

GOD IS NOT AN OGRE

William P. Griffin, Ph.D.

January 28, 2009

LWO = less well off (the vulnerable in society).

Today's discussion: What the OT says about how we should view and treat the LWO (less well off).

1. Intro: Malachi 3:5.

MAL 3:5 "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien, and do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts.

DEU 27:19 `Cursed is he who distorts the justice due an alien, orphan, and widow.' And all the people shall say, `Amen.'

2. Classes of people who are singled out for special protection (the LWO [less well off{vulnerable in society}]):

Widows.

Fatherless.

The Levite.

Low wage-earners/day laborers.

Resident aliens.

Military veterans.

The physically challenged. Lower rungs of society.

3. Judgment is often because of mistreatment of the LWO.

ISA 1:16 ¶ "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil,

ISA 1:17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.

ISA 1:18 ¶ "Come now, and let us reason together," Says Yahweh, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.

ISA 1:19 "If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land;

ISA 1:20 "But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of Yahweh has spoken.

ISA 1:21 ¶ How the faithful city has become a harlot, She who was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her, But now murderers.

ISA 1:22 Your silver has become dross, Your drink diluted with water.

ISA 1:23 Your rulers are rebels And companions of thieves; Everyone loves a bribe And chases after rewards. They do not defend the orphan, Nor does the widow's plea come before them.

ISA 1:24 ¶ Therefore the Lord Yahweh the Warrior, The Mighty One of Israel, declares, "Ah, I will be relieved of My adversaries And avenge Myself on My foes.

ISA 1:25 "I will also turn My hand against you, And will smelt away your dross as with lye And will remove all your alloy.

ISA 1:26 "Then I will restore your judges as at the first, And your counselors as at the beginning; After that you will be called the city of righteousness, A faithful city."

4. God as a helper of the LWO.

DEU 10:18 "He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.

PSA 10:14 You have seen {it}, for You have beheld mischief and vexation to take it into Your hand. The unfortunate commits {himself} to You; You have been the helper of the orphan.

PSA 10:18 To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed, That man who is of the earth may cause terror no more.

PSA 146:5 How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, Whose hope is in the LORD his God;

PSA 146:6 Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them; Who keeps faith forever;

PSA 146:7 Who executes justice for the oppressed; Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free.

PSA 146:8 The LORD opens {the eyes of} the blind; The LORD raises up those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous;

PSA 146:9 The LORD protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow; But He thwarts the way of the wicked.

PSA 68:5 A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation.

PSA 68:6 God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.

HOS 14:3 "Assyria will not save us, We will not ride on horses; Nor will we say again, 'Our god,' To the work of our hands; For in You the orphan finds mercy."

5. Commands to help/not oppress the vulnerable.

LEV 25:35 `Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you.

LEV 25:36 `Do not take usurious interest from him, but revere your God, that your countryman may live with you.

LEV 25:37 `You shall not give him your silver at interest, nor your food for gain.

DEU 10:19 "So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.

DEU 24:14 "You shall not oppress a hired servant {who is} poor and needy, whether {he is} one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns.

JER 22:1 Thus says the \Lord,\ "Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and there speak this word,

JER 22:2 and say, `Hear the word of the \Lord,\ O king of Judah, who sits on David's throne, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates.

JER 22:3 `Thus says the \Lord,\ "Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of {his}

oppressor. Also do not mistreat{ or} do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

JER 22:4 "For if you men will indeed perform this thing, then kings will enter the gates of this house, sitting in David's place on his throne, riding in chariots and on horses, {even the king} himself and his servants and his people.

JER 22:5 "But if you will not obey these words, I swear by Myself," declares the \Lord,\ "that this house will become a desolation."
`"

EZE 18:5 "But if a man is righteous, and practices justice and righteousness,

EZE 18:7 if a man does not oppress anyone, but restores to the debtor his pledge, does not commit robbery, {but} gives his bread to the hungry, and covers the naked with clothing,

EZE 18:8 if he does not lend {money} on interest or take increase, {if} he keeps his hand from iniquity, {and} executes true justice between man and man,

EZE 18:9 {if} he walks in My statutes and My ordinances so as to deal faithfully-- he is righteous {and} will surely live, "declares the Lord

\God.\

ZEC 7:9 "Thus has the LORD of hosts said, `Dispense true justice, and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother;

ZEC 7:10 and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. `

ZEC 7:10 and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. `

6. Commands to protect the vulnerable.

Fair shake in the legal system.

NUM 15:16 `There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the alien who sojourns with you.'"

DEU 1:16 "Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, `Hear {the cases} between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him.

DEU 24:17a "You shall not pervert the justice due an alien {or} an orphan. . . .

But not preferred. Fair.

EXO 23:3 nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his dispute.

The Sabbath: even the male and female servants were to get the day off.

EXO 20:10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; {in it} you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

EXO 23:12 "Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease {from labor} in order that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may

refresh themselves.

DEU 5:14 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; {in it} you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

Day laborers were to be paid on the day they worked.

LEV 19:13 `You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob {him}. ***The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning.***

LWO not to be oppressed.

