

Yeshayahu's Roadmap to Reconciliation

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Theodicy and Divine Justice in Re'eh's Haftarah

<https://adinablaustein.substack.com/> for weekly haftarah newsletter

“More than a decade of weekly dialogue with Christians and intimate conversation with Christian friends,” writes Prager, “has convinced me that, aside from the divinity of Jesus, the greatest—and even more important—difference between Judaism and Christianity, or perhaps only between most Christians and Jews, is their different understanding of forgiveness and, ultimately, how to react to evil.” Here Prager takes one theological step too many and commits, in this single statement, two errors. The first is to deem the issue of forgiveness more important than that of Jesus’s identity. Such a statement, to my mind, sullies the memory of thousands of Jews who died rather than proclaim Jesus Lord. Yet Prager also misses the fact that these two issues, that of approaching Jesus and that of approaching our enemies, are essentially one and the same: that the very question of how to approach our enemies depends on whether one believes that Jesus was merely a misguided mortal, or the Son of God. Let us examine how each faith’s outlook on Jesus provides the theological underpinnings for its respective approach to hate.

<https://www.firstthings.com/article/2003/02/the-virtue-of-hate>

Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik

על נהרות בבל Psalm 137

עַל נְהָרוֹת | בְּכֹל יָמַי יִשְׁכַּנּוּ גַם־בְּכִינוּ בְּזָכְרֵנוּ אֶת־צִיּוֹן:

By the rivers of Babylon,
there we sat,
sat and wept,
as we thought of Zion.

עַל־עַרְבִים בְּתוֹכָהּ תִּלְיֵנוּ כְּנְרוֹתֵינוּ:

There on the poplars
we hung up our lyres,

כִּי יִשְׁם שְׂאֵלוֹנוּ שׁוֹבֵינוּ דְבַר־יִשְׁיר וְתוֹלְלֵינוּ שְׂמִיחָה לְשִׁירֵינוּ מִשִּׁיר צִיּוֹן:

for our captors asked us there for songs,
our tormentors, for amusement:
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”



How can we sing a song of the LORD
on alien soil?

אֵיךְ נִשְׁיר אֶת־שִׁיר־יְהוָה עַל אֲדָמַת נָכַר:

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither;

אִם־אֶשְׁכַּחְךָ יְרוּשָׁלַם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי:

על נהרות בבל Psalm 137

If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither;

תִּדְבֹק-לְשׁוֹנִי | לְחִפִּי אִם-לֹא אֶזְכְּרֶיךָ אִם-לֹא אֶעֱלֶה אֶת-יְרוּשָׁלַם עַל רֹאשׁ שְׂמֹחֲתִי:

let my tongue stick to my palate
if I cease to think of you,
if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory
even at my happiest hour.

זָכַר יְהוָה | לְבָבִי אֲדוֹם אֶת-יּוֹם יְרוּשָׁלַם הָאֲמָרִים עָרוֹ | עָרוֹ עַד הַיּוֹם בָּה:

Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites
the day of Jerusalem's fall;
how they cried, "Strip her, strip her
to her very foundations!"



Fair Babylon, you predator,
a blessing on him who repays you in kind
what you have inflicted on us;

בְּתַבְּבֹל הַשְׂדֵדוּתָה אֲשֶׁר־י שִׁשְׁלָם-לָךְ אֶת-גְּמוּלָךְ שְׂגַמְלֶתָ לָנוּ:

a blessing on him who seizes your babies
and dashes them against the rocks!

אֲשֶׁר־י | שִׂיאֲחֹז וְנִפֹּץ אֶת-עַלְלֵיךְ אֶל-הַסֶּלַע: {פ}

Divine Comfort 51:12-16

12) I, I am the One who comforts you! What ails you that you fear
Man who must die, Mortals who fare like grass? (13) You have forgotten GOD your Maker, Who stretched out the skies and made firm the earth! And you live all day in constant dread Because of the rage of an oppressor Who is aiming to cut [you] down. Yet of what account is the rage of an oppressor? (14) "Quickly the tree buds anew; / It does not die though cut down, / And its sap does not fail." Quickly the crouching one is freed; He is not cut down and slain, And he shall not want for food. (15) For I the ETERNAL your God—Who stirs up the sea into roaring waves, Whose name is LORD of Hosts—
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוֹצֵאתָ מִן־הַיָּם וְשִׁמְרָתָם בְּיָדְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוֹצֵאתָ מִן־הַיָּם וְשִׁמְרָתָם בְּיָדְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוֹצֵאתָ מִן־הַיָּם וְשִׁמְרָתָם בְּיָדְךָ
I have put My words in your mouth And sheltered you with My hand; I have put My words in your mouth / And sheltered you with My hand
13. the skies and made firm the earth, Have said to Zion: You are My people!

