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Parenting: The Creator's Blessing & Hope

By Jim Myers

*The first eleven chapter of the book of Genesis reveal the foundational core values and guiding principles the Creator gave for all humanity. Interestingly, the thing you will not find there is the founding of a religious institution. How is humanity supposed to learn the Creator's core values and principles? It will be through the first sacred and spiritual institution established by the Creator *ó* the family. Its leaders are called *ö*parents.*ö* It is found in homes -- *not the institutions of government, education or religion*. It should be the source of solutions for many of the issues and problems facing our society will be found.*

In this article I will discuss the core values and guiding principles revealed by the Hebrew text of Genesis 1. There are others important values beside the ones I will discuss here, but these are the foundational values that shape our views about ourselves and others, and play an important role in how we relate to each other. The verse below reveals three primary core values. After that, the verses that follow reveal five sacred acts that form the spiritual foundation envisioned by the Creator.

*The Creator created the man with His image,
with the image Creator He created him,
male and female He them. . . ¹*

The three primary core values are:

- (1) *ö*priority of human life*ö* *ó* Every human is created *ö*with His image (Spirit)*ö*. This sets human life apart from the rest of the creation. Human life is the highest core value and top priority of the Creator *ó* *and that makes human life the highest core value and top priority of mankind.*
- (2) *ö*human equality*ö* *ó* Since every human is created *ö*with His image (Spirit)*ö* all humans are created as equal creatures who are all valued by the Creator.
- (3) *ö*gender equality*ö* *ó* The Creator created human males and females as equals.

These are the foundational core values given by the Creator for mankind. When they become the shared values of a community, they empower its members to achieve the quality of life and reach the potential for which they were created. Now, let's turn to the five sacred acts that combine to build a solid spiritual foundation:

The Creator blessed them and said to them:

The Hebrew word translated **öblessedö** means *öto empower, enrich and endow.ö* Pay close attention to what He empowered, enriched, and endowed humans to do:

*"Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the Earth.
Subdue the Earth and shepherd the fish of the Sea, the winged creatures of the Heaven, and
over everything that moves on the Earth.
Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth,
and every tree which has fruit yielding seed, it shall be food for you."²*

Now let's examine each in more detail:

- (1) **öbe fruitful and multipleö** ó The way human life, the highest core value and top priority of the Creator, is created is by sexual intercourse. *This makes sex a sacred and spiritual act.* It also reveals that sex has a spiritual dimension that profoundly changes the relationship of those who engage in it to each other -- *their relationship will never be like it was before.*
- (2) **öfill the earthö** ó Infants know how to do very little instinctively -- *suck, defecate, breathe, sweat, cry, see, hear, and other simple reflexes.* Young children cannot survive by themselves. They require parents that nurture, protect and teach them. *This makes parenting a sacred and spiritual act.*
- (3) **ösubdue the earthö** ó Humans are unique creatures created with the image (Spirit) of the Creator, an earth-soul like the animals and a free-will to choose what type of acts they will do. Humans are neither equals of the Creator nor only animals.

Humans have the capacity to do acts like the Creator, acts that are called **öTOVö** (*good*) -- *acts that protect life, preserve life, make life more functional, and/or increase the quality of life.*

At the other extreme, humans have the capacity to do acts like a wild predatory animal by doing acts that are called **öRAö** (*evil*) -- *acts that destroy life, threaten life, make life less functional, and/or decrease the quality of life.*

This makes self-discipline and impulse control sacred and spiritual acts.

- (4) **öshepherdingö** -- The Hebrew word **RADAH** is translated *örule overö* or *öhave dominionö* in many translations. But, the Hebrew lexicon reveals something very important about this word's basic meaning -- *öit denotes the travelling around of the shepherd with his flock."³* The requirements of a shepherd are:

provide food for the flock

provide water for the flock

strengthen the weak members of the flock

restore the sick members of the flock to good health

guide the flock down the right path

protect the flock from danger

protect the flock from predators

This makes the leadership based on shepherding a sacred and spiritual act.

