



Judaism, Christianity and the United States of America are “*values-based collectives.*” They all “*value and hold sacred the survival and flourishing of all lives.*”

- *Judaism and Christianity teach about a God that created human equality by making them in Its image. Their institutions also teach other beliefs about God and humans; and what God commands. Some of those are the problem.*
- *American Democracy is founded on beliefs that are twin summits of human empowerment – equality and liberty. Government institutions make and enforce laws that govern behaviors, and determine how power and resources are distributed. Some of those are the problem too.*

The belief in *equality* did not originate in America; it was brought to America as part of the religious beliefs of the colonists. It was part of the Scriptures of Judaism and Christianity. Belief in equality played a major role in the founding of America and we believe it can play a major role in bringing Americans together today.

But, history makes it clear that *beliefs* about God and *equality* haven't kept *Jews from killing Jews, Christians from killing Christians and Americans from killing Americans!* It has been their *beliefs about humans* that have been the most important *in protecting them*. “Equality” is highlighted in their founding documents – *Scriptures* and the *Declaration of Independence*.

In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.

*And God created man in His image,
in His image He created him;
male and female He created them.*

The above verses are found in Genesis 1:1 and 27, which is part of Jewish and Christian Scriptures. They challenged the “*natural ways*” people viewed gods and themselves.

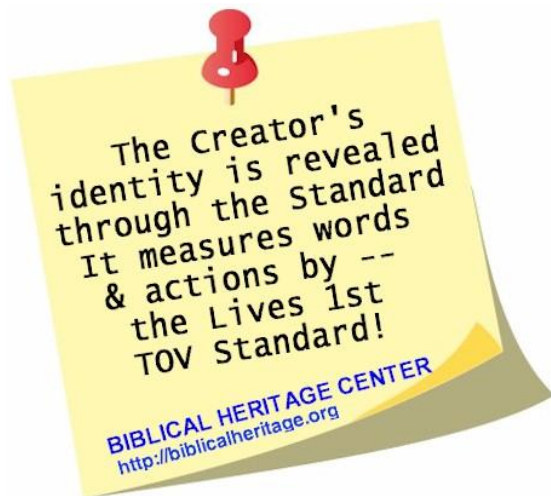
Prior to the god of the Jews, gods were more like prickly servants than masters. Humans picked their deities to support their passions, to grant their wishes, to justify their conquests. The Romans, Greeks, Hindus, Vikings, ancient Chinese, Japanese, and others created gods to match their feelings, from hate and anger to lust and compassion. The Hebrew God reversed the division of labor, demanding that people work for Him, not the other way around. The Hebrew God recognized the moral sanctity of the individual Jew, both male and female.¹

The two verses above introduced powerful new ideas about the creation of the world:

- *One God created the Heavens and the Earth.*
- *God did it through a systematic and peaceful process without chaos, conflict or violence.*
- *Every creative act added something that will be required to meet the needs of humans.*
- *Mankind is the pentacle of His plan – He created the Heavens and Earth for people!*

At birth every human becomes part of God's most valued group – *creatures "created in His image", which actually means "with His Spirit."*

- *Every person has value in the eyes of God.*
- *Every person is viewed as equal in the eyes of God.*



The problem is people do not "naturally" view each other through the eyes of God. Why? People are not gods. That is the part of the Bible's story that didn't make it into the teachings of religious institutions.

