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The Objections to Isra'el's Past Paradox 9: 14-33

The objections to Isra'el's past paradox DIG: What would be "fair" for each of us to receive from God? On what basis does ADONAI relate to us. How does Paul respond to further questions about God's fairness in choosing some but not others? What is God's overriding purpose? How do the quotes from the TaNaKh in verses 25-29 relate to Paul's argument here? How could this help Jewish-Gentile relations?

REFLECT: How can we answer the objection that it isn't just for God to choose some and not others? How can you reconcile divine sovereignty and human responsibility in salvation? What is an antimony? Have you ever wondered why God chose you to be a part of His plan for the universe? What have you concluded?

ADONAI has mercy on whom He wants, and He hardens whom He wants; however, everyone who calls on the name of ADONAI will be saved.

Paul asks two rhetorical questions. First, is God unfair by choosing one person over another (9:14-18): That a loving **God** can **hate (Psalm 139:21-22)**, and that **His hate** can seem arbitrary, might tempt one to ask: **It is unjust for God to do this? Paul,** concentrating both on **God's** sovereignty and **His** justice, replies: **Heaven forbid** (Hebrew: *chalilah*, meaning *that's a contradiction, it makes no sense*) **(9:14)**. **He** is **the Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just. A trustworthy God who does no wrong, He is righteous and straight (Deuteronomy 32:4).**

*Dear Holy Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** have a huge loving heart and are willing to love everyone who turns from his selfish living to love **You** as **Savior** and **Lord**. **For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation (Romans 10:9-10).** Thank **You** that entrance into **Your***

holy heaven does not depend on a person's color of skin, whether they are male or female, nor is young or old a criteria for entrance. ***There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female – for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua (Galatians 3:28****).*

You *have said that what is important is the color of the heart which must be washed clean by* ***Yeshua's*** *blood.* ***"Wash and make yourselves clean. Put away the evil of your deeds from before My eyes. Cease to do evil." . . . "Come now, let us reason together," says ADONAI. "Though your sins be like scarlet, they will be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they will become like wool (Isaiah 1:16*** *and* ***18).*** *Praise* ***You*** *that* ***Your love*** *and* ***Your hate*** *are not arbitrary feelings. They are based on people's heart attitude.* ***You hate evil*** *and all who* ***love You*** *are to also* ***hate evil. You who love ADONAI, hate evil (Psalms 97:10)!*** *The holiness of* ***Your*** *character cannot tolerate any* ***sin****. When someone joins themselves to partner with* ***sin*** *by letting* ***sin*** *rule their lives, they are joining themselves to what* ***You hate*** *and thereby blocking the* ***love You*** *desire to shower on them.*

How gracious and merciful ***You*** *are to forgive* ***sins*** *when someone has a holy fear of* ***You*** *and repents of their* ***sin****.* ***For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy for those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us (Psalms 103:11-12).*** *Please help me to* ***see if*** *there is any* ***sinful*** *way in me as David also prayed:* ***Search me, O God, and know my heart. Examine me, and know my anxious thoughts, and see if there be any offensive way within me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalms 139:11-12).*** *May you also open the eyes of those in my family and friends who do not take* ***sin*** *seriously. Please show them that to come to live in* ***Your*** *holy heaven and to have* ***You*** *live within them* ***(John 14:16*** *and* ***23)****, they must desire to die to* ***sin****.* ***He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we, removed from sins, might live for righteousness. "By His wounds you were healed" (First Peter 2:24).*** *They cannot live in* ***sin*** *any longer.* ***Do you not know that to whatever you yield yourselves as slaves for obedience, you are slaves to what you obey – whether to sin resulting in death, or to obedience resulting in righteousness (Romans 6:16)?*** *I* ***love*** *you and delight in pleasing/obeying* ***You****. Praise* ***You*** *for giving* ***Yeshua's righteousness*** *to all who* ***love You (Second Corinthians 5:21). You*** *are Awesome! In* ***Yeshua's*** *holy name and power of* ***His*** *resurrection. Amen*

