



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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When Man Created Evil

By Jim Myers

Our beliefs about the origin of evil define what evil is and explain why it happens. They influence the way we live as individuals and a nation, and how we respond when “bad” things happen. For Christians and Jews, the Bible plays an important role in understanding evil. For Muslims, the Quran provides those answers.

In the ancient world, a culture’s “*wisdom of the beginnings*” was considered to be one of its most valued treasures. It provides answers to very important questions, such as these:

- (1) *Who are we?*
- (2) *Why are we here?*
- (3) *Where did we come from?*
- (4) *How should we relate to one another?*
- (5) *How should we relate to others?*
- (6) *How are our gods?*
- (7) *How do we relate to the gods?*

The Bible’s Wisdom of the Beginnings is recorded in the Torah (*Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy*). It is recorded in the first ten chapters of *Genesis*. This is where we find the origin of **RA**, which is translated **evil**.



The first time the word **RA** appears in the Bible is in Genesis 2:9 – “*the Tree of the Knowledge of **TOV** and **RA**.*” The Hebrew word “**TOV**” is translated “**good**.” In order to understand what **RA** means in this context, we must first understand the meaning of **TOV**. It had already appeared seven times prior to its appearance as part of the name of the tree. In every case, **TOV** was **the standard that the Creator used** to judge his work: “*And God saw that it was **TOV**.*” (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25 & 31)

In this article I am going to focus on just one of the foundational principles revealed in the opening chapters of Genesis, the origin of **RA** (evil). However, I

need to give you an overview of some of the other principles in order to set the context in which RA (evil) is defined.

- (1) **The mystery of the Creator**. Nothing is revealed about anything that happened before the beginning in Genesis, including the Creator. He has no mythology and that makes him very different from the gods of other cultures who have mythologies that show how they were created, who their parents and children were, their victories, defeats, deaths, resurrections, etc. In the biblical account, there is only one Creator and no gods. There are no other divine beings – *there is only the Creator*. There are no cosmic battles. He is the sole power that plans and creates the Heavens and Earth – *and all their hosts*.
- (2) **Life is the highest value and priority of the Creator**. The first act of creation is light – *light and life are synonymous in the Jewish culture*. Every act of creation after light makes the creation a better and safer place for life to exist -- *a protected dry place, water, food, etc. Life is the highest value and priority of the Creator*.
- (3) **The Creator uses the TOV Standard to judge His work**. As pointed out above, the Creator measures his work by the TOV Standard. The dictionary definition of TOV is “good.” The contextual definition expands it to: *An act that is visible and concrete; beautiful and pleasant to the Creator’s eyes; that makes something more functionally complete; that protects and preserves life; and that enhances the quality of life*.
- (4) **Humans and animals both have Earth-souls, but only humans are created in the image of the Creator**. Humans are unique creatures that are created a little lower than the Creator, but above all other creatures. *They are created with an Earth-soul that gives them appetites, desires and longing that are like the animals. But, they also have the Spirit of the Creator that makes them creatures made in his image*. They have the potential to do acts of TOV like the Creator or acts that are like an animal.
- (5) **Male and female are created to be equals -- co-creators and co-rulers**. They are to be co-creators of acts of TOV and co-rulers over the Earth and the life forms that live on it. It requires male and female, acting in harmony together, to reveal the closest thing possible to the image of the Creator.

These are just five of over twenty core principles revealed in just the first account. *We have a new book coming in approximately the next 90-days that discusses this in much more detail*. Learning the core principles is essential to understanding the opening accounts of Genesis, the Hebrew Scriptures and the teachings of Jesus.

Now, let's turn to the second account of Genesis, which I like to describe as the first case study in the Bible, and discover the origin of evil. Below is a quick overview of the key events that took place before the creation of evil:

- (1) *He made a man by shaping the soil of the ground and breathing His Spirit into it.*
- (2) *The man was created to be a guardian, protector, and worker.*
- (3) *He planted a garden in a place called Eden and placed the man there.*
- (4) *In the center of the garden He planted the **Tree of Life** and the **Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA**.*
- (5) *He commanded the man to eat from any tree in the garden except the Tree of the Knowledge of **TOV and RA**.*
- (6) *He prohibited the man from eating the fruit of the **Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA**.*
- (7) *The forbidden tree was the exclusive property of the Creator.*
- (8) *He created all of the animals, including the serpent, and the man named them.*
- (9) *He made a woman from the man's rib. She was created to be the man's helpmeet, which means that she was equal to and adequate for him.*

It is absolutely essential for us to stick to the words of the biblical text. Many will be tempted to project their beliefs and religion's interpretation into the next event. But our goal is to allow the context to reveal what the ancient author saw and understand what his words meant to him. Later, we can compare it to what we have been taught.