EXO 22:21 "And you shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

EXO 22:22 "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan.

EXO 22:23 "If you afflict him at all, {and} if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry;

EXO 22:24 and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

EXO 23:9 "And you shall not oppress a stranger, since you yourselves know the feelings of a stranger, for you {also} were strangers in the land of Egypt.

LEV 19:33 `When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong.

LEV 19:34 `The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were

aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Necessary items could not be used as collateral.

DEU 24:17 "You shall not pervert the justice due an alien {or} an orphan,
nor take a widow's garment in pledge.

***DEU 24:6 ¶ "No one shall take a handmill or an upper millstone in
pledge, for he would be taking a life in pledge.***

7. How they are to be helped:

Individual responsibilities:

Give and lend to the needy.

05 DEU 15:7 "If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother;

DEU 15:8 but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need {in} whatever he lacks.

DEU 15:8 but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need {in} whatever he lacks.

DEU 15:9 "Beware, lest there is a base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you.

DEU 15:10 "You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the

LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings.

DEU 15:11 "For the poor will never cease {to be} in the land; therefore I command you, saying, `You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'

Longest loan: 6 years long.

DEU 15:1 "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a remission of debts.

DEU 15:2 "This is the manner of remission: every creditor shall release what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother, because Yahweh's remission has been proclaimed.

DEU 15:3 "From a foreigner you may exact it, but your hand shall release whatever of yours is with your brother.

Highest interest rate: % for a fellow Israelite.

EXO 22:25 "If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest.

LEV 25:35 `Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you.

LEV 25:36 `Do not take usurious interest from him, but revere your God, that your countryman may live with you.

LEV 25:37 `You shall not give him your silver at interest, nor your food for gain.

Gleaning: provision.

LEV 19:10 `Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God.

LEV 23:22 'When you reap the harvest of your land, moreover, you shall not reap to the very corners of your field, nor gather the gleaning of your harvest; you are to leave them for the needy and the alien. I am the LORD your God.' "

DEU 24:19 "When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten

a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

DEU 24:20 "When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow.

DEU 24:21 "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow.

Tithing:

Every third year it went to help the needy.

DEU 14:28 ¶ "At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that year, and shall deposit it in your town.

DEU 14:29 "And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

DEU 26:12 "When you have finished paying all the tithe of your increase in the third year, the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan and to the widow, that they may eat in your towns, and be satisfied.

DEU 26:13 "And you shall say before the LORD your God, `I have removed the sacred portion from my house, and also have given it to the Levite and the alien, the orphan and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed or forgotten any of Your commandments.

Collective responsibility:**The community meals were to be shared with the LWO.**

DEU 16:11 and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name.

DEU 16:11 and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name.

DEU 16:14 and you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns.

DEU 26:11 and you and the Levite and the alien who is among you shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you and your household.

The third year tithe to be centrally distributed.

DEU 14:28 ¶ "At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that year, and shall deposit it in your town.

DEU 14:29 "And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

8. Rewards for helping the LWO:

Blessings on the generous/the generous applauded.

PSA 15:5 He does not put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

PSA 37:26 All day long he is gracious and lends; And his descendants are a blessing.

PRO 11:25 The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered.

PRO 22:9 He who is generous will be blessed, For he gives some of his food to the poor.

JER 7:6 {if} you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin,

JER 7:7 then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

Makes God our debtor.

PRO 19:17 He who is gracious to a poor man lends to the \Lord,\ And He will repay him for his good deed.

9. Negative consequences for ignoring them.

The wicked oppress the LWO.

PSA 94:6 They slay the widow and the stranger, And murder the orphans.

JER 5:28 `They are fat, they are sleek, They also excel in deeds of wickedness; They do not plead the cause, The cause of the orphan, that they may prosper; And they do not defend the rights of the poor.

EZE 22:7 "They have treated father and mother lightly within you. The alien they have oppressed in your midst; the fatherless and the widow they have wronged in you.

EZE 22:12 "In you they have taken bribes to shed blood; you have taken interest and profits, and you have injured your neighbors for gain by oppression, and you have forgotten Me," declares the Lord \God\.

EZE 22:13 "Behold, then, I smite My hand at your dishonest gain which you have acquired and at the bloodshed which is among you.

EZE 22:25 "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in her midst, like a roaring lion tearing the prey. They have devoured lives; they have taken treasure and precious things; they have made many widows in the midst of her.

EZE 22:29 "The people of the land have practiced oppression and committed robbery, and they have wronged the poor and needy and

have oppressed the sojourner without justice.

MIC 2:8 "Recently My people have arisen as an enemy -- You strip the robe off the garment From unsuspecting passers-by, From those returned from war.

Warnings against oppressing the LWO.

LEV 19:14 `You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD.

DEU 27:18 ¶ `Cursed is he who misleads a blind person on the road.' And all the people shall say, `Amen.'

PRO 21:13 He who shuts his ear to the cry of the poor Will also cry himself and not be answered.

PRO 23:10 Do not move the ancient boundary, Or go into the fields of the fatherless;

PRO 23:11 For their Redeemer is strong; He will plead their case against you.

