

DISCOVERING THE BIBLE & OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGES

Learning the meanings of the ancient words and messages of our Bibles; how those words were passed down to us; and the origins of the movements and institutions of our Judeo-Christian Biblical Heritages.

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Seeing Through the Creator's Eyes

By Jim Myers

In the ancient world, a culture's wisdom of the beginnings was one of its most valuable treasures. It revealed the origin of its god(s), who belonged, who didn't belong; it defined relationships of the god(s) to each other, the god(s) to people, and people to those inside and outside the group. ***The Bible's Wisdom of the Beginnings*** is recorded in the *Book of Genesis*. My focus in this article is on the standards, principles and core values it has preserved for over 2,500 years.

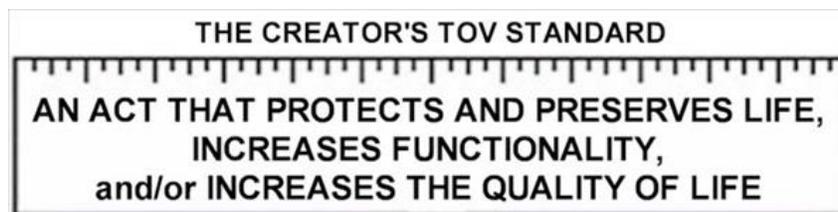
The Bible's Wisdom of the Beginnings opens with the Creator facing a lifeless lightless environment in which a deep primordial ocean is enveloped in complete darkness. This is where the first principle is revealed. I call it the *Mystery of the Creator*. It is a foundational principle of the Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish culture:

*The Creator has no mythology. Nothing is revealed about Him before "the beginning."
Everything we know we learn from what He does.*

The first act of the Creator revealed the most important principle:

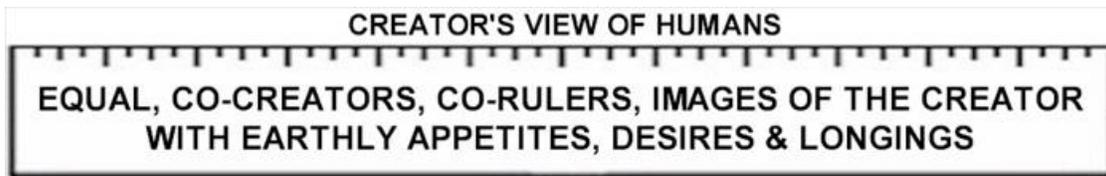
Life is the Creator's highest value and first priority.

This was followed by the act that is a defining trait of the Creator. He judges everything that is done by His standard. I call it the **TOV Standard**.



Each act of the Creator met this standard. Each successive act was made possible by the previous acts. When viewed the acts together, the Creator's acts reveal the **Creator's Basic Requirements for Life: life, knowledge, safety, shelter, dry land, food, water, clothing, equality, power, and justice**. These are the foundational requirements for a human to live a life that measures up to the TOV Standard. The importance of the basic requirements above will be repeated many times in the Hebrew Scriptures and the teachings of Jewish teachers. ***They are so important that the Prophets proclaimed that it was the failure of Jews to make sure their brothers had them that caused their nation to fall!***

Another foundational principle revealed here is the Creator's view of human beings:



Humans are unique creatures. We are created in the image of the Creator, and when we act together and do acts according to His standard, can be the closest thing to Him in our world. But, we are also linked to the animals, because we have an earth-soul like the animals. Our soul is the center of our appetites, desires and longings. When humans are ruled do acts to satisfy their earth-souls instead by doing acts that do not measure up to the TOV Standard, they can become the images of a wild predator beast ó *as we shall see later.*

The key to understand what we were created to be and do is an accurate understanding of the meaning of the word “create.” The Hebrew translated “create” means: “*to change the shape of something that exists.*”¹ In the context of the biblical account:

Creativity is an act that changes what exists to what the Creator wants it to be.

In order to be what the Creator created us to be, we must know, understand and agree on the following:

- (1) *What the Creator does.*
- (2) *The meaning of “create.”*
- (3) *The Creator’s TOV Standard*
- (4) *The Basic Requirements for Life*
- (5) *The Creator’s View of Humans*

Make sure you understand that there is no requirement to believe any mythology about the Creator and this is not the exclusive vision for a tribe. ***The Bible’s Wisdom of the Beginnings reveals standards and values that are for all mankind!***

It also reveals what humans can do if they allow their earth-soul appetites, desires and longings to go unchecked and entice us to do acts that do not measure up to His TOV Standard. This lesson begins with the story of a man named Adam and a woman named Eve. They lived in luxury in the Garden of the Creator, which was located in a place called Eden. They were provided everything they needed to live in such luxury. The Creator allowed them to eat from any tree in His garden, except one of the tree in the middle of the garden ó ***the Tree of Knowledge of TOV and RA.*** The amazing thing about the location of that tree is that growing right next to it was one of the most sought after trees in the mythologies of other cultures -- ***the Tree of Life.***

