

## Does God Really Put Diseases on Us?

A Response to Chaim Bentorah's Online Article, "Word Study – Putting on Diseases"

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*And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, **I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee.** (Exodus 15:26)*

Chaim Bentorah, according to the background information made available on his web page, studied Hebrew as an undergraduate and under the tutelage of a Jewish rabbi. Based on his knowledge he has challenged the Word-Faith understanding of Exodus 15:26 in which God says, "I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians."

Word-Faith proponents often understand this passage as being *permissive* but Mr. Bentorah disputes this based on his knowledge of the Hebrew language. You will find his thesis at the following link:

<http://www.chaimbentorah.com/2014/07/word-study-putting-diseases/?print=pdf> (Last accessed: July 16, 2016)

However, allow me to quote a portion of this author's article:

Faith healers and the Word Faith movement have tried many ways to get around this verse which clearly tells us that God puts diseases upon people. They really hate this verse and will argue quite emotionally that it is not saying with it appears. Their usual explanation of this passage is that God did not say that He would put none of these diseases upon us but that the Hebrew really said: "I will not permit these diseases to come up you." I have studied this passage every which way but Sunday in the Hebrew and as much as I hate to admit it, there is no getting around that Hebrew word, 'asim which means to put or set. **I cannot twist this around to say that he would only permit or allow these diseases to come upon us. Clearly in the Hebrew He is putting them on us** if we do not harken to the will and voice of God. (Emphasis are mine)

I have addressed Exodus 15:26 in detail in my book, "[Does God Send Sickness](#)" as well as in a future publication, "*Healer or Inflictor: Sickness and Disease in light of the Warfare between Christ and Satan*". Nonetheless, I feel compelled to deal with it briefly in this blog in response to Mr. Bentorah's article. I commend Mr. Bentorah for his desire to be true to the text as it is stated in the original Hebrew. I do not question his love for God or for His holy Word. On the contrary, I believe Mr. Bentorah wants people to understand God's truth correctly.

That being said, I believe that if Mr. Bentorah unintentionally maligns God's character by presenting Him as the inflictor of sickness and disease. Mr. Bentorah relies primarily on his technical knowledge of Hebrew to understand this passage rather than interpreting it in the light of the full revelation of Scripture. The full revelation of Scripture is more important to interpreting this passage than technical knowledge of Hebrew because the *full revelation reveals the complete truth about God's character* and His relationship to sickness and disease.

While I do not question this man's knowledge, background, or proficiency in the Hebrew language, I truly believe that Mr. Bentorah does not understand the method of "interpreting Scripture with Scripture." If Mr. Bentorah does understand this important method of Bible interpretation then it is evident that he does not apply it consistently. Proficiency in the original languages of the Bible does not necessarily make one an expert on interpreting the Bible. The Bible is a *spiritual* book and must be *spiritually discerned* (1 Cor. 2:14).

The late R. A. Torrey, a great scholar himself, wrote, "The person who has no technical knowledge of Greek and Hebrew but has spiritual discernment is a far more competent critic of the Bible than the one who has a rare, technical knowledge of Greek and Hebrew but no spiritual discernment."<sup>1</sup> An intellectual knowledge of Bible languages does not necessarily equate to spiritual knowledge. After all, we have men who are proficient in Bible languages who tell us that God no longer works miracles today and that He predestines all events--the good and the bad. I reject their premise despite how intellectually superior they are to me.

Let me provide a Biblical example to illustrate my point. In 2 Samuel 24:1 we read, "*And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.*" I do not possess the knowledge of Hebrew that Mr. Bentorah does but I did look up this passage in the Interlinear Hebrew Old Testament. None of the Hebrew words used in this passage would lead me to believe that it can be interpreted permissively. However, should I conclude from this passage that God is a seducer and tempter? That is what the word "moved" means in the Hebrew.

However, the New Testament, the document by which all Old Testament teaching is to be interpreted by, disputes that idea about God. James said, "*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*" (James 1:13). Since James is in direct contrast to 1 Samuel then we can only conclude one of two things:

- a) The Bible *contradicts* itself or
- b) The Bible *interprets* itself

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<sup>1</sup> Torrey, R.A. **How To Study The Bible** (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1985), p. 9

Mr. Bentorah and I (as well as the Word-Faith teachers) believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God so option a) is out of the question. Therefore we can only resort to option b). The beautiful thing about option b) is that it is easily proven in the case of 2 Samuel 24:1. Several centuries after 2 Samuel 24:1 God inspired another Biblical writer to give us the correct interpretation of 1 Samuel 24:1: “*And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel*” (1 Chron. 21:1). Here we see that God is not a seducer or tempter. This is the work of Satan.