In quoting **Exodus 33:19**, **Paul** brings into focus **God's mercy** along with **His** sovereignty and justice. **For to Moshe, he** says: **I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will pity whom I pity.** Though **YHVH** is within **His** rights to **hate** whom **He** will, so that standing with **Him doesn't depend on human desires or efforts,** nevertheless, **God** does have **mercy** and show **pity (9:15-16).**

Non-Messianic Judaism understands God's attribute of mercy as being even greater than His attribute of justice. Although it seems like a very beautiful idea, it can lead to the false hope that Ha'Shem, in His mercy, will somehow overlook the just punishment for sins. It is easy to see why such a hope is sought – people who don't have Yeshua to satisfy God's demand for justice by being the atonement for their sins, know that they need God's mercy desperately. The wish, then, is hope that ADONAI is more merciful than judgmental.

Messianic Judaism, however, does not have to elevate **mercy** over **justice** because **Yeshua Messiah** combines in **Himself God's** perfect **justice** with **His** perfect **mercy**, and thus demonstrates how **they** dovetail together **(3:25-26)**. This is why **Paul** can quote **Exodus 33:19** in answer to the question about **YHVH's justice,** thereby placing **God's mercy** alongside **His justice** and not above it.

For the TaNaKh says to Pharaoh, "It is for this very reason that I raised you up, so that in connection with you I might demonstrate my power, so that My Name might be known throughout the world" (Exodus 9:16). Paul see's history repeating itself. **Isra'el's** rejection of **Yeshua**, like **Pharaoh's** rejection of **Moshe**, provides the circumstances for **God** to **demonstrate His power** through an act of deliverance from the "Egypt" and "bondage" of sin and death. Further, knowledge of this deliverance continues to be publicized: just as **the Exodus** became known through the TaNaKh and the annual reading of *the Haggadah* at Pesach, so **Messiah's** atoning death and resurrection are being made known through evangelism (and now, after **Paul's** day, through the B'rit Chadashah). All this is a direct result of **Isra'el's** apostasy (a point reiterated in **11:11-12, 15, 19, 25, 30-32**) – for **Isra'el's** self-will, like **Pharaoh's**, serves **God's merciful** ends.[250]

So then, in conclusion, **ADONAI has mercy on whom he wants,** as seen in **Moshe, and He hardens whom He wants,** as seen in **Pharaoh (9:17-18). Paul's** point is that no one should complain that **God's** elective purposes are unjust. Election is consistent with **God's** work in history, with **His** sovereignty, and

with the teaching of the TaNaKh. Election may seem unjust from a limited, human perspective, but when we have questions about the **justice** of **Ha'Shem**, we must remember that **He** is holy, righteous, and **just**. **He** will do nothing contrary to **His** basic attributes.[251]

Secondly, if God hardens hearts, how can He hold people accountable if they don't have a choice (9:19-21): That is a good question, but **Paul** doesn't answer it here, **he** deals with the attitude of one who would ask such a question.

The illustration: Like a good rabbi, **Paul** answers this question with an illustration that says, "You have no right to ask this kind of a question!" **But you will say to me, "Then why does he still find fault with us? After all, who resists his will?" Who are you, a mere human being, to talk back to God?** Lest one think **Paul** is being arrogant, **he** lets **God Himself** be **the One** whom any objection must be made by quoting **Isaiah, "Will what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you shape me this way' (Isaiah 29:16** and **45:9)."** And by using the image of **the potter** and **the clay** from **Jeremiah 18:6, "Or has the potter no right to make from a given lump of clay this pot for honorable use and that one for dishonorable (9:19-21)?** The point of this illustration is to put mankind in a proper relationship with **the Creator**. **The potter** has sovereignty over **the clay**, so **God** is sovereign over **His** creation.

