



DISCOVERING THE BIBLE & OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGES

Learning about the histories of Bibles, beliefs, movements, institutions, events, and leaders of our Judeo-Christian Biblical Heritages.

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Created in the Image of the Creator

By Jim Myers

And ELOHIYM said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the large animals, the wild animals, and over the small animals that move upon the Earth." And ELOHIYM made mankind in His own image, in the image of ELOHIYM He made him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

ELOHIYM is the transliteration of the Hebrew word that is usually translated "God" by translators. But, since "God" can mean different things to different readers -- YAHWEH, Jesus or Allah (these clearly are not simply different names for the same entity) -- *I decided to use ELOHIYM instead.*

Who is ELOHIYM? Everything we know about Him in the context of the account is recorded in the twenty-five verses that preceded the above quote. ELOHIYM is the **creator** and **maker** of: *light, a solid dome structure, dry ground, seas, plants, trees, water creatures, flying creatures, and animals.* He **names** things and **determines their functions**. ELOHIYM measures all of His work by the **TOV Standard**. The Hebrew word TOV is usually translated "good," but the context it appears here, TOV's contextual definition is:

an act that is beautiful and pleasing to eyes; an act that preserves life, protects life, increases the functionality of life, and/or enhances the quality of life.

The mystery of ELOHIYM. ELOHIYM has no definitive mythology like the gods of other religions. Mythologies focus on the lives of the gods – *miraculous births, spectacular deaths, resurrections, victories and defeats.* The fates of the gods are the deciding and most important factors in those religions. Their mythologies do not begin with the creation of heaven and earth; they begin with the birth of gods. It is the appetites, desires, longings, jealousies, etc. of the gods that determine the fates of the earth and humans. Their gods have no shared moral standards to use to measure their acts and the acts of humans. *Each god or goddess does what it wants to do at any particular time.*

Who is the “us” in the verse above? Many commentaries have been written about this question. The answer that best fits the context is “**ELOHIYM** and the **Earth**.” Notice how they worked together to create the animals.

²⁴ And ELOHIYM said, “**Let the Earth cause to bring forth a living soul** according to her kind: large animals, small animals, and wild animals of the Earth, according to their kinds.” And it was so.

²⁵ **ELOHIYM made** the wild animals of the Earth, according to their kinds, large animals according to their kinds, and the small animals that move upon the ground according to their kinds. And ELOHIYM saw that it was TOV.

The Earth brought forth an *earth-soul* and ELOHIYM made the animals. The earth-soul is the thing that gives the animals the appetites, desires, and longings that are linked to the earth. Water creatures were created before the animals and they were also given a soul, but it was a *water-soul*. Their appetites, desires and longings are linked to water.

Humans are creatures of the Earth and ELOHIYM. They share the *earth-soul* with the animals, but they are different from them because humans also have the *spirit of ELOHIYM*. As long as their earth-soul and spirit of ELOHIYM are in harmony everything is good. When one’s earthly appetites, desires and longings want something, but the way he or she chooses to acquire it does not measure up to the TOV Standard, it is called **RA** (usually translated “evil”). RA is the opposite of TOV:

RA, in this context, is an act that is not beautiful and pleasing to eyes; an act that threatens life, destroys life, decreases the functionality of life, and/or lowers the quality of life.

Humans are in the unique position of being able to consciously choose to do acts like ELOHIYM the Creator or acts like a savage wild animal or deceptive like the serpent in the Garden in Eden. Animals do what they do because of their natures, but humans use their free wills to make their choices. Without freewill, they could not be judged and held accountable for their actions. *Humans have the power to choose to do TOV or RA.*

In this account, the word TOV is used seven times to describe what ELOHIYM saw when he judged His acts. Any word that appears seven times in any biblical account is a sign for readers to pay close attention to it. The author is making an important point that he or she doesn’t want readers to miss. The point here is that ELOHIYM uses the TOV Standard to measure all of His actions. It is the universal standard of the Creator. It is also the universal standard that the acts of those made in His image will be measured.