The first thing we must clearly understand is who the characters are: *a man, a woman and a serpent*. The serpent is an animal of the field, created by the Creator, and named by the man. It was created after the man and before the woman. **The serpent was not a fallen angel, the Devil or Satan.** That interpretation will not exist for another thousand years after the words of the first Torah scroll were written. The serpent is simply a wild animal; however, it is different from the snakes we know. This serpent stands upright and can converse with humans. Now we are ready for the introduction to the event:

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his woman; and they shall be one flesh. They were both **ARUMIYM**, the man and his woman; and **had not shamed themselves**. And the serpent was more **ARUM** than any beast of the field which the Creator had made. (Genesis 2:24-25)

The introduction contains three very important pieces of information:

- (1) The man is to cleave to the woman.

- (2) A wordplay of **ARUMIYM** & **ARUM**, which come from the root ARUM that means -- *subtle, shrewd, clever, crafty, and cunning*.¹ The humans and the serpent are *subtle, shrewd, clever, crafty, and cunning*.
- (3) The humans have not experienced shame.

This raises the following questions:

- (1) *Will the man cleave to the woman?*
- (2) *Which will be the most subtle, shrewd, clever, crafty, or cunning – the two humans together or the lone serpent?*
- (3) *Will the two humans shame themselves?*

Now the action begins:

The serpent said to the woman, "Ah, because the Creator said, '**Y'all** shall not eat from any tree of the garden . . .'" (Genesis 3:1b)

The serpent wasn't a "Southern" snake. "**Y'all**" is used to indicate the word is plural. The woman immediately cut the serpent off in mid-sentence:

From the fruit of the trees of the garden **we** may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, the Creator has said, "**Y'all** shall not eat from it and **y'all** shall not touch it, lest **y'all** die." (Genesis 3:2-3)

Notice that the serpent said "any tree," but the woman immediately pointed out a specific tree – "*the tree which is in the middle of the garden.*" There was only one forbidden tree in the garden. *She believed that it was so deadly that **just touching it** would cause them to die.* But, the serpent immediately responds:

Y'all surely shall not die! Because the Creator knows that in the day **y'all** eat from it **y'all's** eyes will be opened, and **y'all** will be like the Creator knowing **TOV** and **RA**." (Genesis 3:4-5)

The serpent accuses the Creator of deceiving them in order to keep them from becoming like him. This caught the woman's full attention:

And **the woman saw** that the tree was **TOV for food**, and that it was **a delight to the eyes**, and that the tree was **to be desired to cause one to understand** (see) . . . (Genesis 3:6a)

The author allows us to see into the mind of the woman:

- (1) *She saw that the tree was TOV for food.*
- (2) *She saw that it was a delight to the eyes.*
- (3) *She saw that it was desired to cause one to become wise.*

The serpent's words changed her reality so dramatically that she now desired the very thing she had believed was so deadly that just touching it would kill her before – something she had believed for her entire life. All it took was words to persuade her to completely change her reality. But after engaging in a conversation with the serpent, and treating its words as if they were true, she began to think like it. She told the serpent what she believed the Creator said, and the serpent told her the Creator lied. Which one would she obey? We won't have long to wait to find out:

she took of its fruit . . . (Genesis 3:6b)

Her moment of truth came when she touched the tree – *and didn't die*. Think about what must have gone through her mind as she held the fruit in her hand knowing that she was still alive. Did this prove that the serpent was right? If it had been right about that, then could it be right about her becoming like the Creator.

and (she) ate it. . . (Genesis 3:6b)

The ancient audience must have been sitting on the edges of their seats as they waited to see what would happen next – *and what happened was not what they expected*:

and she gave also to her man **with** her. . . (Genesis 3:6c)

The man had been standing there the whole time! He had witnessed everything -- *and said nothing*. Why? Was he afraid of the serpent? There may have been another reason. Remember, he was the only one that existed when the Creator gave the commandment. He knew exactly what had been said:

From any tree of the garden **you** may eat freely; but from the *Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA* **you** shall not eat, for in the day that **you** eat from it **you** shall surely die. (Genesis 2:16-17)

Did you notice that the Creator gave the commandment specifically to him (“you” singular) and it nothing about touching the tree? The woman could have climbed the tree and swung from its limbs -- *and nothing would have happened*. So, where did she get the wrong information? The man is only one who could have given it to her. Did he lie to keep her away from the tree? Obviously, if he could keep her from touching it, she would never eat from it. Did he keep quiet because he didn't want her to know that he had lied? Had both of her sources of information not been telling her the truth?

Or, was there another reason? Had the serpent's words beguiled him too? Was he considering the possibility of becoming like the Creator? **Was he willing to**

risk her life to find out what would happen when she ate it? Think about what was going through his mind as watched her take the bite. Had she changed? Was it the same woman or a Creator that offered him the forbidden fruit? Would he obey her or the Creator that had given the commandment?