There are many lessons we can learn from this account, but we are going to focus on the most important. **It begins when Eve encounters a walking talking religious snake that claims to know how the humans can become like the Creator!** *Of course, readers already know from the previous account that the humans were created in the image of the Creator, and that to be like Him, all they need to do is act together to do acts that measure up to the TOV Standard.*

I am sure you already know the story, but something you may have missed is that while the serpent was talking to and tempting the woman the man was standing right there the whole time -- *and he did nothing*. He failed to guard and protect her. He failed to accurately communicate the Creator's commandment to her. He watched her do what the serpent enticed her to do. And, he did what she told him, knowing that it was forbidden. In addition, the Creator clearly told him that eating it would cause him to die. Instead of following the TOV Standard, Adam created his own standard and new value:



Adam had been persuaded by the words of a wild animal that **property** (the forbidden fruit) **was more valuable than human life**. He valued property over human life. The Creator created TOV (good) by His acts. Adam created RA (evil) by his acts. Evil is *an act that threatens or destroys life, decreases functionality and/or quality of life*.

Since the forbidden fruit was the property of the Creator, Adam also committed the first act of theft in the Bible ó *he stole the Creator's property*. Theft and evil have gone hand- in-hand throughout the history of mankind. Adam also violated the TOV Standard by not treating Eve as an equal co-creator and not acting together as co-rulers over the wild animal. Adam and Eve will ultimately lose their lives because of his act of RA (evil). Their functionality and quality of life would dramatically decrease when they were driven from the Creator's Garden. After the humans were judged by the Creator, they would also become mortal being ó *a fate that will be passed on to all of their future descendants*.

Adam and Eve had twins after traveling to their new home. Cain and Abel had to work the fields to provide what they needed to survive. Cain became a farmer like his dad, and Abel became the first shepherd in the Bible. Even though they didn't live with the Creator, He did not forget them. He established an appointed time for Cain and Abel to bring offerings from their crops and herds to Him. It was at one of those appointed times that something very unexpected happened -- *the Creator completely ignored Cain and his offering*.

What would you have done if you had been in Cain's place? You and your brother bring your gifts and place them before the Creator and He looks directly at your brother and his gift ó *and completely ignores your gift and you!* Cain became exceedingly angry. He was not angry with the Creator though ó *Cain was angry with his brother!* The Creator may have ignored Cain and his offering, but He did not ignore Cain's anger. He told Cain to do acts of TOV and that would give him dominion over his anger, but if he didn't do acts of TOV, sin would overpower him. His father's challenge was the serpent. Cain's serpent was his anger. Would he rule over anger, or would he be ruled by it?

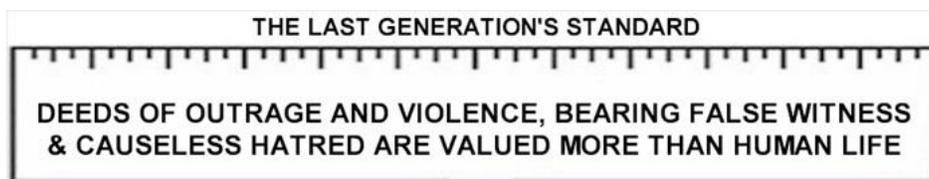
Cain followed in his father's footsteps and valued property (his offering) over human life and murdered his brother Abel. This time death was violent and immediate. Immediately Abel's bloods, his descendants that would never be born, began calling out from the ground to the Creator for justice. The Creator heard their cries and confronted Cain and he responded with one of the most famous statements recorded in the Bible ó *Am I my brother's keeper?* The answer isn't recorded in the Bible, but it would have been ó *You should have been!*

Cain quickly learned there were consequences for his actions. First, he was cursed by Abel's bloods *ó* *the ground would produce even less for Cain than it did for Adam*. Then he was forced to leave his homeland and live as a nomad. He left by himself because he had no mate. Later, somewhere on his journey, he found a mysterious woman and they had a son and named him Enoch. Cain settled down and built the first city recorded in the Bible.