- (5) **eat green vegetation, herbs and fruits** -- Humans require a diet that includes green vegetation, herbs and fruits. Modern research agrees completely with this ancient wisdom. *This makes eating a sacred and spiritual act.*

Now let's review the above acts that are understood to be sacred and spiritual to the Creator:

- (1) *sex*
- (2) *parenting*
- (3) *self-discipline and impulse control*
- (4) *leadership*
- (5) *eating*

Think about how viewing the above as sacred and spiritual acts transforms daily life *ó at home and work!* Many people consider things like going to a church or synagogue, praying, or Bible reading as their primary sacred and spiritual acts. But, according to Creator, those are secondary to treating the acts above as sacred and spiritual acts.

The biblical text now moves to what I like to call the first case study in the Bible. It is about the first parents in the Bible *ó Adam and Eve*. It is not a retelling of the creation account. It will reveal things that they should not have been done, provides insights about why things happened, and help us understand things that they should have done. Let's begin by putting ourselves in the shoes of Cain and Abel *ó the first children in the Bible* -- and consider what their parents were like.

- (1) *They did not have a father or mother.*
- (2) *They were created as full-grown adults.*
- (3) *They had never seen or experienced pregnancy before.*
- (4) *They had never seen a birth before.*
- (5) *They probably hadn't connected the dots between sex and making babies yet.*
- (6) *They had never seen a child.*
- (7) *They never experience childhood.*

The article will continue on the next page.

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In addition to the above, before they became your parents, they had some experiences that definitely affected their relationship to each other:

- (1) *They had lived in Yahweh's Garden, a place of luxury where they never worked a day in their lives.*
- (2) *The Creator gave Adam a commandment, but he failed to tell Eve exactly what it was.*
- (3) *Supplied with the wrong info, Eve was deceived by a walking talking snake.*
- (4) *Adam neither corrected his mistake nor protected her from the snake.*
- (5) *Even though he knew better, Adam broke Yahweh's commandment.*
- (6) *The Creator kicked them out of their luxurious home with all of its benefits.*
- (7) *They had to make a new home and work very hard just to provide their basic needs.*
- (8) *They also lost access to immortality and were told they were going to die – whatever that meant?*

Can you imagine some of the conversations of their parents that Cain and Abel heard:

Eve: *If you had done what Yahweh told you to do we wouldn't be in this mess!*

Adam: *I wouldn't have done it if you hadn't taken the first bit and handed the dang fruit to me?*

Eve: *I didn't stick it your mouth – you took it from me and gobbled it down!*

Adam: *I wouldn't have had any problems if Yahweh hadn't given you to me!*

Eve: *You and the serpent would have made a good couple – you are both just alike!*

Somehow, Cain and Abel survived childhood. Cain became a farmer like his dad and Abel decided to become a shepherd, probably with his mother's help. Every so often, they had an appointed time to meet with Yahweh and bring Him offerings from their crops and flocks. On one of those occasions, something very strange happened:

And Yahweh gazed toward Abel and toward for his offering; but toward Cain and toward his offering He did not gaze.⁴

We can't imagine how much hard work and long hours Cain had invested in the crop from which he took the gift that he brought to Yahweh. Now, put yourself back into Cain's shoes again. How would you feel, standing there after you presented your gift to Yahweh *ó* *and He completely ignored you and the gift!* Obviously, since He is the immortal Yahweh and you are a mortal man, you would have enough sense to carefully consider your options. You know the story of what He did to your parents. *So, you simply stand there and continue to be completely ignored.*

But then, as you stand there, your attention shifts to who and what have His full attention *ó* *your brother Abel and his gifts!* Then, you realize that your brother didn't just bring Him any gift *ó* *his gift consists of*

the best things of his flock! You knew that you had just grabbed some things and brought them to Yahweh. At that moment you began to get angry ó *very very angry at your brother Abel for bringing his best!* You get so angry your face turns bright red, and then at that moment ó *you realize you now have Yahweh's full attention!*

As I said above, the biblical text doesn't tell us what happened in their childhood, but a lot of what we now know anger reveals something important about their childhood:

No one is born with a chronic anger problem. Rather, chronic anger and aggressive response styles are learned. There are multiple ways that people learn an aggressive angry expression style. Some people learn to be angry in childhood by copying the behavior of angry people around them who influence others by being hostile and making threats.⁵