. . . and he did eat. (Genesis 3:6d)

The moment he took the bite, he created RA (evil). It had never existed before that moment in the Bible. Why did he do it? *He valued the Creator's property more than he valued of human life. He placed something above life and was willing to risk taking her life to get what he wanted.*

And, his act took human life. The Hebrew word literally means "dying you shall die." Death, in this context, is a process and it began the moment the man ate the forbidden fruit – *the humans began to die*. His act caused the humans to begin the process of dying. *Now we can understand the meaning of RA (evil):*

RA (evil) is an act that is visible and concrete; that is not beautiful and pleasant to the Creator's eyes; that makes something less functionally complete; that threatens and destroys life; and, that decreases the quality of life.

Let's review the contextual definition of RA (evil):

- (1) *an act that is visible and concrete*
- (2) *an act that is not beautiful and pleasant to the Creator's eyes*
- (3) *an act that makes something less functionally complete*
- (4) *an act that threatens and destroys life*
- (5) *an act that decreases the quality of life*

The man experienced TOV when the Creator placed him in the garden, provided for all of his needs, and gave him the commandment that would save human life. Now he created and experienced RA (evil) when he did the act that began the process of dying.

And the eyes of them **both** were opened,
and they **knew** that they were **EYRUMIM**. . .²

Remember the wordplay used to introduce this account with **ARUM** (*subtle, shrewd, clever, crafty, and cunning*)? Now the author uses another wordplay that is related to it. **EYRUMIM has the same consonants as ARUM, but different vowels and it means "naked."** Their eyes had been opened. **They knew they were not like the Creator and they had been exposed! It wasn't the Creator that knew TOV and RA – it was the mortal man.** The serpent's words persuaded the humans to covet the Creator's property. This led to their decision to steal it and use it for themselves. The desire to take someone else's

property, at the expense of human life, is a theme that appears throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, Jewish teachings and the message of Jesus. He put it this way: *"You cannot serve God and Mammon."*

In other cultures, gods were viewed as the source of evil. Cosmic battles between the gods were believed to be the causes of good and evil on the earth. People lived in the crossfire of the gods, never knowing what the gods would do next. They believed they had been created to serve and submit to the gods and presented them with offerings, gifts, rituals and prayers – *through their priests and priestesses*. They hoped their acts of obedience would cause the gods to be good and protect them.

The opening accounts in the Torah presented a very different reality. There was only one God and He had no equals or divine enemies. He was all-powerful. At the top of the creation ladder he placed humans and created them in His image. He created humans to be co-creators and co-rulers. He endowed them with the power to create and do TOV like Him. But they had to join together and follow the TOV Standard – *not be like the man and woman in the garden*. If they used the creative power they had been given to do acts that did not meet the TOV Standard -- *they would reveal the image of a wild predatory animal in their generation*. It would be humans, not gods that engage in wars, battles, conflicts, deceptions, etc., on the earth – not gods or devils.

The TOV Standard is the foundation for the justice system established by the Creator. This standard made it possible to distinguish between TOV and RA. Equal justice could exist unencumbered by gender, tribal, wealth, doctrines, or other biases. All would be judged alike and held accountable for their actions. *They didn't have to believe in any god or belong to any religion*. The test of the health of a nation can be measured by its values. If it does acts of TOV for its poorest and weakest members, it is healthy. If it doesn't, it is not.

These are core principles of the Torah. This can be seen in the teachings of one of the most famous Jewish teachers in history – **Jesus**. *Sadly, his lesson about the TOV Standard failed to make it into the religions that claim him as their founder*. When we understand the TOV Standard we see his message and mission in a very different way and it takes on a very different meaning – *especially his salvation message*:

When the **Son of Man** comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. **All the nations** will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a **shepherd** separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. . . Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire . . . 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. . . Then they (RA doers) will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous (TOV doers) to eternal life. (Matthew 25:31-46)

The judgment of all mankind is based on the TOV Standard – *not their tribe, religion, genes, beliefs, wealth, or anything else. This is the salvation message of Jesus – Those who do TOV will be saved!* His point wasn't for people to just do the things listed above; ***it is for people to look at their worlds through the eyes of the Creator and use His TOV Standard to measure what you see. Do acts of TOV when you see dysfunction; lives that are threatened and destroyed; or where the quality of life is being decreased. Identify those that are doing the acts of RA that cause those things, and hold them accountable to a justice system based on equality.*** This was the message, mission, and way of salvation that Jesus taught. The Creator looks for TOV doers and finds them. He will find you, even if they are living in a mass of evil doers – *just like He found Noah!* **BHC**



November Memorials

In Their Remembrance

In Loving Memory

**PAMELA
STRYKER**

December 11, 1941
November 21, 2000

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

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

**JOHNNIE
VERA BOND**

February 21, 1893
November 30, 1985

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

¹ A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerrushalmi, and Midrahic Literature: Volume I; compiled by Marcus Jastrow; Printed in Israel; p. 1115a.

² Genesis 3:7a

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