

THE DAVAR BIBLE SCHOOL

Bible

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

LESSON 13

An Open Letter from the Dean

Greetings and welcome to our growing family of Davar Bible School correspondence course students. This is a totally new and different kind of Bible study course. This informative course of study will help you understand the clear, simple, plain truths of your Bible. The only textbook you will need for this correspondence course is your Bible. You will find these studies fresh and interesting, not dull and dry. You will be richly rewarded with enlightening new truth in each lesson. There is no tuition or cost to you whatsoever, this course is absolutely free of charge. Your enrollment has already been paid by the voluntary freewill tithes and offerings of those who have elected to support this teaching. Those who wish to support this work are gladly welcomed as coworkers in this important effort to proclaim truth to all people. As you read each lesson, make sure you look up each Scripture that is cited. A separate test booklet is provided for each lesson. This way you can keep the lessons for further study, returning only your test booklet to be graded by your teacher. (Alternatively you may just email your answers to us.) It is our prayer that Elohim will bless you as you seek to understand His word.

- James Trimm

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LESSON 13

The Essenes believed strongly in Predestination:

...the sect of the Essenes affirm that fate governs all things, and that nothing befalls men but what is according to its determination.

(Josephus; Ant. 13:5:9)

From the God of Knowledge comes all that is and shall be. Before ever they existed He established their whole design, and when, as ordained for them, they come into being, it is in accord with His glorious design that they accomplish their task without change. ...

(1QS 3:15f)

However the Pharisees had a more moderate view:

When they say that all things happen by fate, they do not take away from men the freedom of acting as they think fit; since their notion is that it has pleased God to mix up the decrees of fate and man's will, so that man can act virtuously or viciously.

(Josephus; Ant. 18:1:3)

The Mishna gives the Pharisaic view as follows:

All things are foreknown,
but freewill is given.

- m.Avot 3:16

One of the primary "predestination" schools in Christendom is known as "Calvanism". "Calvanism" is actually a term which refers to all of Calvin's teachings however it has come to be used primarily to refer to Calvin's teaching of "predestination". After Calvin's death his followers formulated his teachings into five basic points called "the Five Points of Calvanism" which they compare to the five pedals of a tulip. Calvinists use the word TULIP as a memory device for these five points by making the following acronymn:

[T]otal depravity of man
[U]nconditional election
[L]imited atonement
[I]rresistable grace
[P]erseverence of the Saints

In this paper we will discuss the first four of these in depth, though not in the same order as TULIP.

Calvanist thinking goes something like this:

Elohim is ultimately sovereign and all powerful while man is totally depraved. As a result man cannot resist Elohim. Since all men are not saved, but the "elect" are saved, Elohim has only willed certain men to be saved, while others he has willed to be damned. If the all powerful irresistible Elohim has called a man to be saved, then he will be saved. By contrast if the all powerful irresistible Elohim has not called a man to be saved, then that man will never (and can never) be saved.

OK now lets show the fault in the "TULIP logic":

The Calvinist concept of Elohim's sovereignty is that he is irresistible. That no man could ever resist the will of Elohim. This is based on a flawed interpretation of Romans 9 as well as misunderstanding the key terms in the KJV "foreknown", "predestined" and "elect". We will discuss each of these in depth under another heading. However the scriptures plainly teach that man can and has at times resisted the will of Elohim. A prime example appears in Acts 7:51:

"...You men are always resisting the Ruach HaKodesh."

If in fact the will of Elohim cannot be resisted by man, then all men would be saved. This is because the scriptures tell us that ALL men have been called by Him to salvation:

...by the righteousness of one [Messiah]
the free gift came upon all men
unto the justification of life.
(Rom. 5:18)

...our Eloah and Saviour;
who will have all men to be saved, ...
(1Tim. 2:3-4)

[YHWH is]...not willing that any should perish,
but that all should come to repentance.
(2Pt. 3:9)

In fact it seems that these three verses, coupled with the concept of "limited atonement" (i.e. that only some men will be saved) actually disproves Calvinism. Since Elohim has willed all men to be saved, yet only some of them will be saved, it stands to reason that some of these men resist his will and are damned by their own choice.