This begs the question as to why did the writer of 1 Samuel 24:1 say that God seduced David to sin by numbering Israel? Many scholars explain that, “...in the Hebrew idiom God is often said to do what he merely permits to be done.”<sup>2</sup> I go into much more detail about this truth in my book, [“What God is Said to Do is that Which He Only Permits”](#). I find it strange that Mr. Bentorah did not learn this truth from the schools he attended or the Rabbis he consulted.

This truth should be equally applied to Exodus 15:26. God is no more the distributor of sickness than He is of sin. As one author wrote well over a century ago:

We are apt to say, when any one is afflicted, diseased, distressed, tormented, or dead, that the Lord has done it, the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Now, this is right to say and to believe, if we speak of it, and believe, respecting it, according to truth, and a right understanding of the subject. With this view, a right understanding of the matter, we ask the following questions:—Is there sin in existence? It is answered yes. Was God the cause of it? It is answered *no*; for if he *was*, then sin is not sin, as God can do no sin, nor be its cause, direct nor indirect, immediate or remote. What then *was* the first cause of sin? It is answered, Satan or the devil was its cause, and originated the first sin.... But as held by others, and as established by the Scriptures, it is plain that the devil was the author of sin. If the devil then, is the originator of sin, then is not the devil the true cause of the diseases and death of the human race as it was that evil being who misled our first mother to sin, on which account death entered into the world and has passed upon all men, because that all have sinned in our first head, Adam and Eve.<sup>3</sup>

The New Testament abounds with the teaching that sickness is directly inflicted by Satan and demonic forces (Matt. 4:24; 12:22-28; Mark 9:25; Luke 7:21-22; 8:1-2; 9:42; 13:11-16; Acts 10:38; 19:11-12; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Heb. 2:14). Jesus, who we are told is exactly like the Father in every respect, never once inflicted anyone with sickness (John 5:19, 30; 10:30; 14:7-11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 1:1-2). On the contrary, He went about doing nothing but healing people who had been inflicted by Satan.

In light of this, how do we understand the Exodus 15:26 phrase, “*I will **put** none of these diseases upon thee, which I have **brought** upon the Egyptians*”? Job 42:11 provides the answer:

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<sup>2</sup> Holden, George **The Christian Expositor; or, Practical Guide to the Study of the Old Testament** (London: J. G. and F. Rivington, 1834), p. 139

<sup>3</sup> Priest Josiah **The Anti-universalist: Or History of the Fallen Angels of the Scriptures** (Albany: J. Munsell, 1837), pp. 326, 327

*Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and **comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him**: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold (Job 42:11)*

In both passages God is said to have *brought* the sicknesses. But let's go back to the second chapter of Job to see what actually took place concerning this patriarch:

*But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. **So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown** (Job 2:5-7)*

Satan demanded that God “put forth His hand”. God complies with his request but does not *directly* afflict Job with sickness. God “puts forth His hand” by *removing His protection and allowing Satan to inflict Job with sickness*. The only way that God can be said to inflict sickness is to remove His protective presence and allow Satan to inflict it. Hence we believe that Burton Coffman gets it right in his commentary on Job 42:11:

One thing that is absolutely clear in the Book of Job is the fact that it was Satan, not Jehovah, who slaughtered Job's children, impoverished him, and reduced him to the utmost suffering and disease; yet here, it is stated that, Jehovah had brought all these things upon him. Here we have enunciated the Biblical premise that God indeed does that which he allows to happen.<sup>4</sup>

If “brought” can be understood as “allowed” in Job 42:11 then there is no reason why the words “put” and “brought” in Exodus 15:26 (which are the exact same words in the Hebrew according to the *Interlinear Hebrew Old Testament*) cannot be understood in the *permissive sense* as well. While his paraphrase is geared toward a denominational bias, I do like how Dr. Jack Blanco, a Seventh Day Adventist minister, interprets Exodus 15:26:

The Lord said to Moses, “If you will listen to me and do what is right, if you will keep my commandments and laws, **I will not let any of you come down with the diseases of the Egyptians**. I will heal you for I am the Lord.”<sup>5</sup> (Emphasis are mine)

