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God Disciplines His Children

12: 4-11

God disciplines His children DIG: What does the struggle against sin demonstrate about a person's relationship with God? How should a person respond to Ha'Shem when disciplined? What are the three specific purposes of Ha'Shem's discipline? How does God's discipline differ from human discipline? What benefits does discipline bring?

REFLECT: From the demanding coach in a grueling practice to the pruning back of a rose bush in a garden, it's discipline that ultimately causes growth. In what areas of your life do you sense that Ha'Shem has been or is disciplining (chastening) you? What was your reaction to God's discipline? Did you rebel? Pout? How long did it take you to come around to His way of thinking? Do you think God disciplines you out of anger, or out of love? How can you help others in this regard? What's the hardest thing you're going through in your life right now? How is God using it?

All the **Jews** to whom the letter to the **Hebrews** was written were experiencing persecution because of their break with Judaism. It was coming from **their** Jewish friends and relatives, who resented **their** rebellion against the religious customs and traditions in which **they** had held since childhood (**10:32-33**). But none of **them** suffered what **Yeshua** had suffered. None of them had given up **their** life for the gospel. **In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood (12:4)**. Nor had any of **them** lived an absolutely sinless life as **Messiah** had done, living in perfect obedience to **the Father**, and therefore, deserving no punishment at all. On the contrary, some of **their** suffering was deserved and was intended for **their** spiritual **discipline** and growth.

ADONAI uses hardship and affliction as a means of **discipline**, a means of training **His children**, of helping **them** mature in their spiritual lives. As John MacArthur relates in his commentary on **Hebrews**, **God** has **three specific purposes** for **His discipline**: **punishment**, **prevention**, and **education**. We must realize that there is a great difference between **God's discipline** and **His** judgmental punishment. As

believers we often have to suffer painful consequences for our **sins**, but we will never experience **God's** judgment for them. This punishment **Messiah** took completely on **Himself** in the crucifixion, and **God** does not exact double payment for any **sin**. Though we deserve **God's** wrath because of our **sin**, we will never have to face it, because **Jesus** endured it for us. Neither **God's** love nor **His** justice would allow **Him** to require payment for what **His Son** has already paid in full. In **discipline**, **God** is not a judge but a father. **Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).**³⁶⁵

Punishment: We experience some of **God's** discipline as a result of our **sin**, but the punishment is corrective, not judgmental. It is punishment, without a doubt, but not the kind that unbelievers receive. Because of his lust for Bathsheba and the resulting adultery and murder of her husband, **Ha'Shem** severely punished David. Most of the kings of that time did this sort of thing, or even worse, but that didn't give David license to **sin**. So **YHVH disciplined** David, not out of wrath, but out of love. For the rest of his life he suffered anguish that otherwise he never would have experienced (**Second Samuel 12:10**). David didn't lose his salvation, but he lost his infant son and had countless heartaches from his other sons. He was even forbidden to build the Temple because of the war that resulted between himself and Absalom. Yet David was a better man because of **God's discipline**. **ADONAI** had a purpose in the **discipline** – to draw **His** servant closer to **Himself (Psalm 51)** and to help him grow and mature.

The church at Corinth was especially immature and worldly. Among other things, many believers were abusing **the Lord's Table**. **They** were using it as an excuse for partying and drunkenness. Paul rebuked **them** strongly and told **them** plainly that **they** were suffering **weakness, sickness**, and even **death** because of **their sinfulness**. They were **being disciplined so that [they would] not be condemned with the world (First Cor 11:30-32)**.

When we **discipline** our **children**, even for something serious, we do not put **them** out of our family. We **discipline them** to correct **their** behavior, not to disown them. Neither does **ADONAI** put us out of **His** family when **He disciplines** us, **His children**. It is often hard for us to see the good in **God's discipline** as it is for our **children** to see the good in our **disciplining** them. But we know that because **He** is our loving heavenly **Father**, **He** will not do anything to harm us. **The LORD** says that when **His children abandon My Torah and fail to live by My rulings, if they profane My regulations and doesn't obey My mitzvot, I will punish their disobedience with the rod and their guilt (Psalm 89:30-32 CJB)**. But on

the other side of **His** promise of punishment there is the promise of **faithfulness** to **His covenant**. **But I won't withdraw My grace from My children or be false to My faithfulness. I will not profane My covenant or change what My lips have spoken (Psalm 89:33-34 CJB)**. When **the LORD** punishes, **He** is not rejecting but correcting.