One major problem with Calvanist thinking is that it is deeply rooted in Replacement

Theology. One key term that is central to Calvinism is "the Elect". But what is the difference between the "Elect" and the "Chosen"? None at all. The KJV translates the same Hebrew and Greek words as "Chosen" or "Elect" depending on the mood of the translator, or more likely so as to imply that the "Elect" is the "Church". For example if you compare 1Pt. 2:9 with Is. 43:20 and Deut. 10:15 you will see that the "Elect" of 1Pt. 2:9 is drawn from Tanak passages about the "Chosen" people Israel in Is. 43:20f and Deut. 10:15.

Now if we are good Bereans (Acts 17) we will check the scriptures, the Tanak to see what Paul and other "New Testament writers" are saying. If we do so we will see that clearly the term "Elect/Chosen" refers not to "the Christian Church" but to Israel (Deut. 7:6; 10:15; 14:2; Is. 41:8-9; 42:1; 43:20f; 45:4; 65:9, 22 & Ps. 135:4).

Now the misunderstanding of the Elect as the Christian Church has created a problem in logic that has helped to support Calvinism. By most Christian theology the Christian Church is made up of all believers in "Jesus Christ". But this seems to conflict. If the term "the Elect" refers to the Christian Church then it implies not that they chose Elohim, but that Elohim chose them. The Calvinist resolution is that Elohim chose a certain class of people who would choose Elohim because Elohim predestined them to do so. Thus they are the "Elect" because Elohim chose them to be those who would choose him. The real resolution is that replacement theology is wrong in the first place. The term "Elect/Chosen" is a euphemism for Israel and not the Christian Church at all.

A keystone to Calvinist thinking is Romans 9. Since Calvinists have so misunderstood this chapter we will cover it in detail.

The topic of Romans 9 is to reassure Paul's readers. He has just told them that Elohim has predestined believers to be conformed to the image of the Son (which in no way indicates the doctrine of predestination as explained above). He has just been telling them about the promise of redemption. But what good is that promise. Did he not make promises to Israel? In Romans 9 thru 11 Paul will explain that YHWH will indeed be faithful in keeping his promises to Israel. However this has caused Paul to cover a parenthetical thought. This thought is to explain to his readers that Elohim had the right to Choose Israel. Notice the term "Election" in 9:11 refers to Israel NOT the Christian Church.

In the next few verses Paul will justify Elohim's right to make Israel his chosen people.

In Rom. 9:11-16 Paul cites Gen. 25:23 and Mal. 1:2-3 to express that Elohim chose to have his chosen lineage to pass through Jacob rather than Esau. It must be noted that this resulted from Esau selling his birthright to Jacob of his own freewill (Gen. 25:24-34). Elohim "hated" Esau for not cherishing his birthright.

In Rom. 9:17-18 Paul refers to God's sovereignty when he hardened Pharaoh's heart. Paul here quotes Ex. 9:16 and is referring to the material in Ex. 9:15-17. The Calvinist misunderstanding here comes from a lack of understanding the idiom Biblical Hebrew. Ex. 4:21 & 9:16 are examples of a common Hebrew idiom in which an active verb is

used to express not the doing of a thing, but permission to do it. Another example of this idiom is found in Jer. 4:10:

Then said I: 'Ah, Adonai YHWH! surely
You have greatly deceived this people and
Yerushalayim, saying: You shall have peace;
whereas the sword reaches unto the soul.'
(Jer. 4:10 HRV)

Meaning not that YHWH deceived them but that he ALLOWED them to be deceived.
(other examples of this idiom: Mt. 6:13a; 2Thes. 2:11; Rom. 1:24-26; Zech. 1:10b).

In the case of Pharaoh we have a man who was not a believer (Ex. 5:2) and who hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:11, 15, 28; 9:7). Paul simply refers to this story to show that Elohim had the sovereign right to allow Pharaoh to harden his own heart of his own freewill. This concept is also taught in the Talmud:

In the way in which a man wishes to walk he is guided.
(b.Mak. 10b)

If one goes to defile himself, openings are made for him;
and if he goes to purify himself, help is afforded him.
(b.Shabb. 104a)

If a man defiles himself a little, he becomes much defiled:
[if he defile himself] below, he becomes defiled from above;
if he defile himself in this world,
he becomes defiled in the world to come.
Our Rabbis taught: Sanctify yourselves,
therefore, and be ye holy:
If a man sanctify himself a little,
he becomes much sanctified.
[If he sanctify himself] below,
he becomes sanctified from above;
if he sanctify himself in this world,
he becomes sanctified in the world to come.
(b.Yoma 39a)

Elohim, has the sovereign right to further harden the heart of the man who has chosen himself to harden his heart. This does not conflict with freewill, it is an amplification of freewill.