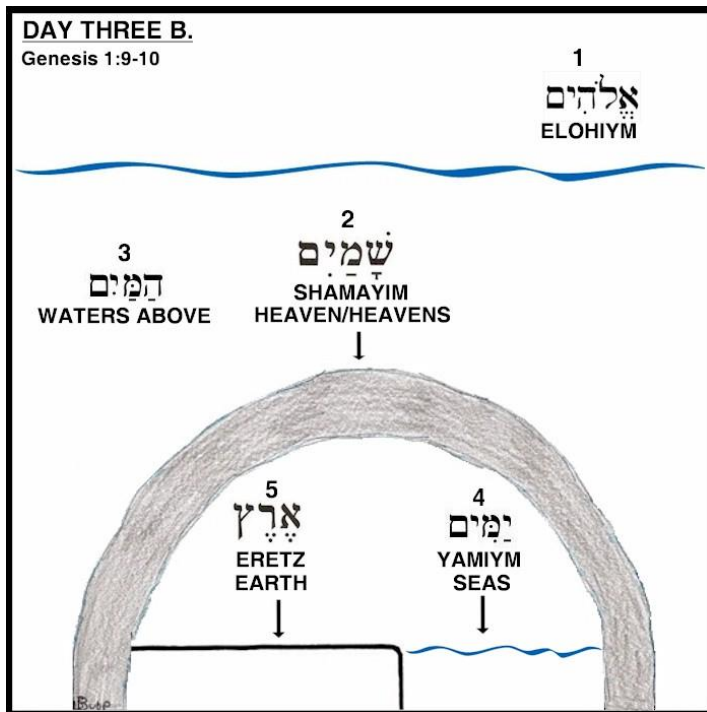
Another part that isn't taught is "*the God that created the Heavens and the Earth was not named.*" In Judaism and Christianity the name is very important.

The identity of this God is revealed through its words and actions. They are all TOV – *they protect and preserve lives, make lives more functional and/or increase the quality of life.*

The first verse in Genesis announced the unnamed God's plan -- *create the Heavens and the Earth*. The second verse reveals the existing conditions before God created anything.

The Earth did not exist, darkness was over the surface of deep waters, and the Spirit of the Creator hovered above the surface of the deep waters.

The first lesson we learn is that mystery is an important part of life and this story – *beginning with the mystery of the things that existed before God did anything – the unnamed God, the darkness and the deep waters*. The next lesson is about how God creates -- *He changes things that exist*. The things He has to work with to create the Heavens and the Earth are *darkness and deep waters*. God's challenge is to change the most dangerous and deadly environment a human could face into one in which humans not only survive, but thrive!



After three days of creating this is what we find: **a daily cycle of darkness and light, the Heavens (#2), the Earth (#5), Seas (#4) and an open air space** beneath the inside surface of the Heavens. Is the graphic on the left what you pictured when you read your Bible?

- Heavens – a solid dome-like structure beneath submerged in deep waters.
- Earth -- dry thing located beneath that solid dome-like structure.

Did you picture **God (#1) hovering above the surface of the deep waters that were above the submerged Heavens**. I was an ordained minister and Jeffrey Leynor is a rabbi – and we didn't see it either!

Now let's jump ahead three more days. Wow! Look how dramatically God has changed things again. On the sixth day of creation the space beneath the Heavens is teeming with life. The Creator has created an environment in which all of their physical requirements are provided. It is beginning to look like the world we know, but did you notice that we are missing?



At the beginning of this article I quoted Genesis 1:27 – “And God created man in His image, in His image He created him; male and female He created them.” However, something was missing from it too. It must be viewed in the context of the verse that came before it:

God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. (v. 26)

In order to identify to whom the “us” refers, we must understand the creation of animals.

And God said, “Let the Earth bring forth a living soul according to her kind . . . And God made the animals.” (vv. 24-25)

God and the Earth were both involved in creating the animals. God told the Earth to provide an Earth-soul and then God created them. *The Earth-soul gave the animals appetites, desires and longings related to the Earth -- “earthly instincts.”*



1. Humans are created with *God's image* (Spirit).
2. Humans are created with an *Earth soul* and its *earthly appetites, desires and longings*.
3. Humans have "*earthly instincts*" like animals because *they are required for survival*.
4. The *Spirit of God* empowers humans with "*Spiritual instincts and capabilities*" – to do *TOV actions by communicating and creating*.
5. Human have the capacity to *do TOV acts together or act individually like animals*.

But humans cannot be gods and they cannot be just animals. *Humans are creatures just lower than God and just above animals.* This point is repeated and driven home in one of the most famous stories in the Bible – *The Garden in Eden*.

A God, a Man, a Woman & a Talking Religious Snake

The **First Story** in the Bible is about *the unnamed God that created the Heavens and the Earth*. The **Second Story** is about *Yahweh the god that planted a garden*. In the **First Story** the Creator and the Earth created two humans at the same time, a male and a female. In the **Second Story** *Yahweh created a man, planted a garden, put the man in the garden, gave the man a commandment, made animals and then made a woman from the man's rib*.

