



Predestination and Foreknowledge: Are They the Same Thing?

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In this past year of SAM's review of all things basic, we came upon a few concepts that were surprising to some among us. The story of David hiding out in Keilah illustrated a very important point. When David inquired of YHWH as to whether or not the men of Keilah would surrender him and his men to Saul, YHWH told him, yes, they would. Therefore David chose to leave the city. **Seems simple enough.**

BUT the implication is that YHWH Could answer the question as to what the citizens of Keilah would do and at the same time, David was free to choose NOT to remain there! His departure meant that it never actually happened that they surrendered him to Saul. So Yah foreknew what would happen, but David was able to use that revelation to change what did happen. For some among us, the reality that prayer can actually change things and that the future is not set in stone came with a shock and yet release!

A sudden awareness of the awesome intervention of prayer in our lives dawned. No, we do not pray just because we are told to do so, all the while thinking that it won't really change anything, just doing our duty. But David was free to choose what to do. Now that he understood what Yah had told him the men of the city would do, he was free to change his course and thus change the outcome. So YHWH foreknew the future but that future was not locked in.

A follow up study examined the questions of foreknowledge and predestination. Are they one and the same? This perspective seems predominant within many branches of Christianity. But if indeed, He foreknows and has all locked in, it would follow that human beings do not really have free will. If we preserve the understanding that He gave us free will that we could choose to honor Him freely, it also follows that we can use our free will to make less wise choices.

Some would have it that YHWH needs evil things to happen in order for His plans to prevail. Is that within the character of an all wise, all knowing, all powerful Elohim? I think not. That understanding about "abolish Torah" and call His character into question. Is it within the parameters of a loving God Who grieves with us when evil happens? Yes.

If Yah has already decreed all and "what will be will be," what benefit is there in obedience and in prayer? It is not within the character of a loving Creator to set us up for failure, but to provide every opportunity for good.

David prayed in obedience and then chose a course of action which changed the process and the outcome. If Yah has set all things in stone, without true free will, that could not have happened! David would have been obliged to remain in Keilah and be captured. He didn't. He wasn't.

Recently, we had also seen that there is a very good reason that Yeshua told His followers to pray that Our Father's will be done "on earth as it is in heaven." Reason being is that it is NOT always done on the earth. Again, were that so, there would not be genuine free will. Yes, we know that evil exists. We know that human beings who do not submit to YHWH are subject to the world, the flesh and the devil. All too often, men choose to do another's will rather than Yah's will. To go counter to Yah's ways is to bring about evil. In an odd sort of way, because Yah was willing to allow His created human beings free will to enable us to make a choice to be in relationship with Him, He was also willing to allow the known risk that people would also choose otherwise. Thus, wickedness enters in. The cost of a voluntary loving relationship is the potential for other choices. In this way, He "created" evil. (Is. 45:7)

Because He lives outside of our limited dimensions including time, He is all knowing, all present and all powerful. He knows and tells the end from the beginning and He foreknows all the possible outcomes.

We have also been told that all things work together for the good of those who love Him. (Rom. 8:28) Can we really believe that He can do that? Yes, we can! He has given us free will yet He is so far beyond our comprehension that He is able to work all of our own and other's choices, good and not good, together so that ultimately it is for our good.

We live in times of great chaos and confusion as the evil increases prior to the time of the anti-christ and then Messiah's return. How does this understanding change our habitual prayers and behaviors? We do not need to remain stoic and resigned that the future is laid out for us with no hope of change no matter what we may pray. Ultimately, His will WILL prevail. We can increase our confidence and come boldly to the Throne of Grace, knowing that He made provision for every possible action and outcome and is big enough to hold it all together, working toward the goal of the two becoming one, as His people choose Him, choose to know His ways and walk after Him in preparation for the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.