Elohim hardened Pharaoh's heart further because Elohim had made Israel his Chosen people Egypt. The point of the story here is that Elohim chose to reveal himself to Israel, typified by Moses, while allowing Egypt (typified by Pharaoh) to harden their hearts.

Finally in Rom. 9:19-23 Paul recounts the parable of the potter and the clay. This is a common parable in Jewish literature. It also appears in Is. 29:16; 45:9; Jer. 18:1-10 and Wisdom 12:12, 20; 15:7). In this parable the potter is Elohim and the clay is mankind. The point of the parable is that Elohim is sovereign over mankind and therefore has the right to make the Jews his chosen people. This is revealed as the meaning of the parable in Rom. 9:24.

Some important points about this parable overall. Jeremiah reminds us that Elohim responds to our freewill in exercising sovereignty over us (Jer. 18:8, 10) and actually condemns those who ascribe this to fate/predestination by stating that we have a freewill (Jer. 18:12) a point Paul also seems to agree with in speaking of allegorical vassals in 2Tim. 2:20-21.

Thus the purpose of Romans 9 is to justify Elohim's right to choose the Jewish people as his Chosen people (Elect) and NOT to teach the Calvinist concept of predestination and an Elect Christian Church.

There are two words which are translated three ways in the KJV these are Strong's Greek number 4309 Translated "predestined" and Strong's Greek number 4267 translated "foreknow/foreknew" in Rom. 8:29 and 11:2 but as "foreordained" in 1Pt. 1:20. (this word appears in Acts 2:23; 15:18 = Amos 9:11-12; Rom. 8:29; 11:2 & 1Pt. 1:20)

First we will address the issue of "foreknowledge". Judaism maintains this concept as the Mishna says:

All things are foreknown,
but freewill is given.
- m.Avot 3:16

Foreknowledge is simply the concept that Elohim foreknows the future, and does not require that he predestine the future.

A heathen said to Rabbi Joshua,
"You believe that God knows the future?"
"Yes," replied the Rabbi.
"Then," said the questioner, "wherefore is it written,
'The Lord said, I will destroy everything which
I have made, because it repents me that I have made
them?' Did not the Lord foresee that man would
become corrupt?"
Then said Rabbi Joshua, "Have you children?"
"Yes," was the answer.
"When a child was born, what did you?"
"I made a great rejoicing."
"What cause had you to rejoice?"
Do you not know that they must die?"

"Yes, that is true; but in the time of enjoyment
I do not think of the future."

"So was it with God," said Rabbi Joshua.

"He knew that men would sin; still that
knowledge did not prevent the execution of
his beneficent purpose to create them."

(Gen. Rabba 27:4)

Next is the word "foreordain" in 1Pt. 1:20. As we have already shown this same word is
elsewhere translated simply as "foreknow".

Finally we reach the keyword "predestined" This word appears five times in the KJV.
However in none of its usages does it actually refer to the doctrine of "predestination" as
understood in Calvinism.

Rom. 8:29-30 says only that believers are predestined to be conformed to the image of
the Son, not that they were predestined to believe.

Eph. 1:5, 11 says only that believers are predestined to have a life in the world to come.

These passages in the KJV use the word "predestined" but do not at all teach the concept
of "predestination".

It should be noted that the Aramaic of these passages actually has the phrase "marked
from before" which implies only marking and not predestination.

The Calvinist concept of the total depravity of man is largely rooted in a
misunderstanding of Jn. 6:44, 64-65 which states:

No man can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

While this is true, Calvinists have totally ignored a whole series of other passages which
tell us that God has called all men to him:

...by the righteousness of one [Messiah]
the free gift came upon all men
unto the justification of life.
(Rom. 5:18)

...our Eloah and Saviour;
who will have all men to be saved,...
(1Tim. 2:3-4)

[YHWH is]...not willing that any should perish,
but that all should come to repentance.
(2Pt. 3:9)

The trick is that they must respond by their own freewill.

It remains to be said that the doctrine of predestination is totally counter-Torah. Freewill is an important element of Torah as well as freedom/liberty. Without freewill there is no real freedom/liberty. The Tank tells us:

So shall I keep your Torah continually forever and ever,
And I will walk in freedom: for I seek your precepts.
(Psalm 119:44-45)

As well as by Ya'akov HaTzadik (James the Just) who called the Torah "the Torah of freedom" (James 1:25; 2:12).

