

# **Good Doctrine Makes Good Talmidim (Disciples) by Rabbi Baruch**

There is no question that over the past several decades the believing community has placed less significance on proper doctrine for those who identify themselves as followers of Messiah Yeshua. Within the evangelical world there has been a resurgence of Reformed Theology, which has been often times embraced without considering the implications that some of the tenets of Reformed Theology hold dear. Before dealing with a few of these, allow me to say that there are some aspects of Reformed Theology which are praise worthy. For example, a desire to place all the glory and honor on G-d for the work and the outcome of a salvation experience. However in doing so, Reformed theologians have misinterpreted several Scriptural verses and formed doctrines which are not supported by the Biblical texts. In this article and the ones which will follow, we will begin to take a critical look at some of the major tenets of Reformed Theology. The first doctrine that will be studied is the Sovereignty of G-d.

## **Sovereignty of G-d**

In one sense this doctrine sounds quite elementary; after all, who would not agree that G-d is sovereign. The issue is how to understand the implications and intent of the fact that G-d is sovereign. HaShem is L-rd and Master; He is the King over all and is absolutely omnipotent. Here again, there should not be any disagreement with this. The conflict arises when one interprets the sovereignty of G-d to mean that if something were to happen that is not the will of G-d, it would infringe upon G-d being sovereign. Hence for some, the sovereignty of G-d demands that all that takes place must be the will of G-d. Not all Reformed theologians agree with this extreme position, but those who do rely on either poorly interpreted passages or mistranslations which

further their positions. One such verse is Proverbs 16:33.

וְהוֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים לְפָנָיו כִּי לַיהוָה הַמִּשְׁפָּט וְלַיהוָה הַמִּשְׁפָּט

I have included the Hebrew to show how translators play with the text in order to support a preconceived position.

When examining some popular translations one finds translations such as,

“People cast lots to learn God’s will, but God himself determines the answer.” Good News Bible

“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD” King James Version

“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.” New International Version

“One can cast lots into one’s lap, but the decision comes from ADONAI.” Complete Jewish Bible

“We may throw the dice, but the LORD determines how they fall.” New Living Translation

“Into the centre is the lot cast, and from Jehovah [is] all its judgment!” Young’s Literal Translation

More or less all agree with one another, except the Young’s Literal Translation. What is the verse saying? If one relies on the most popular Bible translations, then the text is saying, “One can ponder long and hard about what to do, but ultimately everyone decides in accordance with what G-d determines.” Is this truly the intent of the Hebrew words in this verse? The answer is absolutely not. It is the Young’s Literal Translation that comes nearest to the intent of the actual verse. Let us take the verse apart one word at a time.

וְהוֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים לְפָנָיו כִּי לַיהוָה הַמִּשְׁפָּט וְלַיהוָה הַמִּשְׁפָּט

וְהוֹדוּ This word is actually two Hebrew words put together. The first is attached like a prefix to the primary

word. This first word means, "In the". The second word which is translated in several translations as "lap" is referring to that which is "in the midst of". The word is used in the Hebrew New Testament in Luke 16:22. There it is translated as the "bosom" of Abraham. In the Luke passage it is referring to the portion of Sheol where the faithful went. This is in contrast to Hades or Hell where the faithless went. Next the Proverbs passage has the word לִפְתוֹחַ. The word implies "casting" or "throwing". It is a verb, and that which was thrown or casted in this verse was -לִפְתוֹחַ לְלִפְתוֹחַ. The first word here is a non-translatable particle הַ whose only purpose is to point out the definite article. It is in the next phrase (actually two words) the reader learns that which was thrown or cast. Although most translations render this phrase as "the lot", it is not the same phrase which appears in the book of Esther in 3:7 (to cast lots) לְלִפְתוֹחַ לְלִפְתוֹחַ where both the noun and verb are different. Instead of using the word for "lot" לְלִפְתוֹחַ the word which means "destiny" or "ones future" appears in the Proverbs passage.

The first half of this verse is a Hebrew idiom which relates to one thinking within himself or pondering what he should do. In other words, the subject of Proverbs 16:33 is simply trying to make a decision. How most translations render this first half is not so problematic if one understands that "a person casting lots" was for the purpose of making a decision". It is the second half of this where the true intent of the verse is manifested.

The problem occurs in rightly understanding one word. This is the last word in the verse. Before dealing with it, let us deal with the four words that precede it. The next phrase in Hebrew is לְלִפְתוֹחַ. It is actually three Hebrew words, וּ meaning "and" or "but", מִ meaning "from" and finally the sacred name of the L-RD יְהוָה. Therefore, it must be translated, "but from the L-rd (HaShem) is". The next word is כָּל which simply means "all of" or "every".

Let us put it all together except for the final word of the verse. The verse would read: *"In the inner part he will*

*ponder the future, but from the L-rd is all of...*” The final Hebrew word (actually one word with a possessive pronoun attached to it) is מִשְׁפָּטָיו . The final letter ם is the possessive pronoun meaning “its”. The word מִשְׁפָּטָיו is not a difficult one to render, it means “judgment”. Hence the proper translation for Proverbs 16:33 is:

*“In the inner part he will ponder the future, but from the L-rd is all of its judgment.”*

The intent of the verse is to say this: when one is pondering what he should do and is trying to reach a decision on a matter, he should be aware that the L-rd will be the One Who will judge this decision. What a sobering thought. I am free to make the decision, but I need to always remember that the decision I make will be brought ultimately under G-d’s judgment. This being the case, a wise individual would want to utilize the Scripture and much prayer in arriving at the decision which G-d will judge to be appropriate.

Those translations which render this verse to mean, you can cast lots to make a decision, but in actuality the outcome will be from the L-rd, are allowing an extreme and unbiblical form of predestination to influence their rendering of the verse. Why do they do so?

They do so because their view of the sovereignty of G-d demands that everything that happens has to be G-d’s will. If something that happens is outside His will, according to them, G-d is not sovereign.

In the next article we will see how a false understanding of the Sovereignty of G-d perverts the understanding of the Biblical Doctrine of Election.

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