, "all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord!"



Job Rebuked by his Friends by William Blake 1793

Jail was an education that prepared him for his life's success and the salvation of all of Israel and Egypt and his family.

In James 4:7, we read: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Overcome evil with good!

David and Saul (1 Samuel 24)

When David had the opportunity to kill King Saul, who was unjustly pursuing him, he chose instead to spare Saul's life. David confronted Saul's evil

intentions with mercy, demonstrating that overcoming evil with good can be more powerful than retaliation. If David would have killed King Saul – he could have never been the King of Israel.

In Romans 12:21, The Apostle Paul makes it so clear with these words: "Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good." This principle is central to biblical ethics. The principle appears in so many places in the Bible that this paper is becoming too long to bring all the examples from the Bible. Yeshua himself gave us both examples and

commands to this effect that to respond to evil with more evil doesn't stop evil but only spreads it. Finding good ways to respond to evil with good, breaks the cycle of wrongdoing.

The Apostle Paul again says in Ephesians 5:11, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."

Sometimes, we might only have the power of prayer for deliverance and justice. My family has had many such situations. The only way to seek release

To respond to evil with more evil doesn't stop evil but only spreads it. Finding good ways to respond to evil with good, breaks the cycle of wrongdoing.

***We have more
than one
opportunity
to face and
confront evil.
We need this
training from
the book of Job
to know how to
do right and how
to avoid other
people's advice;
even friends'
advice.***

from evil is pray to God and the truth is, that most of the times God answers. He might take his sweet time to answer, but God knows best and what we need and we are standing on His promises.

A good example of the power of prayer is Daniel in the lion's den! Daniel was thrown into the lion's den for praying to God rather than to the king. Even in the lion's den Daniel prayed for God's deliverance. God heard Daniel's prayer and the lion became Daniel's pussy cat.

Since we are speaking of Daniel, let me bring here another story from the book of Daniel that demonstrates God's deliverance from evil. From the book of Daniel chapter 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; three Israelite men. These are their Babylonian names. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused, standing firm in their faith, and at the fear of death, refused to worship the pagan gods of the Babylonians. God miraculously saved them, demonstrating that standing in faith, even in the face of death, is a powerful way to confront evil.

The Apostle Paul again in Ephesians 6:13. "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." The disciples of Yeshua are commanded to equip themselves with the spiritual armor of God to stand firm against evil.

From the letter of James 1:5: "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." Seeking God's wisdom is essential for everything that we do, but for confronting and understanding the complexities of evil, it is absolutely essential.

Probably the most striking and real example of resisting and contending with evil is Yeshua himself. Jesus' response to Satan (Matthew 4:1-11). There is nothing more evil than Satan. The story of Satan's temptation of Yeshua in the Judean Desert is probably the best demonstration of confronting pure

evil, Satan himself. We can learn from Yeshua that knowledge of the Word of God is a priceless tool for spiritual warfare and the confrontation of evil, both among us humans and also against evil spiritual forces. Yeshua's response to Satan emphasizes the power of Scripture and faith in God when confronting evil.

In this article I tried to give examples and also biblical texts but the truth is that there is a much better place to learn how to confront and resist evil in the Bible. That is the whole book of Job. My suggestion is for you to read the book of Job, and take notes on paper when you come to a question raised by God, Job, Job's friends and the devil himself. It will take some time and concentration but look at it as a kind of boot-camp training to face and confront evil. We have more than one opportunity to face and confront evil. We need this training from the book of Job to know how to do right and how to avoid other people's advice; even friends' advice.

God bless you! Stand up for good, and righteousness and justice, and charity and generosity. Always stand up in prayer for our world that is so deeply covered with evil, that the truth and good is most time hidden from our eyes. The biblical way to confront evil involves a combination of resisting sin, overcoming evil with good, speaking out against injustice, relying on prayer, standing firm in faith, seeking divine wisdom, and trusting in God's sovereignty. These principles are demonstrated through the lives of faithful individuals throughout Scripture, offering a powerful model for believers today.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joseph Shulam was born in Sofia, Bulgaria on March 24, 1946 to a Sephardic Jewish Family. In 1948, his family immigrated to Israel just before the establishment of the State. While in high school, he was introduced to the New Testament and immediately identified with the person of Yeshua. In 1981, Joseph and the small fellowship that was started in his house established one of the first official non-profit organizations of Jewish Disciples of Yeshua in Israel – Netivayah Bible Instruction Ministry. Joseph has lectured extensively and has assisted in encouraging disciples around the world. He and his wife Marcia have two children and two grandchildren.

WHEN EVIL WEARS A SMILE

By Jared Abram Seltzer

Concepts that have far-reaching ramifications are notoriously difficult to define, and evil is a prime example. On the surface, evil seems simply defined as either badness or wickedness, but millennia of wisdom and discussion reveal many finer points. Augustine thought that evil is the absence of good, whereas dualism views good and evil as equal but opposite forces. Epicurus argued that a powerful and willing God would not allow evil to exist, and since evil exists, God must not be either all-powerful or willing. However, another argument, the free will defense, posits that for free will—and therefore true love—to exist, the possibility of

minds do their best to summarize evil in a statement, they cannot surpass the brilliance of the Bible, which had already depicted evil in numerous ways long before these philosophical discussions.

A litany of Bible verses—and in fact, a majority—define evil as sin and wickedness, that is, actions in opposition to God’s will and character (e.g., Deut 9:18, 31:29, Judg 2:11, Ps 5:4, 37:27, 97:10, Prov 8:13, Rom 1:29-32, 12:21). Evil consistently appears in parallel with other heinous behaviors (Prov 6:16-19). Furthermore, many passages position evil as the opposite of good and life (Deut 30:15, Amos 5:14-15).

creating evil.” Bible translators often shy away from such a striking statement, instead choosing words like “calamity” as the opposite of peace. However, this verse is not an isolated case. Amos 3:6 asks, “If there is calamity/evil in a city, has not the LORD done it?” Similarly, translators use “calamity” for Exodus 32:14, where God is “moved to pity concerning the evil He had spoken to do to His people.” 2 Samuel 12:11 offers a play on words when God says, “Behold, I shall raise up evil (רָעָה ra’ah) against you out of your house, and shall take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor (רָעָה).” Another example is Jeremiah 26:3, where a triple