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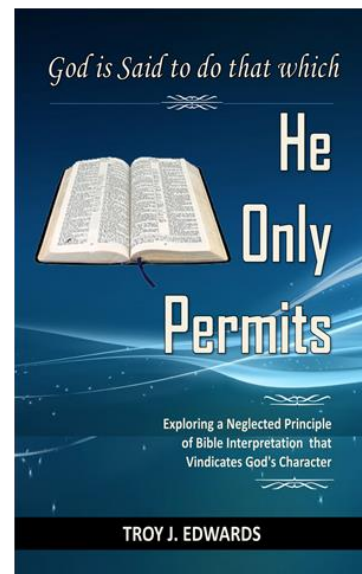
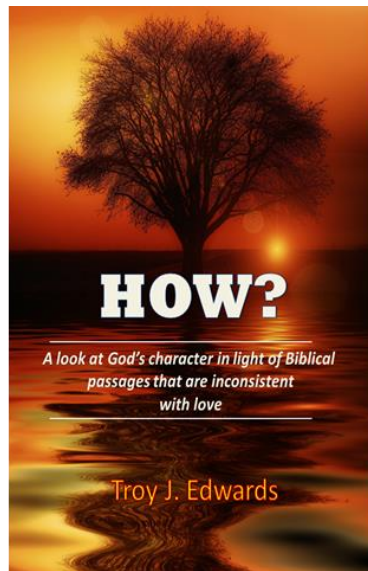
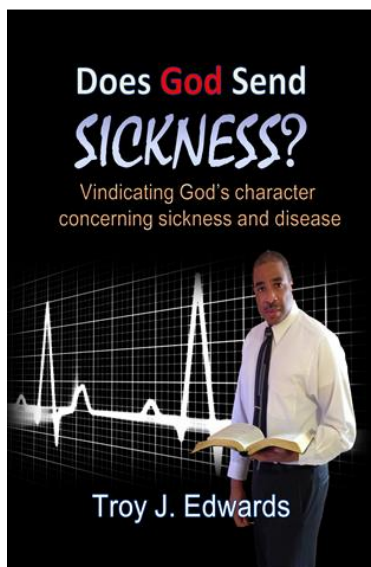
<sup>4</sup> 12. Coffman, James Burton. “Commentary on Job 42”. “Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament”. <<http://classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/view.cgi?book=job&chapter=042>>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

<sup>5</sup> Blanco, Jack **The Clear Word: An Expanded Paraphrase to Build Strong Faith and Nurture Spiritual Growth** (Hagerston, MD: Jack J. Blanco, 2003), p. 85

In conclusion, we do not want to belittle or downplay the importance of Mr. Bentorah's knowledge of the Hebrew. We appreciate his scholarship. But his understanding of Exodus 15:26 must go beyond merely being able to give a technical interpretation from the original language. It must be understood in light of the full revelation of God's character. God is not the inflictor of sickness and disease. We have proven that Exodus 15:26 can be understood in that light.



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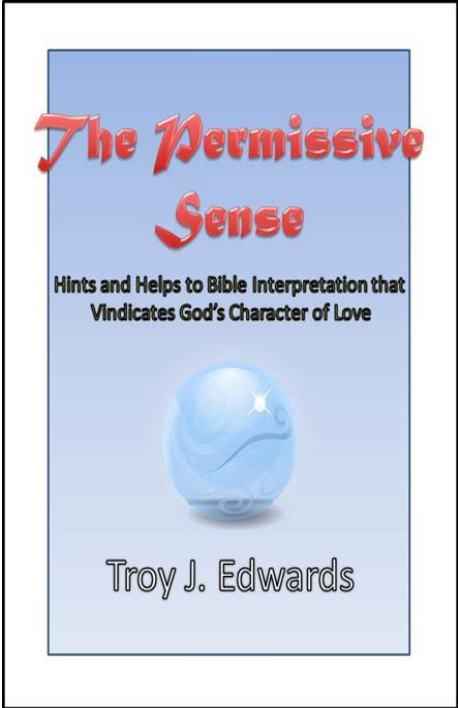
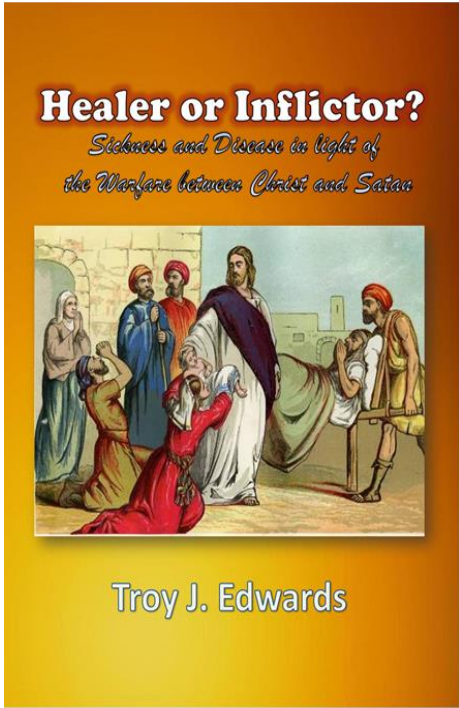


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