Yeshua said:

... if you continue in my word,
then are you my disciples indeed.
And you shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free.
(John 8:31-32)

With Ps. 119:142:

...your Torah is truth.

So the Torah makes one free. Freedom requires freewill. Freewill is constantly reflected in the Torah. The following are just a few examples:

Gen. 2:16 - Adam could FREELY eat of any tree in the garden except one. Adam CHOSE to eat that fruit as well anyway.

Ex. 5:2; 8:11, 15, 28; 9:7 - Elohim allowed Pharaoh to harden his heart (see explanation of idiom under Rom. 9 above)

Lev. 1:3 - Freewill offerings

Num. 13-14 Ten of the 12 spies and the majority of the people chose not to enter the promised land. God yielded to their choice.

Deut. 11:26-28; 28:1; 30:15 - Elohim has set two choices before us, giving us the choice to follow his Torah or rebel against it. In the Midrash Sifre to this passage there is an interesting explanation to these passages from Deuteronomy:

‘Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse’
(Deut 11: 26). Why is this stated, since it has likewise

been said, "See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil" (Deut. 30:15)? Perhaps the Israelites will say, "Since God has set before us two ways, the way of life and the way of death, we can walk in whichever of them we like." Therefore it is taught, "Choose life that thou may live, thou and they seed" (Deut. 30:19). There is a Parable of a person who was sitting at the cross-roads, before whom two paths branched out. The beginning of one was plain and its end full of thorns; the beginning of the other was thorny and its latter part plain. He used to warn the passers-by and say to them, "You see this path that its beginning is plain and for two or three steps you walk in comfort, but at its end you meet with thorns. You also see the other path the beginning of which is thorny; for two or three steps you walk through thorns, but in the end you come to a straight road." Similarly said Moses to Israel, "You see the wicked prospering; for two or three days they prosper in this world, but in the end they will be thrust out. You also see the righteous in trouble; for two or three days they suffer in this world, but in the end they will have occasion for rejoicing" (Sifre Deut. 86a)

It is important also to cover the pagan origins of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. According to the World Book Encyclopedia:

A belief in some form of predestination is found... in the ancient religions of Greece, China, India and Egypt. (Vol. 15 p. 659; 1975 edition)

The Greeks and Romans believed that reality was weaved out by three goddesses called "fates" who spun out men's lives like thread. The ancient Scandanavians believed this also calling them "norns". Predestination is in fact the Helenistic phylosphy called "Fatelism".

This doctrine was first introduced into Christianity by the Catholic writer Augustine (354-430 C.E.) (ibid vol. 15 p. 659) and was later expounded by another Catholic writer Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274 C.E.) (ibid). Protestants initially rejected the doctrine until it was reintroduced by John Calvin (1509-1564 C.E.) (ibid).

Thus this pagan doctrine made its way from Paganism into Catholicism and eventually into Protestantism. Now it seems to be raising its pagan head in Messianic circles as well.

Calvanism teaches a an Elohim who creates faulty humans and then punishes them for being exactly what he forced them to be by his own irresistible will.

Calvanism makes Elohim ultimately guilty of every sin ever committed. By Calvinist thinking it would seem to be unjust to punish any person for any crime or sin since they were only following the irritable will of Elohim.

Ask a Calvinist: "Do you believe in predestination because you chose to of your own freewill?"

In closing I quote to passages, one from the Mishna the other from the "New Testament":

All things are foreknown,
but FREEWILL is given.
- m.Avot 3:16

...that your goodness should not be as it were by compulsion,
but of your own FREEWILL.
- Phil. 1:14 New American Standard

And as we read in Ben Sira (from the Apocrypha)

Say not thou, It is through the Lord that I fell away: for thou oughtest not to do the things that he hateth.

Say not thou, He hath caused me to err: for he hath no need of the sinful man.

The Lord hateth all abomination; and they that fear God love it not.

He himself made man from the beginning, and left him in the hand of his free will;

If thou wilt, to keep the commandments, and to perform acceptable faithfulness.

He hath set fire and water before thee: stretch forth thy hand unto whether thou wilt.

Before man is life and death; and whether him liketh shall be given him.

For the wisdom of the Lord is great, and he is mighty in power, and beholdeth all things:

And his eyes are upon them that fear him, and he knoweth every work of man.

He hath commanded no man to do wickedly, neither hath he given any man licence to sin.

(Ben Sira 15:11-20)

(End of lesson 13)