



Suing G-D

What's the best way to approach G-d? To take Him to court or to say L'chaim with Him?

The Case Against G-d

About a decade ago, Nebraska State Senator Ernie Chambers sued G-d in court in Omaha, Nebraska. He filed a complaint against G-d for inflicting suffering upon the world such as tsunamis, hurricanes and other such woes.

In the suit, he argued that he believes that “everyone is subject to justice” and that the doors of the court must be open to all, including G-d Himself.

But ultimately, Judge Marlon Polk tossed the lawsuit out of court on account of a technicality: the judge held that according to American law, the defendant must be notified in writing that he or she is being sued in court—and since G-d doesn't have a specific address to which to send the summons, there was automatically no grounds on which to continue the proceedings of the suit.

The Senator announced that he is weighing whether to file an appeal against the judge's decision in the Court of Appeals, arguing that since “the entire universe is filled with His Glory” and that the court itself admits that there is a G-d, they therefore are equipped to proceed with the case. And if there is a G-d, it follows that He knows everything, including the lawsuit, and more so, it follows that He resides in the area— so the court case must definitely continue. This

was what the Senator argued.

I think the Senator is right: G-d definitely knows everything, and tossing the case from court on the grounds of not knowing G-d's address is merely avoiding responsibility.

Poverty Instead of Infertility

In Judaism, the idea of taking G-d to court is not new. There are many stories of people who took G-d to court.

The story is told of a rich man named Reb Meir, a chasid of the tzadik, Rabbi Yisroel of Ruzhin. This Reb Meir was a very successful businessman, but he did not have any children. Every time he visited his Rebbe, he asked for a blessing for kids, but nothing happened.

One time, as he visited the Ruzhiner, he burst out in tears and said, "Rebbe! Give us a guarantee that we will have children!" The Rebbe sat silently for a long time, lost in thought. Then he turned to Reb Meir and said, "You may choose to exchange your infertility for poverty. If you agree to a life of poverty and lack, you will have a son."

Reb Meir agreed, but said he first needed to ask his wife. He traveled home, and when she heard the condition, she immediately agreed. Reb Meir returned to Ruzhin and informed his Rebbe that he and his wife were prepared to accept the difficult condition.

In a short time, a string of economic setback hit Reb Meir, and he lost all his money and wealth. But at the same time, the Rebbe's blessing was fulfilled and within the year, they had a baby boy. Despite the painful transition from riches to rags, the parents were happy.

Reb Meir, who now had to support a family, would wander far from his house seeking sources of income.

In the meantime, the boy grew up and the poverty grew worse. While

his father was absent from home for long periods of time, the boy fell under negative influences and joined a gang of wild street kids.

His father was broken by the situation. He traveled to Ruzhin, entered the Rebbe's study and cried out in pain, "Rebbe! I have a court case against G-d!" He immediately regretted his words, but it was too late.

The Rebbe heard and immediately asked, "A court case against G-d?! About what? And why?"

Reb Meir told his Rebbe about his son and said: "When I accepted the condition of living in poverty, it was to raise a good Jewish boy. It was not for this lad that we prayed. This was not part of the condition! G-d has broken His agreement!"

The Ruzhiner listened to Reb Meir and then said: "Apparently, your argument is justified. But to proceed with a court case against G-d, you need to go to the great court in the city of Brod. Go there and bring your complaint before the judges without fear."

One bright day, there appeared an anonymous poor man in the Rabbinical Court House of Brod, saying that he wants to bring G-d to court.

The judges had never heard such a complaint. They thought the man needed some mental help. But when he told them that the Ruzhiner Rebbe had sent him, they immediately changed their entire reaction to the story.

After they listened to his complaints, they investigated and ruled on the matter, issuing a ruling that Reb Meir was in the right, and indeed, "*Man d'yahiv chayei, yahiv mezonei*"—He Who gives life to this boy must see to it that he and his parents are sustained so that they can raise him properly as a good Jew.

On the way home, Reb Meir heard the sound of a carriage behind him.

The carriage pulled up next to him and stopped. Somebody inside the carriage called out: “Hey, Meir—what are you doing here?” It became clear that it was a member of the local nobility who once did big business with Reb Meir in “the good old days.”

The nobleman invited Reb Meir to board the carriage, and Reb Meir told him everything that had happened to him.

The nobleman says to him: “Listen—I need your help.” He told Reb Meir that he urgently needed a certain amount of money and that he was now returning from meeting with a local property owner. At the meeting he had tried to sell him several plots of land, but the property owner realized that the nobleman was in dire straits and tried to bargain him down to an unsuitable price.

Ultimately, the nobleman told Reb Meir: “I still need the money now. If I turn around and go back to him to try to sell my properties to him again, he’ll lower his bids even more—so I’m asking you now to go and try to sell them for me, and I promise you a handsome fee if you succeed.”

Reb Meir immediately traveled to the landowner, a man he also knew from his good days as a successful merchant. The landowner was thrilled to see him. In the course of conversation, the landowner told him that a nobleman had just visited him, wanting to sell some of his properties for a good price, and he balked for no good reason.

Then, the landowner told Reb Meir: “Listen—if you can go to the nobleman and buy the properties, I promise you a handsome fee.”

By the end of the day, the deal was closed for the best terms—and Reb Meir profited from both sides, netting a sum of money that allowed him to support his family with dignity.

Court Never Wins

Though there are many stories like this, a Jew is not fundamentally interested in getting into arguments with G-d about who's right. Nobody wins by going to court— everyone loses. The only question is: how much?

The right way to approach it is to meet G-d over a glass of whiskey, to say “L’chaim!” and make a deal with Him that everyone likes.

My friends: Tonight, you're all invited to Hakafoš—to come and say “L’chaim!” and close a good deal or two with G-d Himself. May we all be blessed with a good and sweet new year!