

Weekly Teaching

January 27, 2017

I often feel that the most difficult book to read in the Hebrew Scriptures is the Book of Job.

Job was a tzaddik; a righteous man.

He was also very successful and possessed great wealth.

According to the Biblical story, *Ha-Satan* (the angel in charge of prosecuting human beings before God in the Heavenly Court) asserted that Job was only righteous because he was successful.

God then allowed *Ha-Satan* to take all that Job valued away from him.

He suddenly lost his wealth, his family, and his health; afflicted instead with a body covered by painful boils.

Job possessed three friends who came to him, and then the bulk of the Book of Job is a recording of their conversations.

Job asserts that God was being unjust with allowing him to suffer so much.

The three friends try to defend God:

- God must have his reasons
- Job must have done something that brought these difficulties upon himself
- Job's protest about God being unjust proves that he is being punished because of his own blasphemy

Job refutes his friends. He says he is innocent and therefore God is being unjust.

With this indictment God appears "in a whirlwind" and asks if Job had been present when He created the World and could Job perform the miracles that God performs?

With God's challenge, Job becomes silent.

Perhaps it's Job's silence that I most struggle with.

God's challenge as Creator, as Omnipotent, doesn't offer any satisfaction to Job's rightful challenge.

I feel that Job should have kept up his argument until God either conceded the injustice that does exist in the world, or God offers an acceptable explanation.

The Jewish faith promotes our "struggling" with God; this being the literal translation of the Hebrew word Yisrael.

The reality of our mortal existence is that God has given us a world where injustice exists.

Most of us know that we really are trying to pursue righteousness. We also know that the very essence of being mortal is that we will nevertheless confront personal injustice. When this occurs, we should shout out our objections to God.

And, after we shout out, we can then also take the time to recall the blessings that still can be found in our lives and our world.

And, then, we can choose how to move on in our lives.

Perhaps, we can recall the well-known midrash of the King who possessed a precious diamond:

Each night the King took the diamond out so as to admire its beauty and perfection.

But, one night, the King dropped his valuable possession, and was horrified to observe that a small crack had developed within the precious stone.

The King summoned all the experts that could be found who might be able to repair his diamond; all said it could not be done, except for one master craftsman.

He declared that he could fix the cracked jewel.

The King then declared that if the Jewel could be repaired he would provide an abundance of wealth; but if he failed, the craftsman would be executed for lying to his King.

The craftsman took the cracked diamond and spent only a few minutes on it with his tools, and then handed it back to the King.

The King became furious for the diamond was still obviously cracked, but the master craftsman told the King to turn over the precious gem.

The King then saw what he previously hadn't observed; at the very top of the diamond there was now carved into the gem flower petals.

The crack was no longer a flaw, but instead the stem of a beautiful flower.

The King admired his transformed precious jewel; there was now for him so much more to admire.

He paid a fortune to the master craftsman and enjoyed each night for the rest of his life his diamond's beauty and new perfection.

Job is a difficult book because life can be difficult.

There are no easy answers; no completely satisfactory justification for the challenges a righteous mortal must confront.

But, we can protest to God, and then also profess our love.

Our relationship with God is real because of the ability to possess these dialectic feelings.

And, after our protests and prayers, we can either choose to make the cracks within our lives flowers, or let the ugliness of brokenness remain unchanged.

People of faith will always choose the flowers.

Shabbat Shalom,

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