Since **ADONAI** knows what's best for you, you should gratefully accept the way **He** has fashioned you. Your **shape** was sovereignly determined by **God** for **His** purpose, so you shouldn't resent it or reject it. Instead of trying to reshape yourself to be like someone else, you should celebrate the **shape the LORD** has given only you. **Christ has given each of us special abilities – whatever He wants us to have out of His rich storehouse of gifts (Ephesians 4:7 LB).**

Part of accepting your **shape** is recognizing your limitations. Nobody is good at everything, and no one is called to be everything. We all have defined roles. **Paul** understood that **his** calling was not to accomplish everything or please everyone but to focus only on the particular ministry **God** had **shaped him** for **(Galatians 2:7-8)**. **He** said: **Our goal is to stay within the boundaries of God's plan for us (2 Corinthians 10:13 NLT).**

The word **boundaries** refers to the fact that **ADONAI** assigns each of us a field, or sphere of service, along with our spiritual gift(s) (**to see link click Dc – Responding to the Mercies of ADONAI**). Your **shape** determines your giftedness. When we try to overextend our ministry reach beyond what **God shaped** us for, we experience stress and failure. Just as each runner in a race is given a different lane to run in, we must individually **run with patience the particular race that God has set before us (Hebrews 12:1 LB).** Don't be envious of the runner in the lane next to you; just focus on finishing **your** race.[252]

However, against **Paul's** refusal to budge on the matter of **God's** sovereignty, must be placed **his** insistence that: **Everyone who calls on the name of ADONAI will be saved (10:13).** This is an antimony, meaning *two things that seem to be mutually exclusive, but both are true.* **Paul** does not let go of either side of the apparent paradox of our predestination verses or freedom to choose. Rather, **he** is action orientated, steering us away from idle and destructive questioning of **God's** governance, toward the practical solution, which is coming humbly to **YHVH** through **Yeshua Messiah** – this path is closed to no one. **Rashi notes that Pharaoh was given five chances to repent (in connection with the first five plagues) but hardened his own heart, and only after that did God confirm Pharaoh's decision by hardening his heart (Exodus 7:3). God** does not **harden** the heart of anyone but a confirmed rebel **(John 12:39)**; **He** wants all to turn from sin to **Him (2 Peter 3:9)**.[253]

The application (9:22-23): Paul uses the actions of **the potter** to provide a direct application for **God's** dealing with **people**: there are **objects of His wrath** and **objects of His mercy. Paul** declares: **What if God, although choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath – prepared** (Greek: *katartizo*) **for destruction? What if He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared** (Greek: *proetoimazo*) **in advance for glory (9:22-23 NIV)?** The Bible clearly teaches that **YHVH** is ultimately behind every action **(Ephesians 1:11)**. But while **the LORD** stands behind the destiny of both **those prepared for**

His mercy and **those prepared for destruction**, **He** may not do so in exactly the same way. It is significant that when **Paul** used the verb *katartizo* to speak of **those prepared for destruction** in **verse 22, he** does not specifically state **God** as the subject, as **he** does when **he** speaks of those **prepared for mercy** in **verse 23.** The difference is subtle but significant. While **ADONAI** is sovereign over the destinies of both **the saved** and **the lost**, **He** is not behind the destiny of **the lost** in the same way as **He** is **the saved**. The problem with "double predestination" is that it gives the idea that the two predestinations are of equal character, when they are not. No one is predestined to hell. The crucial difference is supported in **Romans 6:23**, where **eternal death** is considered as **what one earns**, while **eternal life** is considered as a **free gift**.[254]

The principle (9:24): Up to this point, **Paul** had been speaking conditionally and objectively but now **he** became more direct – **to us** – because **he** and **his** readers were some of **the objects of mercy** sovereignly **chosen** by **ADONAI**. **That is, to us, whom He called not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles (9:24)?**

The conclusion (9:25-33): To back up **his** claim, **Paul** quotes two verses from **Hosea**. **As indeed God says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call my people; her who was not loved I will call loved; and in the very place where they were told, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called sons of the living God" (Romans 9:25** and **26; Hosea 2:23b** and **1:10b). Paul** uses these verses from **Hosea** as a midrash, or application. **Hosea** was not referring to **Gentiles**, but to **Isra'el herself**. **He** meant that one day **Isra'el** (who was in rebellion when **he** wrote) would be called **God's people**. **Paul's** meaning neither conflicts with what **Hosea** wrote, nor has any necessary inference from it. **His** meaning is that **God's people** now includes believing **Gentiles**.[255] How this has come about, and for what purpose, is examined further in **9:30-10:4** and **11:17-32**, as well as the book of **Ephesians**.

