

וַיֵּשֶׁב

Vayyeishev

(and lived)

B'reshit [Genesis] 37:1-40:23

הפטרה וישב

Haftarah Vayyeishev

Amos 2:6-3:8

Calamity from YHWH

Amos 3:6

If the shofar is sounded in a city, will not the people be afraid?

If calamity befalls a city has YHWH not done it?

The simple reading of the above verse states that when a disaster hits a city, then YHWH has done it. These are the words of YHWH as recorded through the prophet Amos. Now for some reason, the very idea of YHWH bringing judgment upon a city upsets a lot of people. However, is YHWH not the Creator of the heavens and the earth? Can He not do with it as He sees fit? To be sure He can! But the verse is actually much stronger in the Hebrew reading than it is in the English translation. Let us examine this passage carefully.

<p>If the shofar is sounded in a city, will not the people be afraid? If calamity befalls a city has YHWH not done it?</p>	<p>אם יתקע שופר בעיר ועם לא יחזדו אם תהיה רעה בעיר ויהיה לא עשה</p>
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We are particularly interested in the last phrase of this verse; and in that verse we are particularly interested in the Hebrew word that is translated as “calamity”. Let us examine this last phrase word by word.

עָשָׂה	לֹא	וַיְהִי	בְּעִיר	רָעָה	תִּהְיֶה	אִם
to make	not	and YHWH	in a city	evil	to be	if

What we find here is that it is YHWH Himself that makes evil to come to pass upon a city. Why does He do this to a city?

B'reshit (Genesis) 6:5-7

5 And YHWH saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

6 And YHWH was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.

7 And YHWH said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the ground; both man, and beast, and creeping things, and birds of the heavens; for I am sorry that I have made them."

From the very beginning man has been living contrary to the commandments of YHWH. At some point in a man's life he reaches a point of no return in which his heart is so hard that the possibility of redemption has been exceeded. This is what happened with Pharaoh, and YHWH drowned him and his whole army in the sea because of Pharaoh's own hardness of heart.

Likewise, when a city or nation reaches a point that its sin has reached its fullness, and the report of its wickedness reaches into heaven, then destruction comes. This is what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plains, in which their sin was so great that YHWH Himself came down from heaven to see if the report was true. Once He determined that it was, then He rained down fire and brimstone upon all the people in those cities.

We see this same scenario happen in Nineveh. However, there is a distinct difference in this account as Yonah preached the message of repentance to the people of Nineveh; they all repented of their evil ways from the king all the way down to the lowest of people. The result was that YHWH spared the people.

The Elohim who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, is not quite as many people in Christianity think, in that He is only a loving and kind and compassionate Elohim. While He is all this and more, He is also a just and holy Elohim in which He will not allow wickedness to go unpunished. As soon as wickedness reaches its fullness, then He sends His messengers to deliver a message of either coming to repentance or else suffering the fullness of His wrath.

In this verse from Amos 3:6, the English word "calamity" comes from the Hebrew word רָעָה – "ra'ah," which is commonly translated as "evil." In this passage it is in the feminine form. We find this word in the following passage as well, only in its masculine form as רָע. There is no real difference in meaning between the masculine and feminine forms of this word.

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 45:7

***“I form the light, and create darkness;
I make peace, and create evil.
I am YHWH, that does all these things.”***

This raises a very serious question for us to grapple with, as this verse clearly states that YHWH creates evil. If He is a good Elohim, then how is it possible for Him to create evil? The answer is surprising in its simplicity as well as clarity.

B'reshit (Genesis) 3:22

And YHWH Elohim said, “Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever...”

When Elohim had created the earth and all that was in it, He also made a garden and put two trees in this garden. Of all the trees that YHWH planted in this garden, He commanded man that he might eat of any of them except the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. And yes, the word “evil” is the same Hebrew word we are seeking to understand at present. Because man chose to disobey His Creator, he was kicked out of this garden because he now knew the difference between what was good and what was evil.

At the simplest understanding, what YHWH presented man with was a choice. He could choose to live in obedience to his Master and not gain a type of knowledge, that without proper understanding and handling would cause his death. Or, he could gain the forbidden knowledge and forfeit his life as a result. The reality is this, without the possibility of choice, without the possibility of doing evil, there can be no holiness. This is what YHWH our Elohim created: the potential for, or the possibility of, doing wrong. Why did He create this possibility? Because He desired to be able to have intimate fellowship with His highest creation, man. And this could only happen if He gave to man the possibility of choice. But as soon as He did this, He also knew that man would exercise that choice he had been granted.

It is like the man who desires a swimming pool and has one put in his backyard. When this is done, he takes every precaution to make sure that little children do not fall in and drown. He puts up a fence. He tells his neighbors not to let their children come over and play around the pool. He instructs the members of his own household of the rules governing the safety of using the pool. He puts up signs of warning of the danger of the pool. Yet, when all is said and done, someone at some time will climb over the fence to swim in the pool when he is not home, because that is the way man is. Given a choice, he will exercise that choice.

Likewise, everything that YHWH created was good. The Scripture tells us this important truth. Everything had a lawful place. Yet, man could not wait upon YHWH for His timing, he wanted what he wanted right now and so he took it.

It is because of man's propensity towards making the wrong choices, that on occasion Elohim must step in to render His judgment, lest man become so very wicked that the whole earth must be destroyed. This is what happened in Noach's day. To a lesser degree this is also what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain.

While YHWH does bring calamity to His creation at times, He is not placing an occasion for stumbling before His creation.

Matithyah (Matthew) 18:7

"Woe to the world because of occasions of stumbling! For it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion comes!"

The important thing here to realize, is that YHWH is not a man that He can do wrong or cause another to stumble. Stumbling comes to a person because of his stubbornness in refusing to repent and turn back to YHWH. What YHWH is doing in our world today is giving ample evidence that He is still here and He is still working in the affairs of man. If we have eyes to see and ears to hear, then we can understand the truth that YHWH brings judgment to those who have earned such judgment.

ABBA YHWH, we ask that You lead us far away from Your wrath with a firm hand; in the name of Yeshua our Mashiach. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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