

**“Rasha”: Defining the Wicked both Personal & Religious; Job & Jeremiah’s Query, “Why Do the Wicked Prosper?” False Prophets: 2 Pet 2:1-3, Jude 4**

David Whitmire, e-mail message to author, December 14, 2006:

Dear Joe,

My seven year old grandson, who lives in the Cy-Fair school district in Cypress, Texas, near Houston, came in from school today and reported to his Mom (my youngest daughter) what he was studying this week. His teacher has been teaching about Kwanza this week and Ramadan last week. He asked if they were going to study about Christmas and she said she cannot talk about Christianity.

Satan's victory through the Frankfort School's teachings has gained a foothold captivating young minds.

In His matchless grace,

(Rev.) David Whitmire  
Marshall, Texas

53. An in-depth discussion of how this word is used in the Old Testament is provided by:

Botterwick et al., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 14:1-3, 5-6, 9:

**רָשָׁע** *rasha'*, **רָשָׁה** *rāshā'*. The two Hebrew terms **רָשָׁע** *rasha'* [rah-sha], “be guilty,” and **רָשָׁה** *rāshā'* [rah-shah], “guilty, wicked person,” are related to Akkadian *resum*, “inconsiderate, thoughtless.” A basic meaning of “not be in order, not fulfill the anticipated function,” from which the various specialized meanings then developed.

The forensic meaning is peculiar to Hebrew, where the term is also characterized by polarity with the term **צֶדֶק** *setheq* [justice] and **צֶדֶקָה** *sethaqah* [righteousness]. (pp. 1-2)

**רָשָׁה** [רָשָׁה rah-shah]. In the Old Testament *rasha'* refers primarily to those who “on the basis of their deeds should expect to be declared guilty in court. The examples in the Psalms and Proverbs especially represent an expanded and simultaneously deeper meaning. The best translation is “evildoer” or “wicked, godless person.”

*Pentateuch*. Most of the occurrences in the Pentateuch exhibit the forensic meaning. Abraham protests that God intends to destroy both the righteous (*sethaqah*) and the wicked (*rāshā'*) in Sodom (Genesis 18:23,25). When Moses sees the two Israelites arguing, he reprimands the *rāshā'*, i.e., the one who did wrong (Exodus 2:13). Dathan and Abiram are called *reshaim* [רָשָׁיִם plural] because they rebelled against Moses (Numbers 16:26). (p. 3)

*Psalms*. The Psalms mention the *reshaim* 82 times, generally as adversaries of the “righteous” (*setheqim*), sometimes as *goyim* (9:5,17), and often parallel with enemies (3:7; 17:9; 55:3), workers of evil (28:3; 92:7; 101:8; 141:9-10), evildoers (26:5; 37:9-10), ruthless persons (11:5; 71:4; 140:4), transgressors (37:38), liars (58:3 cf. 109:2), etc. Although they speak peace, they are planning mischief (28:3). They utter curses in their hiding places (10:7ff.; 17:9ff.; 140:9). Psalm 10:3-11 seems to be describing their very nature when it says that they boast of their own desires [v. 3] and despise Yahweh in their arrogance, and think that “there is no God” [v. 4]. They prosper in their ways, pay no attention to God’s judgments [v. 5], and believe they will never stagger [v. 6]. Their mouths are filled with deceit and oppression, they talk mischief and iniquity [v. 7], saying that “God has forgotten, ... he will never see it” [v. 11]. One can accordingly call them the “godless,” since they do not take God into account, believing rather in their own strength; they withdraw from God’s power and live by their own initiative, regarding neither Yahweh’s deeds nor the work of his hands (Psalm 28:5). (p. 5)

*Proverbs.* Almost all proverbs use antithetical parallelism in portraying the contrast between the righteous (*setheq*) and the wicked (*rāshā'*).

The *setheq-rāshā'* sayings are concerned with demonstrating the act-consequence nexus [a connected group or series: the sequence of cause and effect]. "The mouth of the wicked conceals violence [חַמָּס] (*chamas*)" (10:6,11), they speak what is perverse (10:32), are deceitful (12:5) and lie in wait for blood (12:6), their hearts are cruel (12:10), they act shamefully and disgracefully (12:5), speak evil words (15:28), accept bribes and pervert justice (17:23; cf. 19:28), and are merciless (21:10). Their role in the life of society is noteworthy. Their deceptive words bring misfortune upon the city (11:11). According to 10:27, wickedness is the antithesis of fear of God. (p. 6)

LXX [Septuagint]. The term *rasha'* [רָשָׁע rah-shah] is generally rendered as *asebēs* [wicked], *hamartōlos* [sinners], or *anomos* [lawless]. (p. 9)

54. The adjective *rasha'* [רָשָׁע] classifies the kind of wheel-tracks such a person has facilitated. Here's another synopsis from:

Harris, R. Laird, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1980), 863-64:

*רָשָׁע rasha'*. Wicked people were guilty of violation of the social rights of others, for they were violent, oppressive, greedy, engaged in plotting against and trapping poor people, and quite willing to murder to gain their ends. In a word they threatened the community. They were dishonest in business and in the courtroom. (pp. 863-64)

Frequently, eighty times, half of them in the book of Proverbs, *rasha'* is placed in antithetic parallelism to [צַדִּיק] *setheq* [the righteous] in black and white terms. The focus is on both the quality of lifestyle and the results of these two ways of living. Whereas the wicked forsake God, the righteous cling to him. Though the wicked are oppressive and dishonest, the righteous are upright and lovers of truth.