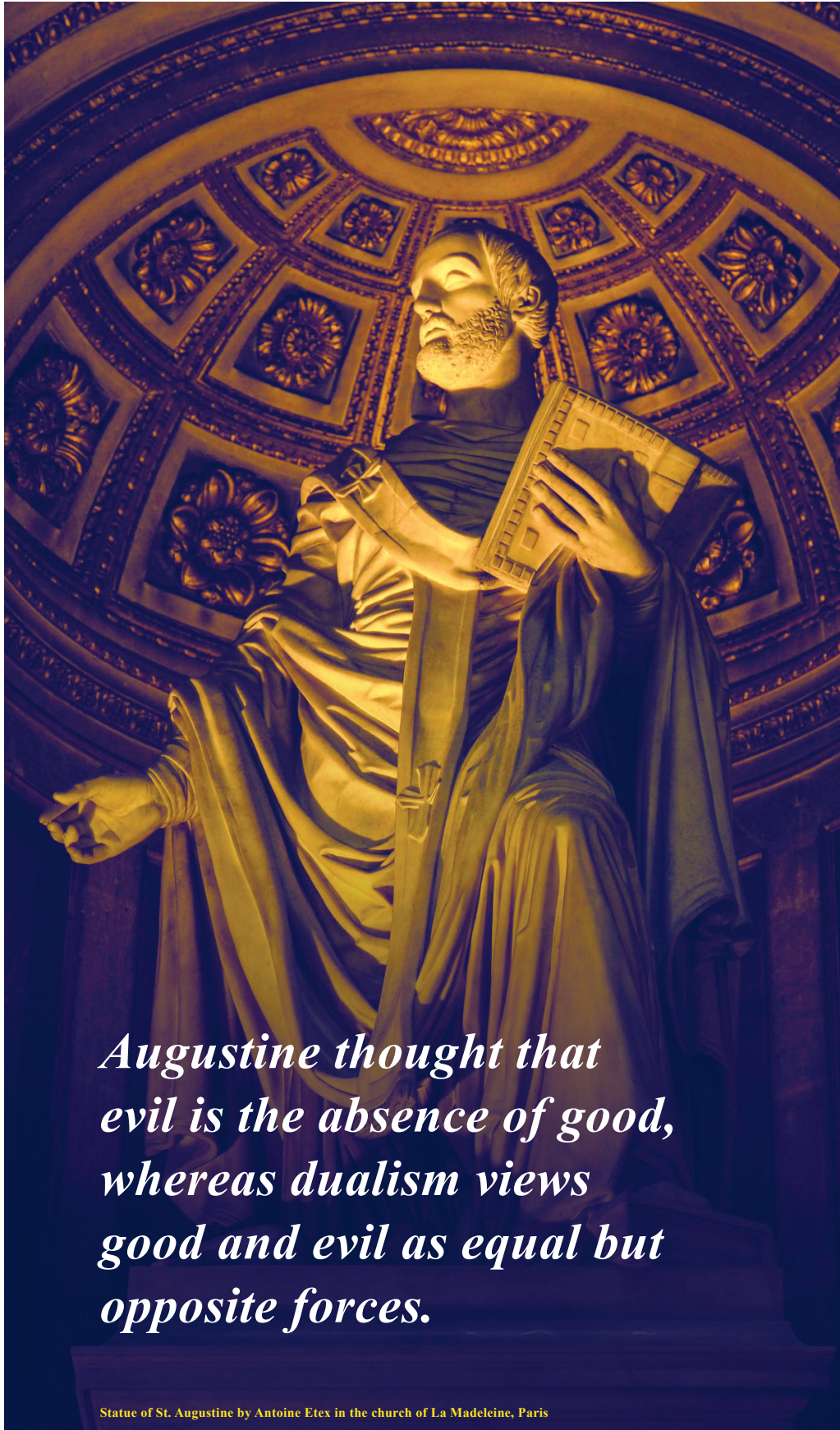
On the surface, evil seems simply defined as either badness or wickedness, but millennia of wisdom and discussion reveal many finer points.

choosing evil must also exist. Nietzsche, decoupling evil from morality, believed that “evil” was a social control tactic to prevent deviant behavior, whereas Aquinas noted that evil can derive either from human immorality or from nature. Some, like Irenaeus, see evil as the impetus for ultimate character development, while others, like Arendt, see evil arising through ordinary but unthinking conformity (such as when individuals within a system justify their actions by saying they are “only doing their job”). While these brilliant

Evil is punishable (Isa 13:11) and must be purged from the congregation (Deut 17:7), yet God is capable of bringing good out of what others intend for evil, as in the story of Joseph’s betrayal and rise to prominence (Gen 50:20). Yet, there are some perplexing instances where God is described as the author of רָעָה (ra’ah, “evil”).

In Isaiah 45:7, evil is placed in opposition to שְׁלוֹם (shalom, “peace”) and states that the LORD is the one “forming light and creating darkness; making peace and

use of the Hebrew root occurs: “It may be that they will listen, and each man turn from his evil (רָעָה) way, that I may repent of the evil (רָעָה) which I plan to do to them because of the evil (רָעָה) of their doings.” Even Job asks his wife, “Shall we receive good from the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” (Job 2:10). While not explicit, the implication is that God sends both. Fortunately, in light of true repentance, God relents from the evil He plans, as demonstrated in the story of Jonah and Nineveh. Jonah 3:10 states, “God saw their works, that



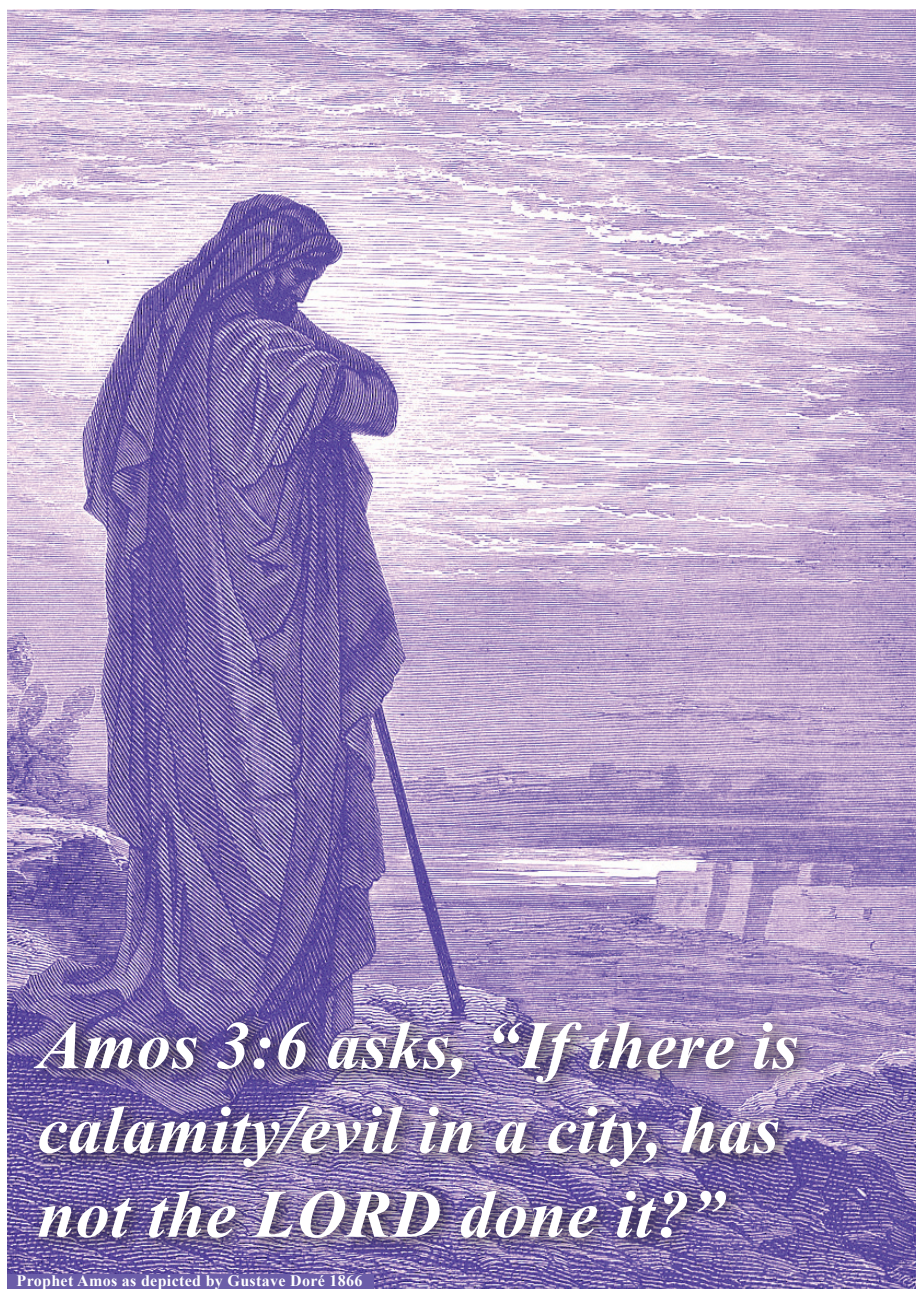
Augustine thought that evil is the absence of good, whereas dualism views good and evil as equal but opposite forces.

