

While reading GATES OF PRAYER: THE NEW UNION PRAYERBOOK [Central Conference of American Rabbis/75] I was struck by the translation of the Hebrew word for "gate" time and again as a synecdoche [part-for-whole] become a metonymy [name-of-whole from a part]: "city"! Of course the basal idea-feelings of opening and going through continue, as indeed in the title of the book itself; but the "city" reading opens on a flood of city passages that one might otherwise miss....so try your concordances for "gate[s]" when digging for city passages.

In addition to providing an instance of the insight in the above paragraph, this thinksheet--in reproducing the 1st of the 4 pp. in a service on "Justice"--associates the justice/city theme with most of the great OT words on social-political responsibility under God. [Interested in knowing the other "Special Themes"?

Here they are: Nature, Omnipresence, Quest, Humanity, Loneliness, Trust, Sincerity, Righteousness, [then, Justice,] Unity, Peace, Revelation, The Ten Commandments, Israel's Mission, Redemption, Doubt.]

Justice

על־שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים הָעוֹלָם קָיָם: עַל־הַצְדִּיקוּת, וְעַל־הַדִּין, וְעַל־הַשְׁלוֹם.
צָדֵק, צָדֵק תִּרְדֹּף, לְמַעַן תִּחְיֶה.

The world is sustained by three things: by justice, by truth, and by peace.

Justice, justice shall you pursue, that you may live.

COMMENTARY

1. Note the particular clusters of the great words in the successive passages.

2. The final passage speaks of the strengths of the great urban civilizations: worldly wisdom [=savvy, "knowing your way around"], capitalization of violence on behalf of the public tranquility [=might], and the capital-managerial class [=riches]. These three are both products of the city and necessary to its existence under present conditions--but all three together are (1) not good enough and (2) a perpetual temptation to act as a counterpoise glory to theocentricity.

3. The Lev. passage inscribed on our Liberty Bell here is properly put in the context of the controlling biblical themes: "liberty" is biblical-particular.

4. Note the world-orientation in the circled words.

וְרַעוּ לָכֶם לְצָדִיקָה, קַצְרוּ לְפִי־חֶסֶד.
כִּי־צָדִיק יְיָ, צָדִיקוֹת אֱהָב.

Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of steadfast love.

For the Lord is righteous; He loves righteous deeds.

וּקְרֹאתֶם דְּרוֹר בְּאַרְצָךְ לְכָל־יֹשְׁבֵיהָ.
שִׁנְאַתְךָ וְאַהֲבֵי טוֹב, וְהִצִּיגוּ בְּשַׁעַר מִשְׁפָּט.

Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all who dwell in it.

Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the city.

reversal:
Tn. 32

(as lit. "gate"
 "as the word")

Amos 5's

כֹּה אָמַר יְיָ: אֱלֹהֵי־יְהוָה לֹל חֶכֶם בְּחִכְמָתוֹ, וְאֱלֹהֵי־יְהוָה לֹל הַגְּבוּרָה בְּגִבּוֹרָתוֹ, אֱלֹהֵי־יְהוָה לֹל עֲשִׂיר בְּעֲשָׂרוֹ; כִּי אִם־בִּזְאוֹת יְהוָה לֹל הַמִּתְהַלֵּל, הַשֶּׁבֶל וְיָדַע אוֹתִי, כִּי אֲנִי יְיָ עֹשֶׂה חֶסֶד, מִשְׁפָּט, וְצָדִיקָה בְּאַרְצָךְ, כִּי־בְאֵלֶּה חֲפָצָי.

Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise glory in their wisdom, let not the mighty glory in their might, let not the rich glory in their riches; but let them who glory, glory in this: that they understand and know Me, that I am the Lord who practices kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight.

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