The inner lives of the wicked correspond to their actions. They are vicious, haughty, treacherous, vile, polluted, and unstable. One might expect that such people would always be kept under the restraints of law and order and suffer defeat every moment of life. Not so. Job was troubled with the strange topsy-turvy nature of the moral order here and now:

**Job 9:24 -** "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked [ *rasha'* ]; He covers the faces of its judges. If it is not He, then who is it?"

**10:3 -** "Is it right for You indeed to oppress, to reject the labor of Your hands, and to look favorably on the schemes of the wicked?"

**16:11 -** "God hands me over to ruffians and tosses me into the hands of the wicked."

**21:7 -** "Why do the wicked still live, continue on, also become very powerful?"

**21:17 -** "How often is the lamp of the wicked put out, or does their calamity fall on them? Does God apportion destruction in His anger?"

55. Jeremiah was also perplexed by this question in:

**Jeremiah 12:1 -** Righteous are You, O Lord, that I would plead my case with You; Indeed I would discuss matters of justice with You: Why has the way [ *derek* ] of the wicked [ *rasha'* ] prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?"

The doubts of some in times of stress did not cloud the clear doctrine of God's strong opposition to wicked people. Psalmists and prophets not only pleaded that God punish the wicked, God proclaimed his intention to do so, and there are descriptions of the horror of his judgments (Psalm 9:5,16; Proverbs 24:20-24; Jeremiah 25:31; Zephaniah 1:3; Malachi 4:3).

One might conclude that once God punished the wicked the moral order would be corrected, but God's servants knew that judgment was not God's best or most desired solution. Both God and man saw acts of salvation as the best way to deal with the wicked person. The Psalmist pled for forgiveness (71:4; 82:4), and God both promised (Isaiah 55:7) and provided for it (Isaiah 53:9). (p. 864)

56. The concepts associated with *rāshā'* are transferred into the New Testament by three Koine Greek words but *asebēs* is the one that is used most often to translate *rāshā'* in the Septuagint.
57. Gerhard Friedrich in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (7:187), states, "In the LXX [Septuagint] ἀσεβής [*asebēs*] is overwhelmingly the translation of the stem רשׁ" [rsh': the root of רשׁ" rasha' (rah-shah)].
58. From the Old and New Testaments we can see from the two words רשׁ" rasha' and ἀσεβής *asebēs* that the problem of facilitated wheel-tracks of wickedness is a major subject in the Holy Spirit's revelation to mankind.
59. This brings us back to verse 4 of Jude where we first need to look at the context of this verse and thus the book.
60. A major problem that has faced the Christian church from its inception is that of false teachers. We have recently noted Paul's views in 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15. Peter also addresses the subject but in the future tense in:

**2 Peter 2:1 -** [NET] But false prophets [ Old Testament types ] arose among the people [ Israelites ], just as there will be [ predictive future tense of εἰμί, *eimi* ] false teachers among you [ Church Age believers ]. These false teachers will infiltrate [ predictive future tense of παρεισάγω, *pareisagō*: enter unobtrusively to subvert ] your midst [ the local church ] with destructive heresies, even to the point of denying the Master who bought them. As a result they will bring swift destruction to themselves.

**v. 2 -** And many will follow [ predictive future active indicative of ἐξακολουθέω, *exakoloutheō*: conform to ] their debauched lifestyles [ dative of disadvantage of ἀσέλγεια, *aselgeia*: lascivious ]. Because of these false teachers the way of truth will be slandered.

**v. 3 -** And in their greed [ hedonistic lust ] they will exploit you with deceptive words. Their condemnation pronounced long ago is not sitting idly by; their destruction is not asleep.

61. Peter is predicting the infiltration of false teachers while Jude takes up the subject ex post facto:

**Jude 4 -** [NASB] Certain persons have crept in unnoticed, [ παρεισδύω, *pareisduō*: synonym of παρεισάγω, *pareisagō* in 2 Peter 2:1: enter unobtrusively to subvert ] those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly [ ἀσεβής, *asebēs*: wicked ] persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness [ ἀσέλγεια, *aselgeia* ] and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.