Statue of St. Augustine by Antoine Etex in the church of La Madeleine, Paris

The Babylonian Talmud in Bava Batra 16a says, “The evil inclination (yetzer hara) is initially weak and grows stronger over time if not resisted.”

they turned from their evil (רָעָה) way, and God relented from the evil (רָעָה) that He had spoken to do to them.”

A verse from Lamentations (3:38) is often posed as a question: “Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?” Although no explicit question word exists in the verse, it is nestled between questions in verses 37 and 39. The medieval Targum to Lamentations clarifies that “From the mouth of God Most High there does not issue evil, rather by the hint of a whisper, because of the violence with which the land is filled.” However, when He decrees good in the world, it “issues from the holy mouth.” The earlier Lamentations Rabbah tells us, “R. Eleazar said: From the time that the Holy One, blessed be He, declared, ‘See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil’ (Deut 30:15), good has not happened to the doer of evil, nor evil to the doer of good; rather,



Prophet Amos as depicted by Gustave Doré 1866

good has befallen the doer of good, and evil the doer of evil.” This suggests that God proportionally dispenses good and evil based on one’s deeds. Yet Psalm 34:19 asserts, “Many are the evils of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him from them all.”

Rabbinic opinions on evil often revolve around the concept of an evil inclination (yetzer hara) that tempts individuals to disobey God. In late Second Temple times, this was personified by Satan,

though later Judaism sees Satan as an angel created by God to act as an adversary. The Babylonian Talmud in Bava Batra 16a says, “The evil inclination (yetzer hara) is initially weak and grows stronger over time if not resisted.” This emphasizes the importance of resisting evil thoughts and desires early on to prevent them from taking root. Berakhot 61b adds, “The evil inclination is like a fly that sits between the two openings of the heart.” This metaphor teaches that evil is an internal struggle but not an

Many examples of evil in the Bible share a common theme: disregard for the well-being of others and for God’s commandments.

uncontrollable one. Kiddushin 30b notes, “The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: I created the evil inclination, and I created the Torah as its antidote.” In this view, the Torah’s moral and spiritual teachings are the cure for human tendencies toward evil. Sanhedrin 91b declares, “The evil inclination leads to idol worship, immorality, and the shedding of blood.” This associates evil with the gravest sins, such as idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder. Sukkah 52a says, “In the future, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will bring the yetzer hara and slaughter it before the righteous and the wicked.” This personification of evil has parallels in Revelation 20:10, where “the Devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire.” Lastly, Shabbat 104a states, “There is no man without an evil inclination. Blessed is he who can stand strong against it.” This suggests that evil is inherent in human nature but can be overcome through discipline and faithfulness to God’s commandments.

Many examples of evil in the Bible share a common theme: disregard for the well-being of others and for God’s commandments. Pharaoh enslaved Israel (Exodus 1-14), which led to

the suffering of Egyptians during the plagues. Korach's rebellion (Numbers 16) resulted in the death of his family and a plague that killed 14,700 Israelites. The sin of the golden calf (Exodus 32) led to the death of 3,000 rebels and a plague from God. The Midianites oppressed Israel (Judges 6-7), while the men of Gibeah committed a horrific act of rape and murder, leading to civil war (Judges 19-20). The Philistines forbade the Israelites from making weapons (1 Samuel 13:19-20), a classic form of tyranny. Jezebel arranged the murder of Naboth to seize his vineyard for King Ahab (1 Kings 21), while Haman plotted to annihilate the Jews (Esther 3-9), a plan that was thwarted by God through Esther and Mordechai. Nebuchadnezzar made a golden image and demanded all to worship it, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused and were delivered from the furnace (Daniel 3). Belshazzar blasphemed God by using Temple vessels for a pagan feast, leading to his downfall (Daniel 5). These themes continue in the Brit Chadasha (New Testament).

Herod the Great massacred the male babies of Bethlehem in an attempt to kill Yeshua (Matthew 2:16-18). Satan unsuccessfully tempted Yeshua in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), who resisted using scripture. Yeshua rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, which negatively affected the laity (Matthew 23). Judas Iscariot conspired with religious leaders to betray Yeshua for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16, John 13:21-30). Ananias and Sapphira lied about their offering, resulting in their deaths (Acts 5:1-11). Perhaps the most infamous evil, Roman soldiers

crucified Yeshua under pressure from corrupt Jewish leadership (Luke 23:33-49). Similarly, Stephen was stoned by Jewish leaders, making him the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:54-60). Herod accepted praise as a god and was struck down by an angel (Acts 12:20-23). A mob, incited by jealous Jews, attacked Paul's host in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-9). In Revelation, the Beast of the Sea blasphemes God and wages war against the saints, while the Beast of the Earth deceives people into worshipping the first beast (Revelation 13), and Babylon represents a corrupt world system opposed to God (Revelation 17-18).