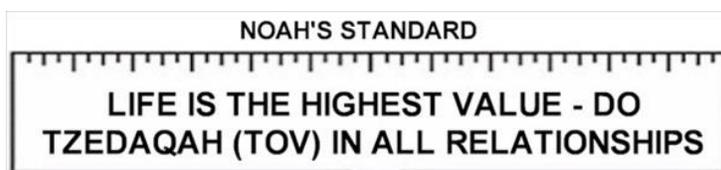
Adam and Eve had another son and they named him Seth, who they raised very differently from the way they raised Cain and Abel. They taught Seth to live according to Creator's standards and he taught his sons -- and each generation passed it on to the next generation. Cain's descendants also passed down what they learned from him. In Cain's line, we learn about a descendant named Lamech *ó* *a man that murdered a stranger just because he wanted to overpower someone*. His victim had not threatened him and he did not want the stranger's property. Lamech wanted to exceed the act of violence done by Cain. He even created a song about his evil act (the first song in the Bible).



In Seth's line, we learn about another Enoch (not Cain's son) -- *he "walked with the Creator."* In other words, he lived according to the Creator's standards and values. The Creator would ultimately take him to be with Him. Enoch's message was passed on to his descendants. As time passed, the descendant of Cain and Seth intermarried and a generation emerged that followed a new standard and their deeds caught the attention of the Creator.



When the Creator measured their actions by the TOV Standard and what He saw things so horrible that He made the decision to destroy the whole generation *ó* *until He saw a man named Noah*. Noah had received the teachings of Enoch and lived by another standard.



The Creator destroyed everyone in that generation except saved Noah and his family. He saved them because of what Noah did.



After Noah and his family returned to dry land after the Flood, He gave them a standard of justice that mankind had not known before:



If this standard had been in place during the lives of Cain and Lamech, they would have had their lives taken for their acts of murders. This brings us to the close of this section of *The Bible's Wisdom of the Beginnings*. Make sure you remember the standards and values we learned from it that are listed below.

- (1) **The Creator's TOV Standard**
- (2) **The Creator's Basic Requirements of Life**
- (3) **The Creator's View of Humans**
- (4) **The Creator's Standard for Salvation**
- (5) **The Creator's Standard for Justice**

The Standards and Values of Jesus

Now we are going to jump five centuries ahead to the time of Jesus. There many lessons we can learn from his words that have been preserved in the Synoptic Gospels. Here, I am going to focus on what has to be the most important. It is his message about the Great Day of Judgment. Keep the standards and values above in mind as you read the words of Jesus:

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.²

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

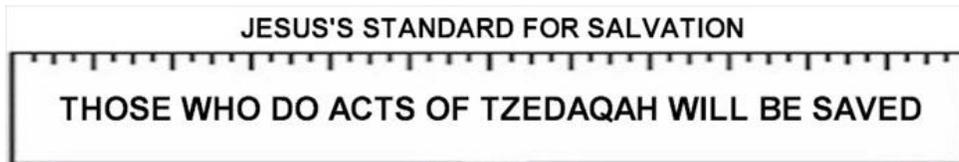
Then the ones who did **TZEDAQAH** will answer him, "Master, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "Amen! I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for Me."³

Then he 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! I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."⁴

Then they (the group on the left) will go away to eternal punishment, **but the ones who did acts of TZEDAQAH to eternal life.**⁵

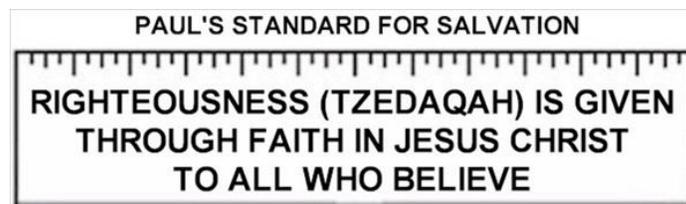
Make sure you clearly understand Jesus's Salvation Standard.



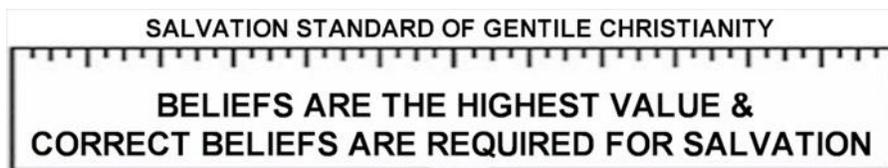
Doesn't it look familiar?



It was the salvation standard that saved Noah. From The Bible's Wisdom of the Beginnings through the Synoptic Gospels there is agreement about what the Creator's standards and values are. But, things changed after Jesus. The transition away from the standards and values of Jesus began with a man named Paul. Paul's movement began about a decade after Jesus had been crucified. *Paul never heard or saw the Jesus of the Gospels and he was not one of the twelve apostles Jesus called.* Paul claimed that, **in a vision**, Jesus gave him a new gospel, one that no one else had ever heard before. It was exclusively his gospel, salvation standard and values.



