

GOD AND TWO-TIERED JUSTICE

A Devotional Meditation on Lech Lecha (Go Forth)

Genesis 12:1-17:27; Isaiah 40:27-41:16; Psalm 19:1-15; Ezekiel 33:17-20;
John 3:16-17, 8:39; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Peter 4:12-17

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The equality of the American justice system has come into question lately. Everyone is supposed to be equal under the law, but several segments of society question whether that is so. Is there a “two-tiered” justice system that has one standard for privileged people, and another for ordinary people? There are compelling arguments to that point. In fact, there have been compelling arguments about the inequality of American justice extending back to the colonial era before our nation’s independence. It’s not really a question of whether our justice system is unequal, but who in any period of our history has been privileged, and who has been victimized by an unfair system.



Scales of Justice, Frankfurt, Germany. Photo: Michael Coghlan, September 22, 2012, [via Flickr](#).

This is human nature. We tend to favor those who are more like us and judge harshly those who are different. In an ideal world, where everyone truly is equal under the law, differences shouldn’t matter. However, that ideal world exists only in the mind of our Creator. We, His corrupted human expressions of Himself, have yet to be made completely right in this regard. That’s why God’s words to ancient Israel recorded by Ezekiel still resonate with us:

Yet the children of your people say, “The way of *ADONAI* isn’t fair!” but it is their way, theirs that is unfair. When a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he will die in it. When a wicked person turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he will live by it. Yet you say, “The way of *ADONAI* is not fair!” House of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his ways.

Ezekiel 33:17-20 TLV

We hear echoes of this conversation in the Gospels and the letters of the Apostles. One comes from Peter:

For the time has come for judgment to begin with the house of God. If judgment begins with us first, what will be the end for those who disobey the Good News of God?

1 Peter 4:17 TLV

We don’t catch this connection unless we understand that “house of God” means those brought into the Creator’s family through His covenant promises of redemption. That would be the family of Israel, which the Almighty established for the purpose of bringing light to the nations.

That’s the connection: Ezekiel and Peter are both addressing the judgment that comes first to the House of God to refine and perfect His people. Not only does He want us all

free from the corruption of this world, He wants us free from everything that might hinder us from being His instruments of shalom and reconciliation.

Another echo of God's conversation with Israel comes in Messiah Yeshua's conversation with Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel in His day:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. The one who believes in Him is not condemned; but whoever does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not put his trust in the name of the one and only *Ben-Elohim* [Son of God].

John 3:16-18 TLV

This is where people might join ancient Israel in complaining about God's unfairness. Yeshua says the world is condemned. That means the Creator has already decided He will execute a judgment of annihilation on it of the same order of magnitude that He executed on the world of Noah's day. Yet where is the due process? Did God issue an indictment? Was there an investigation and a trial? When did we, the accused, get a chance to plead our case?

The indictment happened at the Tower of Babel, when God investigated what the united human population of earth was doing to defy His sovereignty as Creator. We find the indictment in God's declaration:

"Look, the people are one and all of them have the same language. So this is what they have begun to do. Now, nothing they plan to do will be impossible."

Genesis 11:6 TLV

This incident happened after humanity's rebirth following the global flood. God's declaration comes from His conclusion that all humanity were going the same way of rebellion as their predecessors. That's where the world was condemned once again.

As for the trial, it's still happening as each new generation must answer the same charges of wicked rebellion against our Maker. That's the record of history, when each person and nation have the choice of continuing to rebel, or throwing themselves on the mercy of the heavenly court.

Multitudes might say, "That's not fair! I had no idea my life was one big trial! Why didn't God explain this if it's so important?"

He did. That's the witness of creation. Not only the heavens, but the consciences of every person and the ethical models of every society testify to the existence of a Creator and the necessity of being reconciled to Him.

But how are we to be reconciled? If we're all condemned, what's the possibility of a reprieve? How do we plead for mercy, and how do we know we'll receive it? Can we trust God to do this?

The Christian answer has always been that Christ came to bring that reprieve, and that anyone can obtain it simply by trusting in Him. That is correct. However, as with most things about our Creator, there's more to it. Yeshua, or Jesus as we first knew Him, is the

Son of God, but He's also the Son of David, King of Israel, and the Anointed One – the Messiah of Israel.

This is where the Christian understanding of Messiah's identity in Yeshua connects with the Jewish understanding of the concept and Spirit of Messiah. Yes, our Jewish brethren await Messiah Son of David who will bring final redemption to all Israel, but they also understand that the nation of Israel, and every person who is part of that nation, has a messianic calling to represent God to the world. That's what Jews have been doing simply by their continued existence.

How do we know this? Because that's what Abraham, the father of Israel, did. God called him out of his homeland soon after His indictment of the world at Babel. Like Noah, Abraham responded to God's call to establish the way of escape from the pending judgment. He demonstrated God's grace and mercy by his life as a stranger among hostile nations. The Bible doesn't tell us whether Abraham said words like, "I believe You, God!" However, it does say that Abraham believed God, and God counted that belief sufficient to consider him righteous.

This is the link to Yeshua's declaration that all who believe in Him will receive that same reprieve and be counted righteous like Abraham. We demonstrate our belief by the way we live. That's where faith meets action: if we deem our Creator trustworthy to bring us into His house, clean us up, and restore us to the place He had always intended for us, then we will take Him at His word and do as He says. That's how we become children of Abraham, doing the works of Abraham just as our Messiah said we should do. When we, as Abraham's sons and daughters, do that, then we demonstrate by our lives that God's justice system isn't two-tiered, but is very fair to all.