

(8) Lam. 4:16 -- "The anger of the Lord hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders."

In five of these eight references (Lev. 19:15; Deut. 1:17; 16:19, 2 Chron. 19:5 7; Prov. 24:23), the context is clearly one of judgment. Human judges are warned not to allow their judgments to be influenced or perverted by factors extraneous to the issues of truth or falsehood, guilt or innocence, equity or inequity. Whether the persons being Judged are poor or rich, whether they are small or great, whether they offer a gift (bribe?) or not, the Judges should not look upon these external distinctions and Judge accordingly (and thus unjustly). In one of these references the judges are said to be judging for the Lord, which would seem to imply that they should not judge unjustly because God does not judge unjustly (that is, He does not respect persons in His judgment). In two of the references (2 Sam. 14:14; Lam. 4:16), the word "respect" seems to be used in the sense of "looking up to another" or "considering worthy of high regard or esteem". In 2 Sam. 14:14 God is said not to "look up to" any human being; and in Lam. 4:16 the persons spoken of are said to have (wickedly) withheld from the priests of Israel the esteem and high regard which was due them. And in Prov. 28:21 the man who respects persons is said to be ready to transgress God's law in exchange for a piece of bread. This could refer to a man who has given up his own personal integrity, and is ready to lie about or to bear false witness for or against another for any consideration which will accrue to his own personal advantage. This would be respecting persons in the sense of pronouncing false judgments about other persons on the basis of factors extraneous to the issues of truth and falsehood.

b. In the New Testament the term is used in the following Scriptures:

(1) Acts 10:34-35 -- "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respector of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Apart from the question of Cornelius' status as a "proselyte of the gate" (cf. Lenski on Acts 10:2); and apart from the question of whether Cornelius was a true believer in God or not before Peter brought him the gospel; this text appears to be emphasizing the principle that God does not "accept the face" of a Jew merely because he is a Jew, or "reject the face" of a Gentile just because he is a Gentile. In every nation those who fear Him and work righteousness are acceptable (δεκτός). The point appears to be that the distinction between Jew and Gentile (which is valid in other contexts) is a factor which is extraneous to the issue whether or not a man fears God and works righteousness.

(2) Rom. 2:11 -- "For there is no respect of persons with God."

In verses 5-10 Paul speaks of the day of God's righteous Judgment, in which God will render to every man according to his deeds. To those who obey the truth and do good works, He will render glory, honor, peace, and eternal life; to those who disobey the truth and do evil works, He will render indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish. And whether a man is a Jew or a Gentile is an extraneous factor which will not influence God's Judgment in either direction!