With so many examples of evil in the Bible, we can be prepared to identify and resist evil in modernity. There will be individual evil people who serve themselves and love themselves but don't care about or love others. But there are also evil leaders who manage to control masses of people, their time, their resources, and their allegiance. These evil leaders will work through institutions and organizations, the goal of which is to extort and oppress the masses for gain and control. These infernal efforts usually are not represented and labeled clearly as evil, but are mislabeled intentionally to trick people into joining their effort. They are like a devil wearing a cute, cuddly, smiling mask. They work little by little to trick and wear down the people over time using propaganda and psychological tactics. It even gets to the point that the general populace thinks that the dissolution of evil organizations would be unthinkable because the institution is viewed as a necessary and even helpful institution. At that

Yeshua teaches believers to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves,” discerning good from evil through God’s Spirit.

point, the evil institutions have made cheerleaders and supersalesmen out of those otherwise good and caring people that it oppresses because they have been duped into believing that the institution and its cause are noble. While evil is an invisible force of Satan working through people and institutions, it would certainly fail in modernity were it not for good men who are either deceived about or who do nothing about the evil in the world. Instead, believers are to resist evil, and call it out for what it is.

Yeshua teaches believers to be “wise as serpents and innocent as doves,” discerning good from evil through God’s Spirit. Though we are distant from the times of the Bible, the lessons of good and evil are still relevant. Test all things, keep what is good, and resist being drawn into evil.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

SIN, HUMANITY & THE ROLE OF THE BODY OF MESSIAH IN LIGHT OF HABAKKUK'S VISION

By Moshe DaCosta



Nathaniel Westlake, The Prophet Habakkuk, Marouflage mural 1908-1911

As Habakkuk wrestles with the nature of sin and the apparent triumph of wickedness, his prophetic dialogue with the divine offers both lament and hope,

The Body of Messiah, made up of Jewish and Gentile believers today, must navigate the complexities of a fallen world with a dual vision: acknowledging the brokenness around us while steadfastly holding onto the hope of ultimate restoration.

In our world, the pervasive presence of evil is undeniable. From the violence in our cities to the corruption in high places, humanity seems besieged by forces opposing all that represents good. The roots of this universal struggle between good and evil is detailed in the Scriptures, and when we invest our limited time in studying the Old Testament, we gain a solid foundation to understand sin and the human condition.

We are currently overwhelmed in Israel by the extent of the violent reality of evil. To cope with our daily reality, one must turn to the ancient wisdom ingrained in the Scriptures to find context and guidance. The book of Habakkuk is an Old Testament book often overlooked by a great majority of believers. It provides us with an insightful framework for dealing with the existence of evil, the enigma of divine justice, and the vocation of those who belong to the Church of the Messiah. As Habakkuk wrestles with the nature of sin and the apparent triumph of wickedness, his prophetic dialogue with the divine offers both lament and hope, crucial elements for understanding our desired position in an era so saturated with evil.

The Nature of Evil in the Old Testament

The Old Testament provides vivid examples of how evil manifests in

human behavior, starting with the very first act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Adam and Eve's transgression set the stage for humanity's ongoing battle with its inherently sinful nature, and the consequences of that first rebellion against God continued to affect every future generation. In Genesis 6:5, we see how rapidly evil spread: "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

This early portrayal of evil not only highlights isolated acts of wrongdoing, but also signifies a deeper, systemic issue, the corrupted and decayed human nature. This is a topic that scholars in the field of Theology refer to as Original Sin. The evil with which humanity struggles is not external, but mainly internal, a force that resides within every human being. Prophet Jeremiah reminds us of this truth when he says: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

The Tanach consistently addresses the existence of evil in the world. From Cain's murder of his brother Abel to the Pharaoh's enslavement of the Israelites, the scriptures illustrate how both individuals and systems perpetuate wickedness. The Psalms, in particular, are replete with pleas for deliverance

from the clutches of the wicked. Psalm 37:12-13 declares "The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming."

Sin is more than just a moral failure; it is a rebellion against God's order and a deviation from the holiness that He requires. The prophet Isaiah captures this when he says, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20). Sin distorts reality, obscuring the line between truth and deception, virtue and vice. It undermines our ability to distinguish right from wrong, constantly threatening our society.

Habakkuk's Struggle with the Problem of Evil

The prophet Habakkuk's opening lament echoes the enduring questions that reverberate through the corridors of history and frequently invade our contemporary consciousness: "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" and You will not save." (Habakkuk 1:2). In this text, Habakkuk expresses the fundamental human despair in the presence of injustice. This complaint has echoed from the time of Eden's exile throughout the entire duration of

the Jewish diaspora, the horrors of the Holocaust, and into the present day. The prophet is not just questioning the existence of evil, but also addressing the apparent apathetic silence of God in the face of widespread moral decay.

Habakkuk's complaint has been debated by theologians and philosophers for centuries: If God is good and sovereign, why does He allow the proliferation of evil? The prophet's dialogue with God introduces a theological tension between divine justice and human understanding of time. God's response to Habakkuk is

righteous raise a perennial theological dilemma: How can a just God allow such disorder to persist?

God's revelation to Habakkuk further complicates the narrative by announcing that He will use the Babylonians, a nation even more wicked than Judah, as instruments of His judgment. This divine strategy challenges human logic and confronts our assumptions about justice. In essence, Habakkuk is challenged with a theological paradox: God's plan to rectify sin and evil in Judah involves empowering an even more corrupt

elaborated by the Apostle Paul, serves as a cornerstone for the believer's response to evil. Faith becomes a means by which the righteous navigate a world where God's justice seems delayed.

The climactic passage of Habakkuk 3:17-19 embodies this profound trust. Even as Habakkuk acknowledges the desolation around him, fields barren, flocks gone, he proclaims: "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will take joy in the God of my salvation." This response encapsulates the paradox of faith: joy amid sorrows, trust amid confusion. Habakkuk's faith is

God's revelation to Habakkuk further complicates the narrative by announcing that He will use the Babylonians, a nation even more wicked than Judah, as instruments of His judgment.

unsettling yet instructive:: "Look among the nations and watch— Be utterly astounded! For I will work a work in your days which you would not believe, though it were told you." (Habakkuk 1:5). God is actively working, even though His ways are often misunderstood and beyond human comprehension.

The Problem of Sin and the Apparent Triumph of Evil

In Habakkuk's lament, there is a profound awareness of the moral corruption that has taken root among the people of Judah. Sin, according to the prophet, is not just a series of individual acts, but a widespread rebellion against divine order. The law is "apathetic" and justice is "paralyzed" says Habakkuk in verse 4, a condition that clearly resonates with contemporary realities. The triumph of the wicked and the suffering of the

empire, and its knowledge forces anyone to reconsider the limitations of our human understanding when it comes to divine sovereignty and the unfolding of history.