Prevention: Sometimes **Ha'Shem disciplines** us in order to prevent **sin**. Just as we put restrictions and limitations on our children to protect them from harm, so **God** does with us. What seems to us to be a horrible inconvenience or hardship may be **ADONAI's** loving hand of protection. Even Rabbi Sha'ul had his **thorn in the flesh** for the specific purpose of keeping him from exalting himself (**Second Corinthians 12:7**). Our sickness or many other problems may be **God's** way of keeping us from something much worse.

Education: Besides punishing and preventing, **Ha'Shem's discipline** also educates us for better service and better living. It will teach us, if we will listen to what **He** is saying through it. First of all, **discipline** can help us better know **YHVH's** power and sufficiency. Sometimes **God** can get our attention better through suffering than **He** can through blessing. Prosperity has a way of making us feel self-sufficient and independent, while problems make us more aware of our need for **the Lord**. We need **Him** every bit as much when things are going well as when they are not, but often we don't feel our need for **Him** until we reach the end of our rope.

By **the LORD's** own admission, **Job** was **blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil (Job 1:1)**. However, **God** allowed **him** to suffer pain, loss, grief, sickness and ridicule from **his** so-called "friends." Yet through **his** great and seemingly unending suffering, **Job** was given a glorious view of **ADONAI**. **He** experienced **His** holy majesty, **His** deliverance, **His** care, **His** power, **His** counsel, **His** defense – all through **His discipline**. **Job** also learned a lesson about **himself** – **his** wisdom is not **God's** wisdom. **He** learned to trust **God** for who **He** is, not for what **he himself** could see and comprehend. When we see **God** better – we see ourselves better.

Only our faith can bring us to appreciate **discipline**, whatever the kind. We are able to see behind the scenes in **Job's** ordeal because the Bible provides us with a clear picture of the workings of both **the Adversary** and **ADONAI**. But **Job** had no knowledge of this. As far as we can tell, **Job** went to **his** grave not knowing exactly why **he** had to suffer as **he** did. But when he finally acknowledged **the LORD's**

sovereign omnipotence and goodness in it all, it was by faith. **He** came to see **God** more clearly (**Job 42:5**), but he was not shown the whys and the wherefores of **his** problems more clearly. When we understand and trust **Ha'Shem** more deeply, we are content with whatever limited knowledge **He** gives us.³⁶⁶

And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, “My child, don’t make light of the LORD’s discipline, and don’t give up when He corrects you. For the LORD disciplines those He loves, and He punishes each one He accepts as His child” (Hebrews 12:5-6 NLT quoting Proverbs 3:11-12). The author’s basic point is that the purpose of suffering is to bring about the maturity of **ADONAI’s children**. In these two verses he talks about **forgetfulness**. The word **forgotten** (Greek: *eklelethe*) means *to completely forget, or to remove completely from one’s mind*. Some of those Jews had **completely forgotten** many things about the TaNaKh. They had **forgotten** that **God** is never pleased by anything apart from faith (**11:6**), and they had **forgotten** the righteous of the TaNaKh who had suffered greatly for their faith. Now they are reminded that they had also **forgotten** the teaching from **Proverbs 3:11-12** about **God’s discipline**.

They needed to learn two lessons from **Proverbs 3:11-12**. First, they must not regard this **discipline lightly** to the point of **forgetting it** and not allowing the **discipline** to teach them what they need to learn. And secondly, they must not **give up** when they are being **corrected** because **it** is for their own good. They were being **conformed to the image of God’s Son (Romans 8:29)**.³⁶⁷ Our reactions cannot be right if our view of what is happening to us is not right. If we focus on the correction and not on our relationship with **ADONAI**, we can miss the lesson of what **He** wants to teach us. When we do that, and **God’s discipline** is not allowed to accomplish **His** purpose in us, the Adversary is the victor. **YHVH’s** purpose is lost, and our blessing is lost.