MAL 3:5 "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien, and do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts.

Example: the sin of Sodom (Ezekiel).

EZE 16:48 "As I live," declares the Lord Yahweh, "Sodom, your sister and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done.

EZE 16:49 "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy.

EZE 16:50 "Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it.

10. Psalm 82: a strange Psalm.

Whatever the case be, it clearly spells out some major duties of leaders, including defending the LWO.

PSA 82:2 How long will you judge unjustly, And show partiality to the wicked? Selah.

PSA 82:3 Vindicate the weak and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and destitute.

PSA 82:4 Rescue the weak and needy; Deliver {them} out of the hand of the wicked.

11. Examples of generous people/blessings for generosity:

- Job.** JOB 29:12 Because I delivered the poor who cried for help, And the orphan who had no helper.
- JOB 31:16 "If I have kept the poor from {their} desire, Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
- JOB 31:17 Or have eaten my morsel alone, And the orphan has not shared it
- JOB 31:18 (But from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, And from infancy I guided her),
- JOB 31:19 If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, Or that the needy had no covering,
- JOB 31:20 If his loins have not thanked me, And if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep,
- JOB 31:21 If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan, Because I saw I had support in the gate,
- JOB 31:22 Let my shoulder fall from the socket, And my arm be broken off at the elbow.
- JOB 31:32 "The alien has not lodged outside, {For} I have opened my doors to the traveler.
- Boaz.** See the book of Ruth.

12. Statistics: (# of verses with certain terms)

| | |
|-------------------|------|
| Widow | 64 |
| Fatherless/orphan | 8+34 |
| Alien | 44 |
| Poor | 99 |
| Needy | 50 |
| Hired man | 11 |
| Hired servant | 2 |
| Wage earner | 1 |

13. OT as applied to the church today.

Allow the LWO to eat free at your church dinners, and don't make them feel awkward.

Devote a substantial portion of the church budget (OT 1/3) to helping the LWO.
It is legitimate to use tithes to do this.

Don't just give to organizations. Also give/help those for whom you cannot even get a tax credit.

Illustration: Russian Pentecostals (CREATIVITY).

Redistribution of wealth:

Is there a blessing for taking something from someone else and then giving that to the poor? I seriously doubt it. In our day and age there are many who think they will be blessed if they vote for someone who will take from another and give to the LWO. However, this does not fulfill God's expectations, for we have not done anything. We will not be blessed if we steal from others to give to the "needy", especially if we are mainly courting the favor of the less well off. This is similar to the Assyrians plundering other nations to make their citizenry happy.

Giving as offerings that which was acquired by fining other people: condemned by Amos (Amos 2:8).

A conservative position on the Bible is that what the Bible says about God and His expectations of us is true.

The directives of the Bible concern our individual or family responsibilities
Justice is to be performed.

The rich are not to be preferred.

Nor are the poor to be preferred. You shall not favor a poor man in his dispute.
Most societies have not given the less well off the opportunities for justice, and most have not protected them from exploitation and abuse. The OT recognizes this situation.

Societal differences between then and now.

Land laws:

Israel's real estate situation much different.

Abuse of God's real estate laws was rebuked by prophets.

Issues which, according to the prophets, incurred God's wrath:

Any violation of God's ordinances.

Idolatry and occult practices.

Sexual immorality.

Substance abuse.

Violence against the innocent.

Exploitation of the needy.

Denying legal protection to the needy.

False prophecy.

Land law violations.

Charging exorbitant rent.

Exploiting veterans.

Deuteronomy:

Every third year 1/3 of the tithe was to be designated to help the needy.

The needy who are listed: widow, fatherless, resident alien, and Levite (most preachers were poor back then).

This was to be centrally distributed.

Lending.

Year of remission.

Longest loan: 6 years.

Individual responsibility to do this.

Various passages in the OT give incentives for giving to the needy.

Roundabout ways the OT illustrates these principles:

Psalms 82: in a vision, those in charge were to do justice for the needy.

1 Kings 21: Naboth's vineyard.

Prophetic passages which condemn exploitation of the needy.

Isaiah 1.

Malachi 3.

Isaiah 58.

Amos 2;5.

AMO 2:8 "On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar,
And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have
been fined.

AMO 5:6 "Seek the LORD that you may live, Or He will break forth like a
fire, O house of Joseph, And it will consume with none to quench it
for Bethel,

AMO 5:7 For those who turn justice into wormwood And cast righteousness
down to the earth."

AMO 5:23 "Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen
to the sound of your harps.

AMO 5:24 "But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an
ever-flowing stream.

Micah.

MIC 6:8 He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD
require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly

with your God?

Zechariah

ZEC 7:9 "Thus has the LORD of Hosts said, `Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother;

ZEC 7:10 and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.'

ZEC 7:11 "But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing.

ZEC 7:12 "They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the LORD of Hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from the LORD of Hosts.

ZEC 7:13 "And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen," says the LORD of Hosts;

ZEC 8:16 `These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates.

ZEC 8:17 `Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,' declares the LORD."

Ezekiel 23 (Sodom and Gomorrah).

EZE 16:49 "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy.

EZE 16:50 "Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it.