Faith in the Face of Unresolved Evil

One of the most striking features of the book of Habakkuk is the writer's personal shift from complaint to trust. We see this change in the prophet's attitude by the time we reach the famous declaration in Habakkuk 2:4: "But the just shall live by his faith". This verse not only provides a clear and concise description of Salvation by Grace in the lines of the Tanach, but also shows us that he finds resolution for the problem of evil not through immediate deliverance, but in the call to faithfulness amidst uncertainty. This statement, later

not a naive optimism but a deep, sound, and theologically grounded confidence that God's justice and divine wrath, though delayed, will ultimately prevail.

The Current Role of the Body of Messiah in Habakkuk's Vision

The lessons of Habakkuk are just as relevant for the Body of Messiah today as they were in the prophet's time. Believers are called to confront evil with an active, living faith, rather than succumbing to despair. The New Testament's use of Habakkuk 2:4, particularly in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11, provides clear guidance for the Body of Messiah to demonstrate faithfulness in a world where evil often seems to prevail.

The Jewish scholars who, during the last millennium, recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah likewise understood

Habakkuk's vision encourages all believers to adopt a perspective of hope that is deeply grounded in the character and faithfulness of God.

that the resolution of evil was both a present reality and a future hope. Their faith, rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures and fulfilled in Christ, compelled them to engage with the world around them, to faithfully remain in their communities, and not withdraw from it. For these Jewish believers, the tension between God's justice and the persistence of evil did not lead to passivity but to a deeper engagement with the redemptive work of God in the world and their role as disciples of Yeshua among the Jews.

Similarly, the Body of Messiah, made up of Jewish and Gentile believers today, must navigate the complexities of a fallen world with a dual vision: acknowledging the brokenness around us while steadfastly holding onto

the hope of ultimate restoration. As Habakkuk proclaimed "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." (Habakkuk 2:14). This eschatological vision sustains the believer in the present, enabling the Body of Messiah to serve as agents of reconciliation and justice, in line with biblical principles of Tikkun Olam, as we eagerly anticipate the fulfillment of God's promises.

Habakkuk's Eschatological Hope and the Believer's Responsibility

The book of Habakkuk boldly affirms God's sovereignty over history and paints a vision of a future where divine justice prevails. This end-times hope demands active participation in God's redemptive mission, not passivity. The Body of Messiah must tangibly embody this hope, resisting despair in the face of prolonged exposure to evil.

Habakkuk's vision encourages all believers to adopt a perspective of hope that is deeply grounded in the character and faithfulness of God. The prophet's transition from grief to faith reflects Yeshua's disciples crossing a world tainted by sin, violence, and pain. Throughout this journey, the Body of Christ is called to intercede, testify, and lead others towards the future Messianic Kingdom, embodying God's justice even in the presence of ongoing evil.

As we deal with the brokenness of our world, Habakkuk's words remind us that our ultimate hope does not lie in human solutions but in the divine promise that

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." It is this hope that sustains the Body of Messiah and capacitates us to fight evil with the assurance that God's justice will prevail, His wrath will eventually be poured over the wicked ones, and we one day will be testimonies of the fulfillment of His Holy need for appeasement and compensation.

Conclusion

In a world overshadowed by darkness and violence, believers in Yeshua the Jewish Messiah, known as the Body of Messiah, are called to shine as a beacon of light. Yeshua Himself warned His followers about the challenges they would encounter, saying, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." (John 16:33). This promise doesn't guarantee a life free from hardship, but it assures us that in Him, we have the power to face evil without being overwhelmed by it.

Building on teachings from the Old Testament and interpretations of the Word of God, the Apostle Paul urges believers to "overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). This call to action is based on the belief that the Body of Messiah, though not of this world, is sent into it to be heralds of His ultimate redemption and restoration. We are to be the hands and feet of Christ, standing against injustice, aiding the less fortunate, and audaciously proclaiming the Faith found in the Gospel.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Moshe is a husband, father, and servant at Roeh Israel congregation. He has a background in Business Consulting and Advertising, but always longed for the Ministry. As a Messianic Jew, he developed interests connected to Jewish traditions and with time became a Hazan (liturgical cantor), a Sofer STaM (trained scribe), and a certified Mohel (circumciser). He has been serving the messianic community for 11 years in Israel and has joined Netivyah's team with a desire to build ways of communication and mutual support between observant and non-observant believers in Israel.

A BRIEF RESPONSE TO PACIFISM

By Elhanan ben-Avraham

‘O you who love the LORD, hate evil!’

Psalms 97:10

He said to them, But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one - Yeshua, Luke 22:36.

The Jewish people of Europe in the 1930's had come to trust their host countries, especially Germany. Why shouldn't they? The Jews had proven themselves good German citizens, even serving with distinction in that military in WWI. Besides, the Germans were not barbarians, but were among the most cultured and educated people in Europe, having produced Bach, Handel, Durer, majestic cathedrals, and the Reformation. Most Germans were Christians, Lutheran Protestants, claiming to worship a Jew, and the same God of the Bible as the Jews themselves did. But the grim irony is that the naïve trust of the Jewish people, especially in Germany, was not well founded. Without resistance millions of Jews went quietly onto the train cars like sheep to the slaughterhouse- shlachthaus. It was not until the Warsaw Ghetto uprising that some of the Jews chose to perish fighting, rather than as Pacifists.

There are some Christian pastors again,

in our days, preaching Pacifism from the church pulpit to their flocks. Their justification is apparently based on the idea that 'all sin is equal before God', from the theft of a loaf of bread to avoid starvation, to mass murder. As one pastor put it, 'Your sin and that of Osama bin-Laden are the same'. Therefore, this view would seem to imply, a sinner must not exact force against another sinner. Taken further, none could qualify to sit as a court judge to condemn a murderer to execution, the judge himself (and any jury) being equal sinners. But these teachers have erred in their conclusion, as the Bible differentiates between sins, and defines different levels of sin. There are sins unto death, and sins not unto death, which is also referred to in the New Testament (1 John 5:16-17). The Torah speaks of sins that are committed without knowledge and intent, and therefore have a sacrifice for their atonement, whereas sin committed with full knowledge and intent require a different atonement. The Bible describes both first degree murder and manslaughter, both which have completely different consequences, only the former being a capital crime. There are also sins committed that time only takes away, such as the eating of foods proscribed by the Torah as unclean,

which is removed by the process of digestion and evacuation from the body, and then washing with water. Not all sin is the same.

Prior to World War II, Winston Churchill attempted to warn the British of the dangers of Hitler and his Nazi movement in Germany. His warning fell on deaf ears, and he himself was called a "war monger." But had Britain heeded his advice and eliminated Hitler and his war machine with the sword early, perhaps WWII and the death of more than 40 million humans could have been prevented. Instead, the British preferred to believe in the Pacifist doctrine of Chamberlain, whose foolish pact with the Devil would produce "peace in our time". Appeasement and Pacifism are cut from the same cloth.