יב) אָנֹכִי אֶנְכִי הוּא מְנַחֵמְכֶם מִי־

אֲ

תִּיתִי וְתִירְאֵי מְאֹנֹשׁ יָמוּת וּמִבֶּן־אָדָם חָצֵר יִגְתִּי: (יג) וְשִׁמְרָתָם בְּיָדְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוֹצֵאתָ מִן־הַיָּם וְשִׁמְרָתָם בְּיָדְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הוֹצֵאתָ מִן־הַיָּם וְשִׁמְרָתָם בְּיָדְךָ

Lamentations 2: 13-19

13) What can I take as witness-i or liken To you, O Fair Jerusalem? What can I match with you to console you, O Fair Maiden Zion? For your ruin is vast as the sea: Who can heal you? (14) Your seers prophesied to you Delusion and folly. They did not expose your iniquity So as to restore you for truth (ש) But they prophesied to you oracles Of delusion and deception. (15) All will pass away Clap their hands at you; They hiss and wag the head At Fair Jerusalem: These gestures were intended to ward off the calamity from the viewer; cf., e.g., Jer. 18.16 and note Job 27.23 "Is this the city that was called Perfection Beauty Joy of All the Earth?" (16) All your enemies jeer at you; They hiss and gnash their teeth, And cry: "We've ruined her! Ah, this is the day we hoped for; kLit. "We have attained, we have seen." We have lived to see it!" -k



(17) The LORD has done what He purposed, Has carried out the decree That He ordained long ago; He has torn down without pity. He has let the foe rejoice over you, Has exalted the might of your enemies. (18) I Emendation yields "Cry aloud." Their heart cried out-I to the Lord. O wall of Fair Zion, Shed tears like a torrent Day and night! Give yourself no respite, Your eyes no rest. (19) Arise, cry out in the night At the beginning of the watches, Pour out your heart like water In the presence of the Lord! Lift up your hands to Him For the life of your infants, Who faint for hunger At every street corner.

יג) מָה־אֶעֱדָרְךָ מֶה

אֲדַ

מָה־לָּךְ הַבַּת יְרוּשָׁלַם מֶה אֲשׁוּה־לָּךְ וְאִנְחַמְךָ בְּתוֹלַת בַּת־

יִד) נְבִיאֶיךָ חָזוּ לָךְ שָׂוֵא וְתִפֹּל וְלֹא־גָלוּ עַל־עוֹנֶיךָ לְהַשִּׁיב

טו) סִפְּקוּ עֲלֵיךְ כְּפִים כָּל־עַבְרֵי דָרָה שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּנְעוּ רֹאשׁוֹם

טז) פָּצוּ עֲלֵיךְ פִּיהֶם כָּל־אֲיִבֶיךָ שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּחַרְקוּ־שֵׁן אָמְרוּ בְלַעְנוּ אֶרֶץ

יז) עָשָׂה ה' אֲשֶׁר זָמַם בַּעַד אֲמַרְתּוּ אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מִי־מִי