Paul now quotes **Hosea 1:10a**, which includes **God's** promise to **Abraham (Genesis 22:17)** and **Jacob (Genesis 32:17)**. **But, Isaiah, referring to Isra'el, cries out, "Even if the number of people in Isra'el is as large as the number of grains of sand by the sea." The rabbis teach that "All Isra'el has a share in the world to come" (Tractate Sanhedrin 10:1).** However, turning on this part of **Hosea's** prophecy, that one day **Isra'el** would be called **God's people (Hosea 2:23b)**, **Paul** quotes **Isaiah** to show that its fulfillment doesn't imply the salvation of every single **Jew**, for, in reality, **"only a remnant**

will be saved." For ADONAI will fulfill His word on the earth with certainty and without delay" (Romans 9:27-28; Isaiah 10:22-23).[256]

Also, as Isaiah said nine chapters **earlier, "If ADONAI-Tzva'ot had not left us a seed, the remnant of Isra'el, we would have become like Sodom, we would have resembled Gomorrah" (Romans 9:29; Isaiah 1:9).** It is through **the** believing **remnant of Isra'el** that **YHVH** will fulfill **His** desires, and not through **the** entire **nation**. This has been true all throughout **Jewish** history. **So rather than believing the rabbis who say the believing remnant (Messianic Jews) is destroying the people of Isra'el,** on the contrary, we need to understand that **the** believing **remnant** is preserving **the nation,** and **the people,** of **Isra'el**.[257] Indeed, **YHVH** must be thanked for showing enough **mercy** to preserve **a seed**, or **a remnant** of **Messianic Jews** who numbered in the tens of thousands early in the Messianic Community: **You see, brother, how many tens-of-thousands** (or a minimum of twenty-thousand **Jewish believers** in **Jerusalem** alone not counting the rest of the country) **there are among the Jewish people who have believed – and they are zealous for the Torah. They** saw no contradiction in **their** faith in **Yeshua** and **their zealousness for the Torah (Acts 21:20b)**.

So, what are we to say? What are we to conclude? **This** is the monumental paradox**: that Gentiles, even though they were not striving for righteousness, have obtained righteousness; but it is a righteousness grounded in trusting! However, Isra'el, even though they kept pursuing a Torah that offers righteousness, did not reach what the Torah offers.** These people have the right goal, but have pursued it in the wrong way. **Why trusting? Because they did not pursue righteousness as being grounded in trusting but as if it were grounded in doing legalistic works (9:30-32a).** Many in **Isra'el** missed **the Messiah** because they didn't grasp that the first requirement of **the Torah** is **trusting ADONAI**, not good **works**.[258]

Many **Jews** and some **Gentiles** claim **to "trust in God,"** but don't define **"God"** as **the One** who sent **His Son Yeshua** to atone for their sins by **His** death. Thus, they trust in a god of their own imaginations instead of **the God** who exists. The **trust** of which **Paul** speaks is always in **the God** who was, is, and will always be, **the God** of the Bible, and **the God** who **created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1). Trust** is never in a god that one shapes for oneself.[259]

This monumental paradox cries out for an explanation, and here, **Paul** gives it to

us: **They stumbled over the stone that makes people stumble (9:32b). The stone that makes people stumble** was proclaimed by **Isaiah** to be **Immanuel,** or **God with us (Isaiah 7:14, 8:8** and **10),** or **Yeshua Messiah. The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call Him Immanuel (Matthew 1:23). As the TaNaKh puts it, "Look, I am laying in Tziyon a stone that will make people stumble, a Rock that will trip them up. But he who rests his trust on [that Rock] will not be humiliated" (Romans 9:33; Isaiah 28:16).**

Luke quotes **Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders rejected has become the Chief Cornerstone,** and then **he** adds, **"Whoever falls on that Stone will be broken in pieces; but if it falls on him, he will be crushed to powder (Luke 20:17b-18). Yeshua** is a **stumbling stone** to **the Jews** who pursue a relationship with **ADONAI** by **works**, rather than by **faith (Genesis 49:24; Exodus 17:6; First Corinthians 1:23** and **10:4; First Peter 2:6-8).**[260]