

The Biblical Unitarian Podcast - by Dustin Smith, PhD

Episode 329—"The Agent Bore the Judicial Role of the Sender"

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Introduction

Two weeks ago, we introduced the Jewish Principle of Agency. We discussed six aspects of the principle. This week, we will examine the second of these aspects: the agent fully represents the judicial roles and responsibilities of the sender.

In what sense does the agent of a sender execute judicial responsibilities for the sender in Judaism? Where is this observed in the Bible? And how does this tenet of the principle of agency help us better understand the relationship between God and Jesus—the commissioned son?

Let's find out on this week's episode of the Biblical Unitarian Podcast!

1. Definitions

- a. The Hebrew verb *shafat* has a variety of meanings:

1. To judge, decide, rule, govern, vindicate, and deliver
 2. In English translations, it is commonly translated only in one way (“to judge”). This is unfair and misleading.
- b. *Elohim* is used for human judges:
1. BDB Lexicon, “rulers, judges, either as divine representatives in sacred places or as reflecting divine majesty and power...Exodus 21:6; 22:7, 8, 27 [English 22:28] ... 1 Sam 2:25”
 2. HALOT Lexicon. “Judges” and it lists Exod 21:6; 22:7, 8; 1 Sam 2:25; Ps 82:1; 138:1.
- c. When an agent takes possession of the property he was sent to purchase, the sender becomes the owner:
1. *the transaction occurred by taking possession, and in that case, the seller usually must say to him [the agent]: Go, take possession, and thereby acquire it for yourself. And in this case, once he [the seller] conveys the key to him [the agent], he is considered like one who says to him [the sender]: Go, take possession, and thereby acquire it. (b. Baba Qamma 52a)*

2. Examples in the Old Testament

- a. Human judges exercised authority that God, the judge of all the earth, shared with them as his agents.
1. *Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly? (Gen 18:25)*
 2. *Then the LORD raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them. (Jdg 2:16)*
 3. *Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear the cases between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him. 'You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God's. (Deut 1:16-17)*
- b. Judges are empowered with God’s spirit as a means of empowering their ability to judge as God’s judicial agents:
1. *When the sons of Israel cried to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the sons of Israel to deliver them, Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel (Jdg 3:9-10)*
 2. *So the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon; ... Then Gideon said to God, "If You will deliver Israel through me, as You have spoken, behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor. (Jdg 6:34-37)*

- c. Yahweh, as the supreme judge, was able to appoint human judges and remove them for functioning poorly as agents of his judicial purposes:
 - 1. *God takes His stand in His own congregation; He judges in the midst of the rulers.*
 - 1. *Elohim judges in the midst of elohim*
 - 2. *How long will you judge unjustly And show partiality to the wicked? Selah. Vindicate the weak and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked. They do not know nor do they understand; They walk about in darkness; All the foundations of the earth are shaken. I said, "You are gods, And all of you are sons of the Most High. "Nevertheless you will die like men And fall like any one of the princes." Arise, O God, judge the earth! For it is You who possesses all the nations. (Ps 82:1-8)*

3. Examples in the New Testament

- a. *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him (John 6:44)*
 - 1. The sender takes possession at the moment the agent receives what is due
 - b. *For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. (John 5:22-23)*
 - c. *For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. (John 5:26-27)*
 - d. *But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. (John 8:16)*
 - e. *Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:30-31)*
 - f. *on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Rom 2:16)*
 - g. *For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution (2 Thes 1:6-8)*
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Thanks for listening to this week's episode!

Join us next week as we examine the third tenet of the Jewish Principle of Agency, the sender is greater than his commissioned agent.

Please look forward to our next episode.

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