יח) צָעַק לֶבָם אֶל־אֲדוּשֶׁם חוֹמַת בַּת־צִיּוֹן הוֹרִידִי

יט) קוֹמִי רְנִי (בְּלִיל) [בְּלִילָה] לְרֹאשׁ אֲשֶׁמְרוֹת שִׁפְכִי

Zion Awakened and God's Return 52:1-10

(1) Awake, awake, O Zion!Clothe yourself in splendor;Put on your robes of majesty,Jerusalem, holy city!For the uncircumcised and the impureShall never enter you again. (2) Arise, shake off the dust,Sit , Jerusalem!Loose the bonds from your neck,O captive one, Fair Zion!
 (3) For thus said GOD:You were sold for no price,And shall be redeemed without money. (4) For thus said my Sovereign GOD:Of old, My people went downTo Egypt to sojourn there;But Assyria has robbed them,Giving nothing in return.aWhereas the Israelites themselves sought hospitality in Egypt, Assyria (5) What therefore do I gain here?—declares GOD—For My people has been carried off for nothing,Their mockers howl—declares GOD—And constantly, unceasingly,My name is reviled. (6) Assuredly, My people shall learn My name,Assuredly on that dayThat I, the One who promised,Am now at hand. (7) How welcome on the mountainAre the footsteps of the heraldAnnouncing happiness,Heralding good fortune,Announcing victory,Telling Zion, "Your God reigns!" (8) Hark!Your lookouts raise their voices,As one they shout for joy;For every eye shall behold GOD's return to Zion.
 (9) Raise a shout together, O quins of Jerusalem!For GOD will comfort this people,Will redeem Jerusalem.
 (10) GOD will bare a holy armln the sight of all the nations,And the very ends of earth shall seeThe victory of our God.

(א) עורֵי עוֹרֵי
 לָבֹב

שִׁי עֲזָרָה צִיּוֹן לְבִשִׁי וְבָגְדֵי תִפְאָרֶתָהּ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עִיר הַלְדָּשׁ

(ג) כִּי-כֹה אָמַר ה' חֲנֹם נִמְכַרְתֶּם וְלֹא בָכֶסֶף תִּגָּאֲלוּ:

(ד) כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֱדוּשָׁם ה' מִצִּרִים יָרֵד-עִמִּי

(ז) מִה־נְּאֻוֹ עַל-הַהָרִים רַגְלֵי מַבְשָׁר מִשָּׁמַיִעַ

Zion Awakened and God's Return 52:11-12

(11) Turn, turn away, touch naught impure
As you depart from there;
Keep pure, as you go forth from there,
You who bear the vessels of GOD.
1.7–8; 5.14–15. (12) For you will not depart in haste,
Nor will you leave in flight;
For GOD is marching before you,
The God of Israel is your rear guard.

(יא) סֹרְרוּ

סֹרְרוּ

וְצִאוּ מִשָּׁם טָמֵא אַל-תִּגְעוּ צֵאוּ מִתּוֹכָהּ וְצִאוּ מִשָּׁם טָמֵא אַל-תִּגְעוּ צֵאוּ מִתּוֹכָהּ

Exodus 24

וְכִי־יִנָּצוּ אַנְשִׁים וְנָגְפוּ אִשָּׁה הָרָה וַיִּצְאוּ יְלָדֶיהָ וְלֹא יִהְיֶה אֶסּוֹן עָנּוּשׁ יַעֲזֹשׁ כַּאֲשֶׁר יִשִּׁית עָלֶיהָ בְּעַל הָאִשָּׁה וְנָתַן בְּפָלְגִים:

When [two or more] parties fight, and one of them pushes a pregnant woman and a miscarriage results, but no other damage ensues, the one responsible shall be fined according as the woman's husband may exact, the payment to be based on reckoning.

וְאִם־אֶסּוֹן יִהְיֶה וְנִתְּתָה נַפְשׁ נַפֶּשׁ תַּחַת נַפֶּשׁ:

But if other damage ensues, the penalty shall be life for life,

עֵינַי תַּחַת עֵינַי אֶשׁוּ תַחַת אֶשׁוּ יָד תַּחַת יָד רֶגֶל תַּחַת רֶגֶל:

● ● ●
eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,

כּוֹיֵה תַחַת כּוֹיֵה פָצַע תַּחַת פָּצַע חַבּוּרָה תַחַת חַבּוּרָה: {ס}

burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

Leviticus 24

וּמִכָּה גִפְשׁ-בְּהֶמָּה יִשְׁלַמְנָה גִפְשׁ תַּחַת גִּפְשׁ:

One who kills a beast shall make restitution for it: life for life.

וְאִישׁ כִּי-יִתֵּן מוֹם בְּעַמִּיתוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה גַם יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ:

If any party maims another [person]: what was done shall be done in return—

שֹׁבֵר תַּחַת לְשֹׁבֵר עֵינַי תַּחַת לְעֵינַי וְשֹׁן תַּחַת לְשֹׁן כַּאֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן מוֹם בְּאָזְנוֹ גַם יִגָּתֵן בּוֹ:

fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The injury inflicted on a human being shall be inflicted in return.