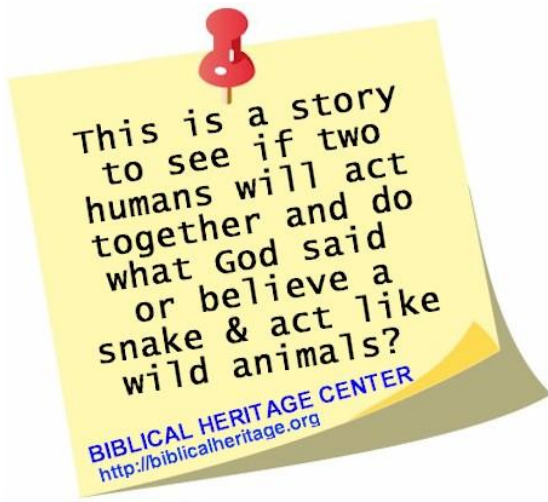
When Yahweh planted the garden He planted two very special trees in the middle of it (Gen. 2:8-9) -- the **Tree of Life** and the **Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA**. Yahweh then gave the man a commandment (Gen. 2:16-17):

*"**You** can eat the fruit of every tree of the garden, but **you** are not to eat the fruit of the **Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RAH**. If **you** eat it **you** will begin to die."*

I underlined "**you**" because in Hebrew it means they are all masculine singular -- *the commandment is just to him*. The Hebrew words **TOV** and **RAH** are translated "good" and "evil," but they have very different meanings than our English words.

- **TOV** – *describes acts that protect or preserve lives, make lives more functional and/or increases the quality of life.*
- **RAH** – *describes acts that destroy or threaten lives, make lives less functional and/or decrease the quality of life.*

Later, Yahweh sets up a surprise contest in the garden – *Two Humans vs. One Snake!* It will determine which is the most *subtle, shrewd, and clever*. *Will the two humans act together to do what God commanded (TOV) or will they act individually like instinct-driven wild animals?*



- **Snake:** "Ah, because a god said, 'Y'all shall not eat from any tree of the garden.'"
- **Woman:** "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, a god has said, 'Y'all shall not eat from it and y'all shall not touch it, lest y'all die.'"

Now you know why I call it a religious snake; it talks about god and even tells her what god commanded (*but doesn't name it*). *That kind of sounds like a religious institution doesn't it?*

When we compare the woman's version of the commandment to what Yahweh said to the man, there are significant differences. Yahweh gave the commandment to the man alone -- *she says it was given to both of them*. Yahweh did not say anything about "not touching the tree." Apparently the man added those words. I wonder why? Let's get back to the contest.

- **Snake:** "Y'all surely shall not die! Because a god knows that in the day y'all eat from it y'all's eyes will be opened, and y'all will be like a god knowing **TOV** and **RAH**."
- **Narrator:** And the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, the tree was desirable for understanding and she took the fruit and ate.

The lesson here is – **words are powerful**. As a matter of fact, humans have only two options for exercising power – *persuasion and physical force*. **Speaking can be an act of power against another person!** After the snake spoke, her very reality changed. The tree that could kill her became the thing she desired. Why? *In her new reality the fruit of that tree transformed humans into gods! And then she reached out and touched the fruit – and nothing happened – so the snake must be right. She ate and then she handed it to the man.*

The man had been standing beside her the whole time listening, watching and knowing what Yahweh had commanded. He saw her reach for the forbidden fruit, put it to her lips, take a bite and that she didn't die! For a split second did he wonder if she had become a god? But when he ate it, both of their eyes were opened -- *they now knew they had been exposed!*

Game Over! Snake Wins! Humans Act Like Two Wild Animals!

Takeaways

1. God introduced **good** (**TOV**) into the world through Its actions. Humans introduced **evil** (**RAH**) into the world through their actions.
2. God does not intervene to stop humans from doing **evil**.
3. Human evil actions are driven by earthly appetites, desires, longings and instincts.

¹ *Suicide of the West: How the Rebirth of Tribalism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics is Destroying American Democracy* by Jonah Goldberg © 2018; Crown Forum, New York, NY; p. 331.