Being the image of ELOHIYM requires relationships based on equality.

The image of ELOHIYM requires males and females to work together as equals. They were created to be **co-creators** and **co-rulers**, which can be seen in the blessing He pronounced over them: *"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."* (Genesis 1:28) An individual male or female cannot be a reflection of the image of ELOHIYM; neither can a relationship that places one gender over the other.

Knowing ELOHIYM comes through doing what ELOHIYM did. There is a big difference between believing and knowing. Believing that a god exists is a very different thing from knowing ELOHIYM by doing what He did. *The first simply requires a momentary decision. The other requires a lifetime commitment.* Believing that a god exists can be done by an individual alone. Knowing ELOHIYM by doing acts of TOV requires others to be involved. Jesus didn't use the word TOV in the versions of his teachings that have been delivered down to us, but the same idea is clearly seen in his words below:

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"¹ Jesus said: "You shall **love** YAHWEH your ELOHIYM with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."² This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: You shall **love** your neighbor as yourself.³

The first commandment is to *love YAHWEH your ELOHIYM*. How does one obey that commandment? According to Jesus, *it requires loving you neighbor*. How do you fulfill that requirement? *It requires loving yourself*. When we do any act of TOV for our neighbor, it is an act of love for ELOHIYM and for ourselves too. Knowing that we are the image of ELOHIYM means that we are to do acts of TOV for ourselves too. This kind of love isn't based on feelings or emotions. It requires acts of TOV, which is how He loved us first. .

People are not perfect, but they can become better and more perfect.

This is isn't breaking news. Humans are not perfect creatures. We often know what we should do -- *but do not always do it*. At least that's what I've experienced in life -- *how about you?* In many cases, our imperfections are seen by our actions because they conflict with the expectations of the spirit of ELOHIYM and His TOV Standard -- *we also hurt others*. This is what our Bibles usually call "sin" or "RA." It is important to understand that any of "our" sins is not "the" sin -- *it is only "our" sin*. But, even though we caused the harm to another, we did not -- and could not -- change what we are -- *creatures made in the image of ELOHIYM and that is very important!*

What did ELOHIYM do when He confronted imperfection in the opening account of Genesis? He did acts of TOV. This is the key to understanding one of the most powerful spiritual principles in the Hebrew Bible and in the teachings of the Jewish Jesus – **TESHUVAH**. It means “to turn” or “return.” It is usually translated “repentance” and has the connotation of punishment attached to it. In many Christian traditions, sin and punishment are used almost like synonyms. Their message is clear, God will punish sinners. However, a sinner is viewed as something that a person is, and not by what he or she did. In order to “not be a sinner” one has to undergo a mystical transformation and be saved.

But, once a person is saved, that person is no longer a sinner. The problem with such salvation doctrines is the confusion that surrounds the fact that saved people continue to sin and hurt people. But since they are saved, they believe they are now exempt from divine punishment. An unsaved sinner and a saved person can commit the same sin, but there are no consequences for the saved one, while it is believed that the unsaved one will spend eternity in hell. Any act other than a “salvation ritual” seems to be of little or no importance to their God.

This creates an environment in which saved people simply ask their God to forgive them when they sin or harm someone and they believe they are automatically forgiven. This clearly raises a number of questions about divine justice, especially for the ones whose lives are harmed or destroyed by their acts. *Their victims are completely left out of the forgiveness process.* The sinner is free to move on with his or her life – *or search for their next victim.* The publicity surrounding the problem with priests who were sexual predators clearly reveals the deadly consequences that this type of belief system can produce. That is not what TESHUVAH is about. As stated above, it means “to turn” or “return,” which can only be accomplished by doing acts of TOV to restore the lives of victims to what they were before the sin. TESHUVAH ultimately restores both parties. Restoration, not punishment, is what ELOHIYM desires. When the creative power of TOV is done to repair and restore lives of the victims, the result can truly be miraculous for both the sinner and the victim.