וּמִכָּה בְּהֶמָּה יִשְׁלַמְנָה וּמִכָּה אָדָם יוּמָת:

One who kills a beast shall make restitution for it; but one who kills a human being shall be put to death.

Devarim 19 16-21

כִּי־יָקוּם יַעֲד־הֶמָּס בְּאִישׁ לַעֲנוֹת בּוֹ סָרָה:

If someone appears against another party to testify maliciously and gives incriminating yet false testimony,

וְעָמְדוּ שְׁנֵי־הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־לָהֶם הָרִיב לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לִפְנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַשֹּׁפְטִים אֲשֶׁר יִהְיוּ בַיָּמִים הָהֵם:

the two parties to the dispute shall appear before יהוה, before the priests or magistrates in authority at the time,

וְדָרְשׁוּ הַשֹּׁפְטִים הַיָּטִב וְהַנָּה עַד־שִׁקֹּר הַיָּעֵד שִׁקֹּר עָנָה בְּאֶחָיו:

and the magistrates shall make a thorough investigation. If the one who testified is a false witness, having testified falsely against a fellow Israelite,

וַעֲשִׂיתֶם לוֹ כַּאֲשֶׁר זָמַם לַעֲשׂוֹת לְאֶחָיו וּבַעֲרַתְתָּ הָרַע מִקִּרְבְּךָ:

you shall do to the one as the one schemed to do to the other. Thus you will sweep out evil from your midst;

וְהַנִּשְׁאָרִים יִשְׁמְעוּ וַיִּרְאוּ וְלֹא־יִסְפוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת עוֹד בְּדָבָר הָרַע הַזֶּה בְּקִרְבְּךָ:

others will hear and be afraid, and such evil things will not again be done in your midst.

וְלֹא תַחֲסוּ עֵינֶיךָ גִּנְפֹשׁ בְּגִנְפֹשׁ עֵינַי בְּעֵינַי שֵׁן בְּשֵׁן יָד בְּיָד רֶגֶל בְּרֶגֶל: {ס}

Nor must you show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

**Rambam (Maimonides), *Moreh Nevukhim* (Guide for the Perplexed), Part III,
Chapter 41:**

Maimonides writes:

"The Torah speaks in the language of man and uses exaggerated and severe expressions to produce a strong impression upon the people, so that they should fear to commit such crimes. The expression 'an eye for an eye' is not to be taken literally, but rather it teaches the importance of justice and the severity of the crime. The literal expression serves as an educational tool to emphasize the moral and ethical behavior that the Torah seeks to instill."

Jeremiah 25

כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵלַי קַח אֶת-פֶּזֶם הַיַּיִן הַחַמָּה הַזֹּאת מִיָּדִי וְהִשְׁקִיתָהּ אֶת-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי שִׁלַּח
אוֹתָהּ אֲלֵיהֶם:

For thus said the ETERNAL, the God of Israel, to me: “Take from My hand this cup of wine—of wrath—and make all the nations to whom I send you drink of it.

וְשִׁתּוּ וְהִתְגַּעְעוּ וְהִתְהַלְּלוּ מִפְּנֵי הַחֶרֶב אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי שִׁלַּח בֵּינְתֶם:

Let them drink and retch and act crazy, because of the sword that I am sending among them.”

וָאֶקַח אֶת-הַפֶּזֶם מִיַּד יְהוָה וָאֲשָׁקָה אֶת-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-שִׁלַּחְתָּנִי יְהוָה אֲלֵיהֶם:

So I took the cup from GOD’s hand and gave drink to all the nations to whom GOD had sent me:

אֶת-יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאֶת-עָרֵי יְהוּדָה וְאֶת-מְלָכֶיהָ אֶת-שָׂרֶיהָ לְתֵת אֲתָם לְחַרְבָּה לְשָׂמָה לְשָׂרָקָה וּלְקַלְלָהּ כַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה:

Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, and its kings and officials, to make them a desolate ruin, an object of hissing and a curse—as is now the case;

“Elsewhere in the Bible this word is used by human begins responding to a divine call (e.g., Gen 22:1,11; Exod. 3.4). Only [here]...does God call “here I am” to humans...

-Adele Berlin, The Jewish Study Bible