Some of the Pacifist ideas seem to be built upon the words of Jesus, such as "turn the other cheek", and "love thy enemies", and "do well to those who persecute you", etc. But in the historical context of His teaching, which is the world of 1st Century Judaism, those commands are in reference to intra-communal relationships (the same essential teachings are found in

After nearly two thousand years of persecutions, inquisitions, pogroms, crusades, expulsions, and the Holocaust, during which the Jewish people were slaughtered as Pacifists without an army or anyone to defend them, Israel is now back in its own land where they can defend themselves.

the Torah). They are not intended for the rapist/murderer who would enter one's home to rape one's wife and kill one's children. Nor are they intended for nations defending themselves from those whose intent is to annihilate them. We see Jesus giving advice to kings regarding warfare (Luke 14:31-32), and we hear Him telling His disciples at one point to sell their cloaks and buy swords, if they did not already have one.

Swords were not used only to peel oranges. The Apostle Paul also writes to followers of the Messiah to submit unto governmental authorities, as they are from God, and they do not carry the sword in vain (Romans 13).

If Christians accept that Jesus is God, the same as the Old Testament God of Israel, then it is that same who is the Commander of Israel's military in the Bible, who sent them into battle against their enemies and brought victory (or defeat). It is the same God in whose Name young David slew Goliath of the Philistines, and it was the sin of King Saul that he did not slay all the remnant of Amalek, according to the word of the Lord. The command given in the Ten

Commandments is normally wrongly translated as "Thou shalt not kill". Hebrew has very clear distinctions, and the word used here is *lo tirtzach*- "Thou shalt not murder." *L'hargog*, the word for "kill" is not used in the Ten Commandments.

The author of "Tortured For Christ", Richard Wurmbrand, who was imprisoned and tortured as a Christian minister by the communist regime in Romania, said, "If one were to see a murderer coming to kill the defenceless, and one had a gun and did not use it, he would be a sinner for not using it".

Perhaps ironically, the only nation that has acted as a Christian nation as far as "turning the other cheek" is modern Israel who, in the 1991 Gulf War, while being barraged with Scud missiles falling on her cities for six weeks, did not respond militarily, though it was surely capable of doing so.

After nearly two thousand years of persecutions, inquisitions, pogroms, crusades, expulsions, and the Holocaust, during which the Jewish people were slaughtered as Pacifists without an army

or anyone to defend them, Israel is now back in its own land where they can defend themselves, and has by necessity a fine military, who bears the sword not in vain. With the constant drumbeat of her neighbors calling for her destruction, it is only appropriate. And it is only right that we should rejoice when we see the Knights of the Air flying overhead in defence of our homes against our implacable, relentless enemies. Jesus told us that "there is not greater love than one who lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). There is perhaps no greater expression of this than the armed soldier who puts himself in danger to protect his home and people.

Until that day that the glorious prophecy of Isaiah (chapter 2) comes to pass, "For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more", then one is obliged to dress appropriately for the current weather conditions, and to not bear the sword in vain.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elhanan ben-Avraham, born in 1945, is a professional artist, poet, writer, father of two, and grandfather of four, and he has been living in Israel since 1979. He has served in the IDF, taught the Bible internationally, published five illustrated books of poetry, painted two large Biblical murals in public buildings in Jerusalem, and most recently produced THE JERUSALEM ILLUSTRATED BIBLE, among many other works. He and his wife live in a quiet village in the Mountains of Judah.

A COMPARATIVE LOOK AT EVIL & HOW TO CONFRONT IT

By Dr. Linda Olsvig-Whittaker

1. Introduction

About 6:30 on 7 October, a quiet sabbath and holiday morning, the people of the northern Negev experienced the most horrific massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Over 1200 people, mostly Jews but including Bedouin and non-Jewish visitors and guest workers, were slaughtered in an invasion by Hamas terrorists and their camp followers from Gaza. There is no need to repeat the details – they are publicly available and are sickening in their brutality. Israelis were shocked and horrified – and immediately pulled together to fight back and to help the survivors.

The shock and emotional distress from that day are still with all of us. It is a day that will never be forgotten in the history of Israel. There is no question that what we experienced was unadulterated evil. It will forever change the lives of anyone who was touched by this tragedy, and nearly all Israelis were touched by it. We are left with the question of how to respond, when confronted with extreme evil.

As part of my own outworking of that question, I agreed to write this paper in

hope that it helps others. I will examine the nature of evil as considered from several sources, and how different sources advise on dealing with it, and finally return again to consider the best response to the massacre.

Others have addressed this. In response to the practices of Nazi Germany, Hannah Arendt concluded that “the problem of evil would be the fundamental problem of postwar intellectual life in Europe”, although such a focus did not come to fruition. [12] Instead the trend in recent decades was toward a belief that evil is an illusion, and people simply have made bad choices. This looks less and less like a valid paradigm in light of Islamic terrorism.

2. What is “evil”?

Evil is a concept that is universally recognized in general, not in detail. In general it involves deliberate choice and action to cause harm or destruction to others – whether nature, animals or people. Different people and groups have different definitions and examples of evil, but we do seem to have a bit of agreement:

The Torah does not recognize the problem of evil and suffering because, in the words of Richard Rubenstein, “in strict covenant theology there can be no innocent sufferers.”

The problem of suffering and evil took on an unprecedented role in Jewish thought after the Holocaust—the greatest event of individual and communal suffering in Jewish history.



Auschwitz concentration camp

a. Natural events are not evil

b. Animals are not evil

c. Only human beings seem to be capable of true evil.

But does evil originate with human beings, or is it due to a supernatural force? (Satan, etc)

Baruch Spinoza (in “Ethics, Part 4”) states

By good, I understand that which we certainly know is useful to us. By evil, on the contrary, I understand that which

we certainly know hinders us from possessing anything that is good.[13]

Proposition 30 “Nothing can be evil through that which it possesses in common with our nature, but in so far as a thing is evil to us it is contrary to us.”

Proposition 64 “The knowledge of evil is inadequate knowledge.”

Corollary “Hence it follows that if the human mind had none but adequate ideas, it would form no notion of evil.”

Proposition 65 “According to the guidance of reason, of two things which

are good, we shall follow the greater good, and of two evils, follow the less.”

Proposition 68 “If men were born free, they would form no conception of good and evil so long as they were free.”

Abrahamic concepts of evil

Bahá’í Faith

The Bahá’í Faith asserts that evil is non-existent and that it is a concept reflecting lack of good, just as cold is the state of no heat, darkness is the state of no light, forgetfulness the lacking of memory, ignorance the lacking of knowledge. All



of these are states of lacking and have no real existence.[22]

Thus, evil does not exist and is relative to man. `Abdu'l-Bahá, son of the founder of the religion, in *Some Answered Questions* states:

“Nevertheless a doubt occurs to the mind—that is, scorpions and serpents are poisonous. Are they good or evil, for they are existing beings? Yes, a scorpion is evil in relation to man; a serpent is evil in relation to man; but in relation to themselves they are not evil, for their poison is their weapon, and by their sting they defend themselves.”[22]

Thus, evil is more of an intellectual concept than a true reality. Since God is good, and upon creating creation he confirmed it by saying it is Good (Genesis 1:31) evil cannot have a true reality.[22]

Christianity

Satan, or the devil, has usually been

The balance between them will determine whether a human being is good or evil, and most humans are a mixture of both.

attributed in Christianity as the source of evil. The devil, in opposition to the will of God, represents evil and tempts Christ, the personification of the character and

will of God. Ary Scheffer, 1854.

