



Praising God's Sovereignty-

Adonai hu kol-yachol

אֲנִי יְהוָה וְאֵין עֹד: וְצַר אֹר וּבֹרָא חֹשֶׁךְ
עָשָׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבֹרָא רָע אֲנִי יְהוָה עָשָׂה כָּל-אֱלֹהִים:

*I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness,
I make peace and create evil,
I am the LORD, who does all these things. Isa 45:6-7*

These words were spoken by the LORD to Cyrus (*Koresh*), the great Persian king whom the LORD called by name and anointed (*mashach*) to be His sword of retribution upon Babylon. Notice that the prophecy given in Isaiah 45 was written some 150 years *before* Cyrus was born, a fact that was used by the sages to later convince him to issue a decree that allowed the Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-8):



...for this prophet said that God had spoken thus to him in a secret vision, "My will is, that Cyrus, whom I have appointed to be king over many and great nations, send back my people to their own land, and build my temple." Accordingly, when Cyrus read this, and admired the divine power, an earnest desire and ambition seized upon him to fulfill what was so written. (Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities*, xi, Chapt. 1-2)



Cyrus was a "Zoroastrian," a believer in the mystical teachings of the Persian philosopher Zarathustra (also known as Zoroaster), who taught that there are two equal and opposite powers at war in the universe: Ahura Mazda (the good god, represented by fire and light) and Ahriman (the evil god, represented by darkness).

That the LORD God of Israel would choose Cyrus to reveal His absolute sovereignty over both of these Persian "gods" is fitting, and is akin to God's revelation to Pharaoh that He is the LORD over all the gods of Egypt. Like Pharaoh, Cyrus was at the time the ruler of the largest empire the world had ever seen.

Unlike metaphysical dualism that imagines life to be a battle between light and darkness, the LORD informed Cyrus that He is the One who creates light and darkness, peace and evil. He is the true Master of the universe, the LORD of all human history.





The Jewish prayerbook includes a blessing that recalls God’s absolute power over the fortunes and affairs of history:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
 יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ, עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא אֶת הַכֹּל.

Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the universe, who forms light and creates darkness, who makes peace and creates all things.

Notice, however, that this traditional rendering actually deletes a parallelism that is important for understanding God’s majestic power over all things, including evil (or calamity) itself.

The traditional blessing states that God *yotzeir or v’vorei choshek* (forms light and creates darkness, the first contrast) and continues with *oseh shalom uvorei et hakol* (who makes peace and creates all things). Now while this is undoubtedly true (and consonant with other teaching in Scripture), the verse from which this blessing derives actually says God *oseh shalom uvorei ra* (who makes peace and creates evil), indicating that the LORD is the Master of the universe, including being undisputed master over evil (*ra*). Indeed, the pasuk ends with the exclamation: *ani Adonai oseh khol-eleh* (I am the LORD who does all these things.)

It is significant that the Apostle Paul referred to the message to Cyrus when he was writing about God’s sovereign purposes concerning Israel in his letter to the Romans.

So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills. You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use? (Romans 9:18-21; Cp. Isaiah 45:9)

The Biblical view is that God is sovereign over evil, *Ribbono shel Olam*, the Master of the universe and all that is in it (including the fates of nations and individual people). However, since we know from other Scripture that God is not the author of (moral) evil (James 1:13), the translation of *ra*’ should be qualified with the parallel word *shalom*, as the absence of peace, perhaps as “calamity” or “disaster” (Amos 3:6).

Without getting into the details of a sophisticated “theodicy” here, suffice it to say that the existence of evil in the universe is a *mystery*, since we know that even Judas, the very man who betrayed our beloved Mashiach and Savior of the world, was *foreseen* to have done so through God’s forbearance and *plan* (Psalm 41:9, Mark 14:17-18, Acts 2:23). And regardless of the Job-like questions that sometimes haunt us while living in a “fallen” world, we are certain of God’s goodness and love, as demonstrated by the glorious resurrection of Yeshua from the dead. God’s power over the forces of evil is found in Yeshua’s triumph over the *kelalah* (curse) of death.



A lot more could be said here, but let me finish this page with one final thought: Cyrus was a type of Messiah (he is literally called *mashiach*, “anointed”) whom Adonai used to ransom captive Israel and return a remnant to Zion. Indeed, Isaiah writes:

“who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd,
and he shall fulfill all my purpose';
saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,'
and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'”
(Isaiah 44:28)

Yeshua is indeed the Messiah (Matt 1:1, John 4:25-6, etc.), the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) who always did what the Father delighted in (John 8:29). He is the One who rebuilds the Temple made without hands (Mark 14:58, John 2:21, 1 Cor 6:19, 2 Cor 6:16, Eph 2:21, etc.) and is the True Foundation stone of all everlasting praise to God (1 Cor 3:11). *Blessed be He.*

Transliterated:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,

ha'olam me-lekh elo-heinu Adonai at-tah ba-ruk
King of the universe our God LORD You Blessed

יוֹצֵר אוֹר וּבוֹרֵא חֹשֶׁךְ, עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם וּבוֹרֵא אֶת הַכֹּל.

ha-kol et u-vorei sha-lom 'o-seh cho-shek u-vorei 'or yo-tzeir
all things and creates peace who makes darkness and creates light who forms

*Barukh attah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam,
yotzer or u'vorei choshek, oseh shalom u'vorei et hakol.*