

Question Box. Why did God choose Israel?

Why did God choose Israel out of all the other nations? It seemed a bad choice." This the brief, but thought-provoking question, which has been supplied for us to consider.

And, yes! Perhaps it does seem to have been a bad choice; at least, from where we are now standing. After all, we are able to read the inspired record of the Nation of Israel's repeated disobedience and persistent stubbornness; to say nothing of her appalling ingratitude in the light of the innumerable blessings which God showered upon her, and the many deliverances He effected for her. Indeed, the Psalmist admitted that God had treated them in a unique fashion. Psalm 147:19 states, "He has not dealt thus with any other nation. "

The question, therefore, is a pertinent one. It was put in a different way by William Norman Ewer, who wrote:

"How odd Of God
To choose
The Jews."

This, amusingly, provoked a pointed response from Cecil Brown, who replied:

"But not so odd
As those who choose
A Jewish God
But spurn the Jews."

So, why did God 'choose the Israel?'

1. Was it because they were racially superior to other nations?

May I ask you to open your Bible at Ezekiel 16 and read the first 5 verses -

(although, you will notice that the entire chapter is a startling revelation of how God felt about the people whom He chose for Himself).

In those verses you will see that there was nothing about the nation itself which made it compellingly attractive to God. On the contrary, He declared that it had been abandoned and 'exposed' - left to die, in the way in which some ancient races disposed of unwanted babies.

Whilst, even today, many Jews undoubtedly regard themselves as ethnically superior to other people, it must surely have been painful for them, almost 600 BC, to hear this assessment of them from God, delivered by the prophet Ezekiel; especially when he dismissed their illusion of racial purity and supremacy with the words in verse

3. "Your origin, and your birth are of the Land of the Cannanites;

Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. "

And consider how it must have pained them to be told in Ez. 16:46:

"Your eldest sister is SAMARIA ...to the north of you, and your younger sister.....to the south of you.....is SODOM with her daughters."

We all know how they felt about those northerly neighbours - Samaritans! In fact, a statement like this would do very little for the ego of any modern Jew, were it to be pointed out to him!

After all, the Amorites were not descendants of Shem, Noah's eldest son - and bear in mind that it is Shem whom the Jews regard as their ancient ancestor. The Amorites were descendants of Canaan's, the son of Ham, Gen. 10:16.

And Gen. 9:20-27 records the shameful manner in which Canaan himself behaved towards his father Noah, and tells of the prophecy which God issued concerning his future.

The Hittites, also, were Canaanites through Canaan, second son, Heth, as we see from Gen.10:15 and 1st Chron. 1:13.

God is saying through Ezekiel that this is the spiritual picture of Israel which the Old Testament shows, that their attitudes and behaviour are such that they might as well have had their origins from their enemies, their mother might as well have been an Amorite and a Hittite; and for sisters, Samaria and Sodom, as there is practically no difference between them.

They were behaving more like descendants of Canaan than Shem.

Nothing to be proud of there! This being the case, any special treatment Israel received from God was not bestowed on the basis of birth. Racial superiority was definitely not in the mind of God when He chose Israel.

2. Then, was it because the Jews had distinguished themselves by their accomplishments, or their numerical, material, political or military powers? That is, were they chosen because they were able to advance the purposes of God through their national greatness? Was it because they were such a great nation?

We are all aware, I am sure, that the world's history is full of accounts, which record how great and powerful nations have imposed themselves on others. Empires were built that way! But, the nation of Israel never really achieved such stature, even taking into consideration the greatness of David's kingdom, or the wealth of the kingdom of Solomon.

The kings of Israel and Judah always remained rulers over very small territories. Place both kingdoms together and, in extent, they were no larger than Wales. Nor did they ever establish empires, like nations which arose both before and after them. So, Israel was not chosen on the basis of merit, or a distinguished history.

3. Were they chosen, then, because they were morally and spiritually superior to other nations? Well! Moses apparently did not think so! He warned them that when they entered the Promised Land and occupied the cities of 'nations greater and mightier than yourselves,' they must not say, "It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me to possess this land" (Dent. 9:4).

Even a casual reading of Israel's history and the outspoken denunciations of their wickedness, delivered by the prophets, dispel any notion that they were in any way better than the nations around them.

After being made the leader of the nation, upon the death of Moses, Joshua also made a statement which must have had a devastating effect on any religious pride the people may have felt. Joshua 24; states: "Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods".

4. So WHY was the Jew chosen out of all the other nations?

The simple answer is: BECAUSE GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS PROMISES!
We have to go back to Gen. 13:16, where, for the first time, He made a promise to Abram, - as he was then called. "I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth."

That promise was the first of seven promises which God made to 'Abram the Hebrew.' It was later amplified and explained in the words:

"Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves because of him?"

This is the promise to which Paul refers in Gal.3:

"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.'"

There we find the answer to our question! It was God's purpose to bring salvation to mankind. Not to the Jews alone, but also to non-Jews. That purpose involved bringing His only begotten Son into the world. To accomplish this purpose, God chose a man Abraham. From him, God produced a nation - Israel. From that nation He chose a Tribe - tribe of Judah. Out of Judah He chose a House - the House of David.

And then, when the time had fully come, a baby was miraculously born in Bethlehem - a baby who was 'Immanuel' - 'God with us' and whose name was 'Jehoshua' - Jesus, which means, 'Yahweh is salvation.'

The entire progress of Israel's history reveals God's purpose being worked out in spite of human frailty and human sinfulness. Had He chosen to use any other nation, the story would have recorded a similar catalogue of shortcomings on Man's part.

What produced the Plan of Salvation was the Sovereignty of God, which always over-ruled and which could "turn the wrath of men to His glory."

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