



The following script is from the 2008 BBC Masterpiece television play “God on Trial.” It has been adapted from Elie Wiesel’s 1979 not-so-fictitious play titled “The Trial of God.”

Rabbi Akiba: Who led us out of Egypt?

Judge: God led us out of Egypt.

Rabbi: I have a question. Why were we in Egypt to start with?

Judge: There was a famine, so we took shelter.

Rabbi: Who sent the famine?

Judge: Well we don't know much about the famine...

Rabbi: God sent the famine. So God sent us to Egypt and God took us out of Egypt.

Judge: And later he sent us out of Babylon in order that we might...

Rabbi: And when he brought us out of Egypt, how did he do it? By words, vision, miracle?

Judge: Moses asked Pharaoh...

Rabbi: And when Pharaoh said no?

Inmate: The plagues.

Rabbi: First Moses turned the Egyptians' water to blood. Then God sent the plague of frogs; next a plague of mosquitoes; then a plague of flies. Then he slew their livestock. Next a plague of boils. Next came the hail, which battered down the crops and even the trees and structures everywhere, except in Goshen where the Israelites lived.

Judge: But still Pharaoh did not agree.

Rabbi: And so a plague of locusts, and then the days of darkness, and finally what?

Judge: God slew the firstborn of Egypt and led us out of Egypt.

Rabbi: He struck down the firstborn, from the firstborn and heir of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the slave at the mill. He slew them all. Did he slay Pharaoh?

Judge: No, I don't think so. It was later.

Rabbi: It was Pharaoh that said no, but God let him live. And slew his children instead. All the children. And then the people made their escape taking with them the gold and silver and jewelry and garments of the Egyptians. And then God drowned the soldiers who pursued them. He did not close the waters up so that the soldier could not follow. He waited until they were following and then he closed the waters. And then what?

Judge: And then the desert and ultimately the promised land.

Rabbi: No. The promised land was empty and a new place, uncultivated.

Judge: No. There were...

Rabbi: When the Lord thy God shall bring you into the promised land you shall cast out many nations before you, nations much greater and mightier than you are. You shall smite them and utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them.

Inmate: It shows us his favor. We are his people.

Rabbi: And he gave us a king in Saul. Now when the people of Amalek fought Saul's people, what did the Lord God command? I'll ask the scholar.

Scholar: Crush Amalek and put him under the curse of destruction.

Rabbi: Was Saul to show any mercy to spare anyone?

Scholar: Do not spare...

Rabbi: Do not spare him, but kill. Kill man, woman, babe, and suckling, ox, and sheep, cattle and donkey. So Saul set out to do this and on the way he met some Kenites. Now these were not Amalek's people, he had no quarrel with them. He urged them to flee. And the Lord our God was he pleased by the mercy of Saul, by the justice of Saul?

Scholar: No. No he wasn't.

Rabbi: And when Saul decided not to slaughter all the livestock and to take it to feed his people, was God pleased with his prudence, his charity?

Scholar: No.

Rabbi: No, he was not. He said, you have rejected the word of Adonai, therefore he has rejected you as king. And then to please the Lord our God, Samuel brought forth the king Agar and hacked him to pieces before the Lord at Gilgar. After Saul there came David who took Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite to himself after arranging to have Uriah killed -- against the wishes of God. Did God strike David for this?

Scholar: In a manner of speaking...

Rabbi: Did he strike Bathsheba?

Scholar: In the sense that when they had...

Rabbi: Adonai said, since you have sinned against me, the child will die. (Turning to the judge) You asked earlier, who would punish a child? God does. Now did the child die suddenly, mercifully, without pain?

Scholar: In a...

Rabbi: Seven days. Seven days that child spent dying in pain while David wrapped himself in sack and ashes and fasted and sought to show his sorrow to God. Did God listen?

Scholar: The child died.

Rabbi: Did that child find that God was just? Did the Amalekites think that Adonai was just?

Did the mothers of Egypt -- the mothers -- did they think that Adonai was just?

Scholar: But Adonai is our God, surely...

Rabbi: Oh, what? Did God not make the Egyptians? Did he not make their rivers and make their crops grow? If not him, then who? What? Some other God? But what did he make them for? To punish them? To starve, to frighten, to slaughter them? The people

of Amalek, the people of Egypt, what was it like for them when Adonai turned against them? It was like this. Today there was a selection, yes? When David defeated the Moabites, what did he do?

Judge: He made them lie on the ground in lines and he chose one to live and two to die.

Rabbi: We have become the Moabites. We are learning how it was for the Amalekites. They faced extinction at the hand of Adonai. They died for his purpose. They fell as we are falling. They were afraid as we are afraid. And what did they learn? They learned that Adonai, the Lord our God, our God, is not good. He is not good. He was not ever good. He was only on our side. God is not good. At the beginning when he repented that he had made human beings and flooded the earth. Why? What had they done to deserve annihilation? What could they have done to deserve such wholesale slaughter? What could they have done that was so bad? God is not good. When he asked Abraham to sacrifice his son, Abraham should have said no. We should have taught our God the justice that was in our hearts. We should have stood up to him. He is not good. He has simply been strong. He has simply been on our side. When we were brought here, we were brought by train. A guard slapped my face. On their belts they had written "Got mit uns" -- God is with us. Who is to say that he is not? Perhaps he is. Is there any other explanation? What we see here: his power, his majesty, his might, all these things that turned against us. He is still God, but not our God. He has become our enemy. That is what's happened to our covenant. He has made a new covenant with someone else.