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as His son (12:7a). Isra’el collectively is **God’s son (Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1; Matthew 2:15; Romans 9:4)**; but more important than that, each believer, Jewish or Gentile, is individually **God’s child**, by virtue of being united with **God’s one and only Son, Yeshua the Messiah (Romans 8:14-19, 29; Galatians 4:1-7; Revelation 21:7)**.³⁶⁸ We must remember that this letter is written to a Messianic community made up of the saved and the unsaved (**to see link click Ag - The Audience of the book of Hebrews**). Both groups were the recipients of the persecution,

because both groups had left the Temple and its Levitical sacrifices. But only those who would remain under **the hardship of God's discipline** would prove themselves to be the true **children of God**. Those that left would prove that they were never save to begin with.³⁶⁹ **The Ruach ha-Kodesh says: They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us (First John 2:19).**

In the TaNaKh, **Isra'el** was taught to regard any discipline by **YHVH** such as drought and famine, or enemy attack, was a sign of **His** displeasure with **His** people because of their **sins**. As a result, those Hebrews in the first-century Messianic Community would naturally regard this persecution in the same light. The writer hastens to assure them that instead of this **discipline** being an indication that they were not right with **God**, it was proof of their **sonship, for what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined - and everyone undergoes discipline - then you are not true sons and daughters at all (12:7b-8)**. A truly loving father is totally committed to helping his children conform to the highest standards. How much more is our heavenly **Father** committed to our conforming to **His** standards, and to inflicting the discipline to make such conformity a reality. **Under Jewish law, to be mamzer (to be illegitimate) meant three things: no right of inheritance; no right to marry into Jewish society; and no right to be buried in a Jewish cemetery.**³⁷⁰ **ADONAI**, as a loving **Father**, wants the best for **His** children, which includes blessing them with the inheritance of **His** peace and joy and an eternal home in heaven with him forever. When **Ha'Shem's** children accept and learn from **His discipline**, it opens the door for **God's** blessings on them.

Moreover, we have all had human fathers who discipline us and we respected them for it. The word **moreover** here introduces a shift in the teaching on **discipline**. Up to this point the persecution of the Messianic community had been explained by **ADONAI's fatherly** relation to them. Now the emphatic point is that their **fathers**, with whom **God** is compared, were only earthly **human fathers. How much more should we submit to our spiritual Father and live (12:9)!** The comparison is between the respect paid to a fallible, human parent, which grows out of a natural relation, and the complete submission to our divine **spiritual Father**. Therefore our **spiritual Father** is compared to our **father of the flesh. Their** relation to us is limited; **His** is universal. **They** are related to us in our dying **flesh; He** is **the Creator** of our eternal being. The words **and live** are

not limited, however, only to our eternal existence, but they also refer to this present life. The idea is to *have true life*.

A comparison is now made between the character and results of **the earthly father's discipline** and that of our heavenly **Father**. Two things point to the imperfection of our **earthly fathers**. First, **they disciplined us for a little while as they thought best (12:10a)**. But **their discipline** must stop when adulthood is reached, whether or not **it** has been effective or not. And secondly, **human fathers** are shortsighted and fallible. **They** are have a sin nature and are sometimes moved by passion rather than sound judgment, with the result being that **their discipline** may have hindered rather than promoted *true life*.³⁷¹



But because **YHVH** is perfect, **His discipline** is always perfect. **He disciplines us** out of love, not anger, and for **our good, in order that we may share in His holiness (12:10b)**. There is only one kind of **holiness . . . God's holiness**. **He** is both the source and the measure of all **holiness** - which is separation from **sin**. **ADONAI's** greatest desire for **His children** is to **share His holiness** with us, so that we **may be filled up to all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19 NASB)**. The only way we can be separated from **sin**, and **be filled up** with **His holiness** is to be saved. So the writer pleads with the unbelievers in the Messianic community who were thinking about going back to the Temple and the Levitical sacrifices, to instead step over the line from knowledge to faith and be saved. The only path to **holiness** is through **Yeshuah Messiah**.

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. **Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it (12:11)**. The spiritual exercise consisted on the struggles of the soul, the battle between the determination to go back to the Temple sacrifices, and thus escape the persecutions, or to go on to faith in **the High Priest** of the B'rit Chadashah in spite of them.



Oh, how **God** wants you to hear **His** music. **He** has a rhythm that will race your heart and lyrics that will stir your tears. You want to journey to the stars? He can take you there. You want to lie down in peace? **His** music can soothe your soul. But first, **He's** got to get rid of that rap (just an example). And see **God** begins tossing our your CD's. A friend turns away. The job goes bad. Your spouse doesn't understand. The church is dull. One by one **God** removes the all the options until all you have left is **Him**. Would He do that? Absolutely. If **He** must silence every voice, **He** will. **He** wants you to hear his music.³⁷²