



Love's Faithful Afflictions

Emunah innatani . . .

יָדַעְתִּי יְהוָה כִּי־צָדֵק מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ וְאֱמוּנָה עָנִיתָנִי:

*I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right,
and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. (Psalm 119:75)*

WE TEND TO WANT an easy time of it in this life, and some Christians even go so far as to think that ease in this world is a sign of God’s favor. And yet it’s the most frightful of punishments to live seamlessly (and unconsciously) *with* the world, oblivious to the radical call of Jesus to “take up the cross” and join him in his mission of suffering (Col. 1:24; Phil. 3:10). Indeed, “the prosperity of fools shall destroy them” (Prov 1:32), since such is often gained only through bargaining with the devil – at the terrible price of neglecting the life of spirit (Matt. 16:26).



God uses affliction to prompt us to *teshuvah* – repentance – since He knows that our tendency is to become attached to this world and its deadening comforts. God's afflictions are also tokens that He cares enough to discipline us as His children (Prov. 3:12).

Many of us are slow to learn that God’s judgments are indeed perfectly righteous and true. The confession, “I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right,” is therefore the first step to understanding the deeper purposes of affliction. When we are given the grace to confess that God defines the truth for our lives, we begin to understand that afflictions and trials are sovereignly given to us so that we can abide in Him without constraint. As Soren Kierkegaard once wrote, “God’s education consists in leading one to being able to do freely what at first one had to be compelled to do.”

Disordered love comes from setting the heart’s affections on the transitory, the ephemeral, and the unabiding; but God has set eternity within our hearts (Eccl. 3:11), and if we experience holy discontent we are considered blessed indeed (Matt. 5:3).



“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov. 27:6). Our LORD is a lover (*ohev*) who, though He wound us, “sticks closer than a brother” - וַיֵּשׁ אֹהֵב רֵבֵק מֵאָח - *yeish ohev daveik meiach* (Prov. 18:24). His afflictions are always purposive and ultimately healing.



The aim of affliction is to ground us in the truth, namely, that we are not God, and that we must surrender ourselves to God's care, even in the wastelands and desperate moments of our lives. When we cling to this world, this life, and seek to make it of value apart from Him, we are living in a state of delusion and blindness. When we are humbled by God's loving affliction, we are set free from the futility of seeking to control the world, and are thereby made free indeed.

For those whom God has chosen, the fires of affliction are purifying fires, refining fires, intended to separate the precious from the dross. We glorify God in the fire when we can say, "Here I am, LORD, do with me as it seems good in thy sight, for I know I shall not have one stroke but thou will give me grace to bear under it."

Transliteration:

יָדַעְתִּי	יְהוָה	כִּי-	צַדִּיק	מִשְׁפָּטֶיךָ	וְאֱמוּנָה	עָנִיתָ	נִי
(3) (2) (1)	(1)	(1)	(3) (2) (1)	(4) (3) (2) (1)	(4) (3) (2) (1)	(4) (3) (2) (1)	(4) (3) (2) (1)
ya-da'ti	Adonai	ki-tze-dek	mish-pa-tey-kha	ve'e-mu-nah	'in-ni-ta-ni		
I know	LORD	that righteous (are)	Your judgments	and (in) faithfulness	you afflicted me		

Yada 'ti Adonai ki-tzedek mishpateykha, ve'emunah 'innitani.