In Antioch, Paul's followers were the first group called "Christians," something that neither Jesus nor any of the original apostles were called. Paul's Standard created the model that would become the Salvation Standard of Gentile Christianity:



Compare the above two standards to Jesus's Standard:

JESUS'S STANDARD FOR SALVATION

**LIFE IS THE HIGHEST VALUE &
THOSE WHO DO ACTS OF TZEDAQAH WILL BE SAVED**

Clearly they are completely different standards. Many different groups of Gentile Christians emerge in the next few centuries, but they share the same basic standard based on their own unique beliefs about who Jesus was and what he came to do. For centuries different types of Christian standards were seen in groups that co-existed and did not insist on their beliefs, being the only beliefs. But that changed when the Roman Church received the support and power of Emperor Constantine the Great. Now there was one universal (catholic) church and failure to comply its standards and values could result in severe consequences of *finis, torture, imprisonment, banishment or even death.*

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Roman Church continued to grow and expand its power. The popes created mutually rewarding relationships with kings and tribal leaders in which secular power was used to enforce and protect the Catholic Church. And then, a new standard appeared in the Roman Catholic Church in the 12th century of *it extended the pope's power to punish beyond the grave:*

ROMAN CATHOLIC STANDARD FOR SALVATION

**THERE IS NO SALVATION OUTSIDE THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

In the 16th century, Martin Luther protested against the pope selling indulgences to raise money. An indulgence was basically *after-life insurance* that covered past or future sins. Even though everyone in the Church would ultimately be saved, according to Catholic theology, sinners could be sent to purgatory for varying amounts of time before they went to heaven. How did the pope respond to Luther's protest? He excommunicated him, which meant Luther lost his salvation. But, Luther quickly solved that problem by creating a new salvation standard of his own:

MARTIN LUTHER'S STANDARD FOR SALVATION

**ONLY THE ELECT WILL BE SAVED &
SALVATION IS BY GRACE ALONE**

Luther did away with the need for the Roman Catholic Church as the way to salvation. Many followed Luther's standard and left the Roman Church. But soon disagreements arose among them over the term of *only the elect.* So, they created another standard and changed it:

PROTESTANT STANDARD FOR SALVATION

**ONLY THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN JESUS WILL BE SAVED
& THEY WILL BE SAVED BY GRACE ALONE**

Many new Protestant Christian churches arose after that, many resulted from disagreements over beliefs and who should be in charge. Connections with kings and tribal leaders often proved to be the key to who prevailed. Inquisitions attest to the abuse of power that took place within Catholic and Protestant Christianity. During the rise of Protestantism, another new challenge arose when individuals discovered new ways of understanding their world and launched the beginning of the period known as the Scientific Revolution and another new standard.

SCIENCE STANDARD FOR TRUTH
**FACT BASED TRUTHS ACQUIRED BY
OBSERVATION, EXAMINATION & TESTING**

As time passed, and new scientific discoveries were made, a number of religious beliefs were challenged. Science gained support and power as new discoveries led to new technologies. A major conflict arose between religion and science just before the Civil War when Charles Darwin published his *Theory of Evolution*.

DARWIN'S THEORY OF EVOLUTION
**DIVERSE GROUPS OF ANIMALS EVOLVE FROM ONE OR A FEW
COMMON ANCESTORS & THE MECHANISM BY WHICH THIS
EVOLUTION TAKES PLACE IS NATURAL SELECTION**

A group of evangelical Christians held an annual series of conferences in the late 19th century and one of its goals was to address the challenges science presented to their beliefs. They ultimately created a new standard and Christian fundamentalism:

FUNDAMENTALISTS STANDARD FOR SALVATION
**ONLY THOSE BELIEVING IN VIRGIN BIRTH, ATONEMENT,
RESURRECTION, IMMINENT RETURN OF OF JESUS,
& INERRANCY OF BIBLE WILL BE SAVED**

Let's take a moment to compare this, and the other Christian standard above, to Jesus's Salvation Standard:

JESUS'S STANDARD FOR SALVATION
**LIFE IS THE HIGHEST VALUE &
THOSE WHO DO ACTS OF TZEDAQAH WILL BE SAVED**

The bottom line is that Jesus required actions, while the other standards demand adherence to beliefs, creeds and doctrines. The standard that 2,000,000,000 Christians choose to follow has tremendous implications for what kind of nation and world we will live in. Take another look at Jesus's Standard and make sure you understand that he was interested in how people interact with other people, not what they believe about any supernatural entity. What does your religion care about the most?

BHC

December Memorials

In Loving Memory

**MARJORIE
ANN
STEWART**

**b. 1927
December 21, 2009**

*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)



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Thank You & Shalom!

¹ The New Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (© 1907 Oxford University Press; Reprinted 1981 by Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc.; Lafayette, Indiana; p. 135a).

² Matthew 25:31-33

³ Matthew 25:34-40

⁴ Matthew 25:41-45

⁵ Matthew 25:46