Christian theology draws its concept of evil from the Old and New Testaments. The Christian Bible exercises “the dominant influence upon ideas about God and evil in the Western world.”[2] In the Old Testament, evil is understood to be an opposition to God as well as something unsuitable or inferior such as the leader of the fallen angels Satan[23] In the New Testament the Greek word *poneros* is used to indicate unsuitability, while *kakos* is used to refer to opposition to God in the human realm.[24] Officially, the Catholic Church extracts its understanding of evil from its canonical antiquity and the Dominican theologian, Thomas Aquinas, who in *Summa Theologica* defines evil as the absence or privation of good.[25] French-American theologian Henri Blocher describes evil, when viewed as a theological concept, as an “unjustifiable reality. In common parlance, evil is ‘something’ that occurs in the experience that ought not to be.”[26]

Islam

There is no concept of absolute evil in Islam, as a fundamental universal principle that is independent from and equal with good in a dualistic sense. [27] Although the Quran mentions the

Rabbinic Judaism

In Judaism and Jewish theology, the existence of evil is presented as part of the idea of free will: if humans were created to be perfect, always and only doing good, being good would not

The problem of suffering and evil took on an unprecedented role in Jewish thought after the Holocaust—the greatest event of individual and communal suffering in Jewish history. Many traditional rabbinic authorities viewed the Holocaust as just another example of Jewish suffering

Righteous anger can be a very deadly drink, for the victim as well as the offender. Hence, we need to be careful about how we confront evil.

biblical forbidden tree, it never refers to it as the ‘tree of knowledge of good and evil’.[27] Within Islam, it is considered essential to believe that all comes from God, whether it is perceived as good or bad by individuals; and things that are perceived as evil or bad are either natural events (natural disasters or illnesses) or caused by humanity’s free will. Much more the behavior of beings with free will, then they disobey God’s orders, harming others or putting themselves over God or others, is considered to be evil.[28] Evil does not necessarily refer to evil as an ontological or moral category, but often to harm or as the intention and consequence of an action, but also to unlawful actions.[27] Unproductive actions or those who do not produce benefits are also thought of as evil.[29]

A typical understanding of evil is reflected by Al-Ash’ari founder of Asharism. Accordingly, qualifying something as evil depends on the circumstances of the observer. An event or an action itself is neutral, but it receives its qualification by God. Since God is omnipotent and nothing can exist outside of God’s power, God’s will determine, whether or not something is evil.[30]

mean much. For Jewish theology, it is important for humans to have the ability to choose the path of goodness, even in the face of temptation and yetzer hara (the inclination to do evil).[31][32]

Ways of confronting evil

There is a philosophical problem for anyone who believes that God is good (benevolent), all-powerful (omnipotent), and all-knowing (omniscient). This problem was summed up by the English philosopher David Hume: “Is he [God] willing to prevent evil, but unable? Then he is impotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Whence then is evil?”

The Torah does not recognize the problem of evil and suffering because, in the words of Richard Rubenstein, “in strict covenant theology there can be no innocent sufferers.” Suffering befalls the Jewish people as a punishment for abandoning their covenantal obligations.

But, logic and experience show that there are innocent sufferers, and thus biblical and rabbinic literature was forced to confront the contradiction between the covenant and reality

and interpreted the event using the covenantal model. Given the magnitude of Jewish suffering, however, many Jewish thinkers found this approach unfulfilling at best and perverse at worst.

The Holocaust demands a reconsideration of the problem and, thus, drastically new solutions.

Stiffen the Neck

Comments from Marc Eichenbaum is the Rabbinic Researcher for Yeshiva University’s Sacks-Herstein Center for Values and Leadership. Source: : <https://jewishjournal.com/judaism/370172/fighting-antisemitism-with-a-stiff-neck/>

R. Yannai said . . . [the dots] teach that he didn’t come to kiss Jacob but rather to bite him, but Jacob’s neck turned to marble; and thus the teeth of that wicked one were blunted. Thus, when the text says ‘and they cried’ – this one cried over his neck and this one cried over his teeth.” (Genesis Rabbah 78:9)

R. Yannai’s interpretation provides a lesson in confronting evil. Instead of retaliating, Jacob chose to stiffen his neck — to display stubbornness, confidence and loyalty to his beliefs. One method

for confronting evil, R. Yannai teaches, is to show your antagonist that their “bite” is ineffective

The text of “hakhe et sheinav” in the Haggadah suggests that beneath the literal translation of the text lies an alternative method more suitable to our contemporary predicament in America. There are times when the correct approach is not to blunt evil’s teeth, but to develop inner confidence in our own beliefs. Terrorists in Gaza must be eliminated, but the approach to antisemitism in America is a different battle, in which stubbornness and pride are more effective than the sword.

Mitchell Leshchiner exemplified this approach during his middle-school graduation in Vernon Hills, Illinois shortly after the 2019 Poway synagogue shooting. Leshchiner didn’t normally wear a yarmulke, but the 14-year-old donned one while receiving his diploma in front of hundreds of onlookers. “It was important to make a statement that we’re still here, and that no matter what happens, we’ll still be here,” he said.

“We’re still here” is the message we need to display more than ever in a post-Oct. 7 world.

3. Confronting evil

The consensus across religions seems to be that evil is something confined to humans. Natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanoes, drought and other such events are not evil in themselves although their consequences can be very bad. Evil must include intent to cause harm, and that exists only in sentient minds.

Can animals be evil? Yes, but it is rare. Evil intent seems confined only to human beings. Are there evil human beings? Yes.

What causes humans to be evil? While some believe in an external supernatural force (the devil, for example) as a driver of human evil, the majority of writers about this subject seem to accept that evil is inherent in human nature, is the consequence of free will. The Jewish rabbinical view seems quite reasonable – every human being has both good and evil impulses (yetzer tov and yetzer ra) – that are in conflict. The balance between them will determine whether a human being is good or evil, and most humans are a mixture of both.

If we understand evil is inherent in human nature, this raises the issue of how to deal with it. The instinctive response to evil is anger, pain, sorrow. These emotions can in turn lead to evil behavior – the desire for revenge, for example. In this way evil can be infectious, creating in the victim or observer impulses which may also be evil. Righteous anger can be a very deadly drink, for the victim as well as the offender. Hence, we need to be careful about how we confront evil.

As the Dalai Lama has observed, it is not good to pretend nothing ever happened, everything will be all right. People have the right to defend themselves, and to prevent a repeat of the injury. However, detachment is important – it is critical that the victim does not also become evil.