Belief in myself. Knowing that I am created in the image and likeness of ELOHIYM gives me belief in myself. My connection to the Creator is based on who I am, my spiritual origin, and cannot be broken. If I turn away from the Creator by doing acts of RA, I can also turn back to the Creator by doing acts of TOV. It is in the spiritual arena that purity, restoration and reconciliation with the Creator is always possible, and that means that in the physical arena, restoration and reconciliation with my neighbor is also possible.

Belief in my neighbor. Knowing that my neighbor is created in the image and likeness of ELOHIYM too gives me belief in my neighbor. My neighbor’s connection to the Creator is also based on his or her spiritual origin in ELOHIYM, and it cannot be broken or taken away. If my neighbor turns away from the

Creator by doing acts of RA, he or she can also turn back to the Creator by doing acts of TOV. It is in the spiritual arena that their purity, restoration and reconciliation with the Creator is always possible too, which means that in the physical arena, my neighbor's restoration and reconciliation with me and others is possible too.

Belief in mankind. Knowing that every person is created in the image of the Creator gives us belief in mankind. We are welded together by a common spiritual heritage and are created to be co-creators like Him. Conflicts that divide us originate in our earth-souls, but the power to restore and bring us together in unity rest in the spirit of the Creator that we all share.

This knowledge about our spiritual origin and roots, its personal character, and the depth of its being in each of us, makes us aware of our spiritual relationship with all forms of life and the Creator's creation in which we live. It is through living in this reality that our own individuality finds its expression. The way that each of us reveals the image of the Creator in his or her life is unique. It is shaped by our personal life experiences and relationships. No one can reveal the image of the Creator in the same way that you do.

Life is a moral demand placed on mankind by the Creator and which only man is able fulfill. Life is the highest moral value in ELOHIYM's creation. Therefore, life is also the highest moral demand and responsibility placed on each individual. Pay close attention to the verse below:

"I have set before you **life** and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore **choose life**, that you may live, both you and your seed."
(Deuteronomy. 30:19)

The focus of salvation is on choosing life instead of death right here on earth through our acts of TOV. It is a task imposed by the Creator and each person must fulfill it "in order that he (or she) may live" (Lev. 18:5). It is a task realizable by all. Based on the teachings of Jesus, the choices we make here also have eternal consequences later:

Then the Son of Man will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'Amen! Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they

will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.
(Matthew 25:41-46)

The righteous are the ones that chose life by doing TOV. They were the revealed image of the Creator to their generation. **BHC**

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May Memorials

In Loving Memory

**SIDNEY
PERRY
DOSH, JR.**

**Born: October 18, 1938
Died: May 17, 2006**

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

In Their Remembrance

May their memories inspire us to seek those qualities of mind and heart which they shared when we walked life's journey together. May we help to bring closer to fulfillment their highest ideals and noblest strivings.

May their memories deepen our loyalty to those things which we valued and shared -- faith, love, peace and devotion and our biblical heritage. As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

(Inspired from prayers found in Yitzhor Reflections - The New Mahzor - The Prayer Book Press)

In Loving Memory

**SIDNEY
BERRY
WARD, SR.**

**October 3, 1891
May 27, 1976**

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*



Sid Dosh

Sid Dosh was a special friend and an associate of Jim Myers and Ike Tennison. He was a co-founder of the Center of Biblical Analysis. Sid was a deep thinker and great scholar. We spent many hours studying ancient Greek and Hebrew texts of biblical books and talking about how they affected lives today. Sid touched many lives -- *and he is greatly missed.* Visit Sid's memorial page on our website at <http://www.biblicalheritage.org/Memorials/dosh.htm>

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¹ Matthew 22:35-36

² Deuteronomy 6:5

³ Leviticus 19:18

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Thank You!