Anger was something that was not new to Cain and Abel. They had probably witnessed it many times in their parents' lives. Cain's reaction was probably something he learned from watching them. But this time, Yahweh intervened and told Cain how he to control his anger ó *as well as the consequences that will follow if he failed to control it.*

(Yahweh said) "Surely, if you do well (YTV), you shall be upstanding, but if you do not do well (YTV), sin will be a like a crouching animal at your door; its desire shall be for you, but you will be able to master it."⁶

The key to understanding Yahweh's instructions is the word **YTV**. It is an alternative form of **TOV** that we saw above.⁷ Yahweh taught Cain a lesson about the His values and one of the sacred and spiritual acts listed above ó *the value of human life and the sacred and spiritual act of self-discipline and impulse control.*

Do acts that protect human life, preserve human life, make human life more functional, and increase the quality of human life – and you will be upstanding (i.e., not like the snake in the garden that now crawls on its belly).

Allowing his anger to control him would be like what his father did when he gave in to the snake in the garden and did what it said, instead of obeying Yahweh. Cain chose give in to his anger and act like the snake -- a wild predatory animal -- *crouching, waiting to spring on its victim*. We don't know if Adam and Eve were aware of what was going on ó *or even if Abel Cain was angry?* But, based on what happens later, it appears that his parent knew what Yahweh had said to Cain.

*And Cain appointed a place to meet Abel his brother.
And it was when they were in the field,
that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.⁸*

His parents brought a long rap sheet that included a number of firsts in the biblical text: *Adam told the first lie; Adam helped Eve commit the first act of theft by stealing Yahweh's property; Adam broke Yahweh's first commandment; and was Adam was the first to be sentenced to leave Yahweh's garden*. In short, Cain's father was known as *the creator of evil* in the biblical text. But, until Cain murdered Abel, Adam and Eve had never witnessed death or understood the potential consequences of their actions. Now they experienced one of the most traumatic experiences imaginable ó *the loss of a child by murder*. And, to make things even more horrible, their other child was the murderer -- *and they lost him too*.

When Cain left home, they knew they would never see him again. Adam and Eve were alone once again, but Abel's death had changed them. Think about what their discussions must have been like. I imagine questions like these came up often:

- (1) *Why did this happen?*
- (2) *What could we have done to prevent it?*

We know their relationship. How do we know? They had another son and named him "Seth." Nothing is revealed about Seth except his line of descendants, which include two very famous men whose lives are described by this phrase "and he walked with God."

- (1) **Enoch** "Seth's great-great-great-great-grandson"
- (2) **Noah** "Seth's great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandson"

Adam and Eve were very different parents and Seth grew up in a very different home from that of Cain and Abel. They taught Seth the wisdom that would have saved Abel's life if Cain had followed it:

The priority of human life and his responsibility to do acts that protect human life, preserve human life, make human life more functional, and/or increase the quality of human life.

Adam and Eve taught Seth through their words and actions "and their decision had very far-reaching consequences:

Adam and Eve taught this to Seth; Seth taught it to Enosh; Enosh taught it to Cainan; Cainan taught it to Mahalaleel; Mahalaleel taught it to Jared; Jared taught it to Enoch; Enoch taught it to Methuselah; Methuselah taught it to Lamech; Lamech taught it to Noah; and, the Creator saw that Noah lived according to His wisdom and He saved humanity.⁹

While Seth was being taught the wisdom of the Creator by Adam and Eve, Cain was teaching his son, the first grandson in the biblical text, something very different. What did Cain teach? The text provides clues that make it clear Cain did not regret murdering Abel. *The only thing Cain regretted was the punishment he received.* He glorified the violent way he murdered his own brother in the field that day. His son's name was also Enoch. *The first two Enochs in the Bible lived very different lives.* Cain's evil teachings were passed down through his descendants as we can see through the lives of the two descendants below:

- (1) **Lamech** "Cain's great-great-great-grandson"
- (2) **Naamah** "Cain's great-great-great-great-granddaughter"

What do we know about Lamech? The first song recorded in the biblical text was created by him and it tells us a great deal about his values:

"For a man I slew, as soon as I wounded him, Yea, a young man, as soon as I bruised him. If sevenfold Cain shall be avenged, then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."¹⁰

Lamech had been taught that Cain was a hero and important man because of the violent way he murdered his brother and the punishment he received from Yahweh for that act. How would Lamech have learned Cain's story?