Where does that leave us with 7 October?

First we must recognize we have truly encountered evil. The massacres and kidnappings cannot be dismissed as bad choices by suffering and sadly deluded individuals. This is true evil, up front and personal. Evil with intent to destroy us.

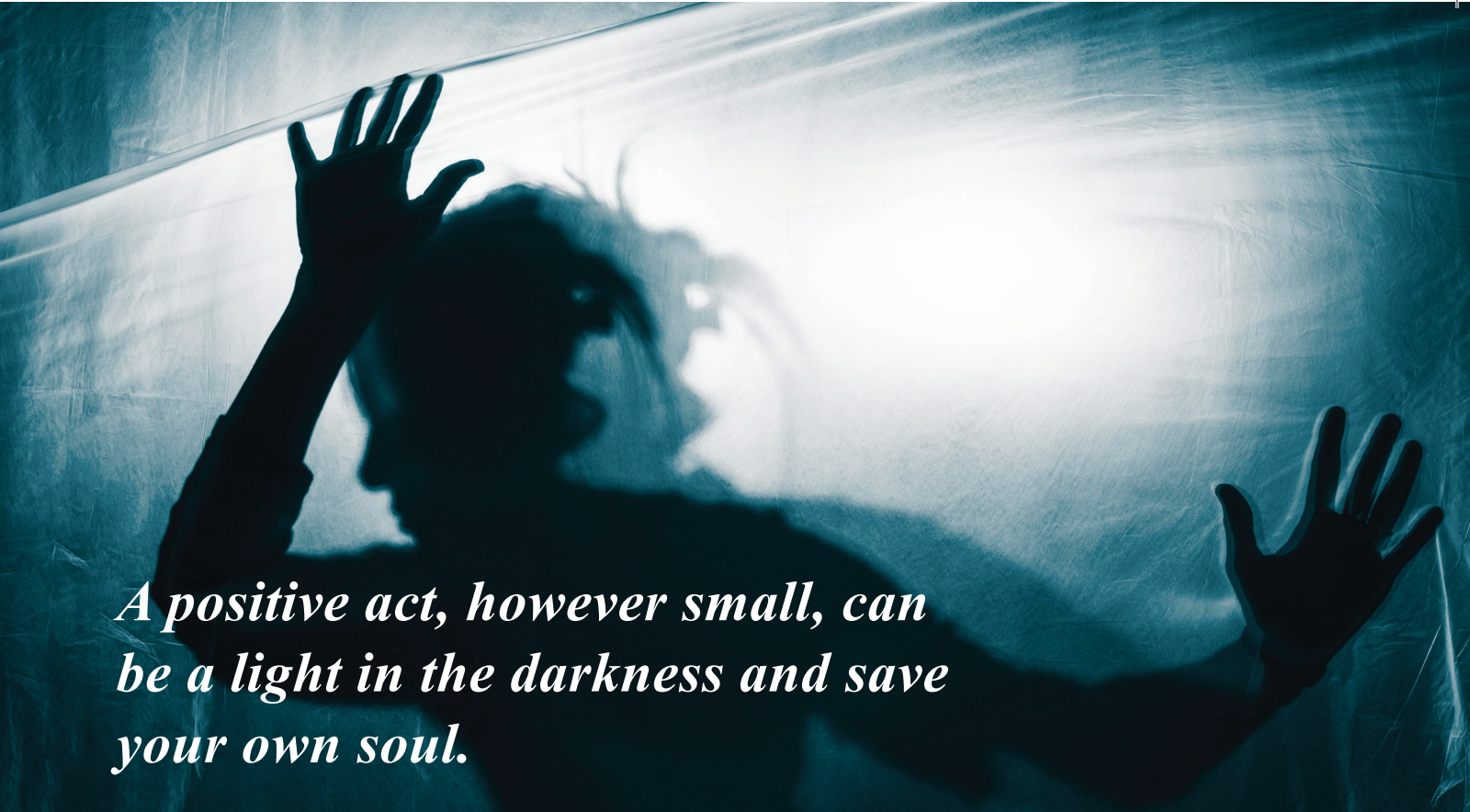
Second, we have the right to resist evil. Without question we have the right to protect ourselves and ensure that this evil will not be repeated in the future (as the perpetrators promise they will do.)

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Even as compassionate a person as the Dalai Lama is clear that one has the right to defend one’s self from harm. This includes deterrence.

Third, and BUT we are not permitted to indulge in evil in return. Revenge is off limits, much as we are tempted. Anger and hatred are dangerous poisons which can infect the hater. So, for our own good and protection, we cannot indulge in the luxuries of anger, hatred and revenge – these will always damage ourselves perhaps even more than their target.

How does one deal with the understandable pain and anger of being the victims of evil? It is unlikely that the perpetrator will repent, make amends and ask forgiveness (although sometimes this does happen, but don’t expect it.)



A positive act, however small, can be a light in the darkness and save your own soul.

The only alternative is to detach, to “let go and let God”. This is terribly difficult but it does help to know that we do this for our own mental health first of all, not for the benefit of those who have committed evil acts. Their actions are on their own heads and out of our control.

The second thing we need to do is recognize we live in a world that is full of evil. As long as humans remain human, evil will exist. It is built into human nature, the “yetzer ra” that exists in every human being, including you and me. We cannot expect the world to be a nice place.

What we can do is use our hurt and anger to make the world a better place. As Hillel taught (and Yeshua repeated in a positive form) – “that which you would not have done to you, do not do to others” (or as Yeshua taught do unto others as you would have others do unto

you”. This is the principle of “tikkun olam” – the mission of healing the world.

When we suffer evil, we can either descend into hatred and bitterness or we can use our protest against that evil to fight against it with the weapons of good actions. In the process, we will find healing.

I will end this with a personal story. During the Second Intifada, my home was in the battle zone between Tanzim in Palestinian Beit Jala and Gilo, a southern neighborhood of Jerusalem. We had fighting every night for months. Gunfire, mortar fire, tank fire (I had two small tanks shooting from beside my house), even the occasional helicopter-launched missile.

I responded to this with anger – free floating anger, and I was ready to be violent to anybody who crossed me in

any way. I was giving way to my own evil impulses.

One night, I got a phone call from friends in Beit Jala – they had no food. At that time I had no car. I had no choice, but loaded two baskets with food from my kitchen, walked through my own military lines (who thought I was crazy) and walked to where my friends were waiting and gave them the food.

I am not a spiritual person, certainly not a mystical person. But as I walked through the gunfire, I strongly felt I was not walking alone. I lost my fear entirely. My fear and anger never came back. I continued to bring food and medicine to Palestinians even as we fought the Palestinian Tanzim – and I was fully in favor of fighting them. But I was not swallowed by hatred. A positive act, however small, can be a light in the darkness and save your own soul.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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