Lamech learned it from his father Methushael; Methushael learned it from his father Mehujael; Mehujael learned it from his father Irad; Irad learned it from his father Enoch; and, Enoch learned it from his father Cain.

Lamech, however, didn't simply pass on Cain's story to his son Jabal ó *he glorified himself by adding his own evil act to Cain's!* Lamech raised the bar for evil to a higher level for Jabal and his descendants.

Jabal passed on Lamech's story to Jubal; Jubal passed it on to Tubal-cain; Tubal-cain passed it on to his daughter Naamah, the last of Cain's descendants who lived in the generation of the Flood.

Whose values did the generation of Naaman and Noah, the final generation before the Great Flood, adopt ó *the values of Seth or Cain?*

*Yahweh saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.*¹¹

*Now the earth was corrupt in the Creator's sight and was full of **HAMAS**. The Creator saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways.*¹²

By the time of Noah and Naaman Cain's values prevailed and had even become more evil after Lamech? Noah and Naaman lived in a world surrounded by people that routinely did acts of **HAMAS**:

***HAMAS** connotes deeds of outrage and violence, where acts of bearing false witness and causeless hatred were the normal ways of life.*¹³

The last generation before the Flood was an angry generation full of resentment and causeless hatred. They lied to each other and lashed out at others through acts of violence. The Creator sums up the root cause of how this happened:

*"Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood."*¹⁴

*This situation began with the inclinations of the hearts of the children ó a failure in parenting. It also reveals that the solution to the situation ó successful parenting. Noah had different inclinations of the heart. **Noah's dad was also named Lamech**, a very different father than of the other Lamech. *In Noah's heart human life was the priority of human and he accepted the responsibilities that went with it.**

The theme of the importance of parenting is seen throughout the Hebrew Scriptures in the stories about good and bad parents. There is also another important theme ó *people change and bad parents can become good parents*. The home was a sacred and spiritual center long before and for thousands of years after temples existed. The home and the institution of parenting the Creator created by His blessing -- *is what the Creator relied on in the biblical account for His hopes to be fulfilled – and He still relies on today to continue the process.*

America has turned into a meaner, more dangerous and difficult place. There is no need to provide you with a list of mass shootings, domestic violence stats, shocking accounts of kidnapping, workplace shootings, gang violence, etc. You are well aware of them. Millions of people worry about the safety of

their children, no matter where they are -- *public schools, churches, malls, theaters, public parks, sporting events, etc.* Even attending a celebration of our nation's birthday could be a deadly decision. Over last month's July 4th holiday, just in Chicago -- *82 people were shot and 14 died.*

You do not have to be told that a tremendous amount of resentment and anger is smoldering in the lives of many members of our society. Just turn on any news broadcast today and you will be told of horrible deeds of **HAMAS** (not the terrorist organization) in your town. You witness people shouting accusations and insults at one another *ó and know how quickly a stranger could become angry with you for no reason.*

*Is there a connection between what we are witnessing in our society and the inclinations of the hearts of the children today? **Who is teaching the children of our generation their core values and guiding principles?** Is it the parents who view parenting as a sacred act, or predatory strangers that use glorified deeds of HAMAS in stories, movies, apps, games and social media *ó to sell their products and services?* If people kept a log of how much time they spent interacting with their children versus how much time their children spend with strangers online *ó what do you think the results be?* We believe that the Creator's ancient wisdom has the power to change things in our generation too. It begins in the sacred and spiritual institution of the home with parents who teach their children by their words and actions:*

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¹ Genesis 1:27

² Genesis 1:27-29

³ *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament Volume 3* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner; © 1996 by E. J. Brill; New York, NY; p. 1190 col. a-b

⁴ Genesis 4:4b-5a

⁵ http://www.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=doc&id=5807&cn=116

⁶ Genesis 4:6-7

⁷ <http://www.nnqs.org/sollamo.html>

⁸ Genesis 4:8

⁹ Genesis 5

¹⁰ Genesis 4:23-24

¹¹ Genesis 6:5-8

¹² Genesis 6:11-13

¹³ *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part Two*, by U. Cassuto; pp. 52.

¹⁴ Genesis 8:21-22