



## The Divine Power of “Doing Good”

by Jim Myers

Every person brings three things with them to our Bible studies – *beliefs about the Bible, an English vocabulary, and life experiences*. These things affect how people understand the words they read. Beliefs about the Bible fall between two extremes:

1. *The Bible contains words that came directly from God.*
2. *The Bible contains legends and fictional stories.*

Between those two extremes are “*a range of beliefs about inspiration and sacredness of the words in their Bible.*” However, regardless of one’s beliefs about the Bible, most Christians agree that *the Bible is the authority for many of their religious beliefs.*

The second thing people bring with them is *an English vocabulary.* This means they brought the meanings of the English words with them to the Bible study. Whatever those words meant to them is how they read the Bible. *No Bible was originally written in English. The books of the Bible were originally written in Hebrew and Greek.* Each English word in an English translation of the Bible is only one of the multiple options of English words translators chose from. Finding English words that are the most “culturally accurate” is our top priority.

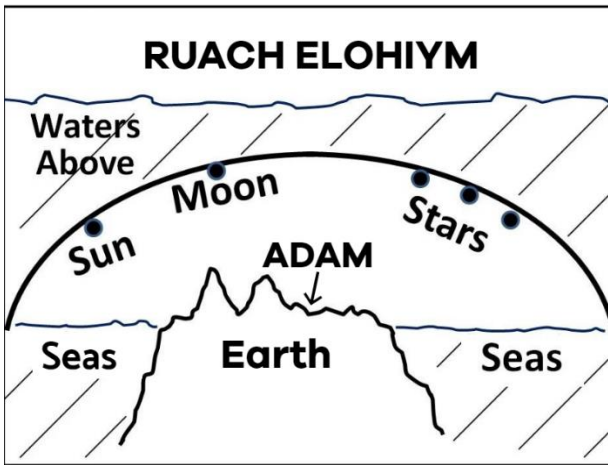
The third thing people bring with them is a lifetime of experiences and these experiences add “*layers of emotions to words in the Bible.*” Many of these experiences involve people that are very special to us – *family members, friends, church members, religious leaders, etc.* Some of the words, fraught with powerful emotions, are *God, Jesus, Christ, saved, lost, forgiven, heaven, hell, believers, and unbelievers.*

We acknowledge the presence of those three things above in each other when we gather to study and discuss biblical texts. Then we dig into them using our guidelines and models to learn what they meant to their authors and discover wisdom. As Proverbs says, “*seek and search for wisdom like you seek and search for money and hidden treasures!*”

## Wisdom Treasures About the Creator

<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">אלהים</p> <p style="margin: 0;"><u>Transliteration</u> <b>ELOHIYM</b></p> <p style="margin: 0;"><u>Translations</u> God, god, gods</p>	<p style="margin: 0;"><u>Ancient Hebrew Meaning</u></p> <p style="margin: 0;">A being that is unlike us and compared with all else is incomprehensible.</p>
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Genesis 1:1 opens with “*In the beginning ELOHIYM . . .*” An ELOHIYM is the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth. This ELOHIYM is not named, but in verse 2 we learn that RUACH ELOHIYM is hovering above deep shoreless waters in absolute darkness. RUACH is translated *spirit, wind and breath*.



The Creator is located above the Heavens and the body of water above it. He is separate from, and different from, the creation. Nothing is known about Him before the moment He said, “Let the light exist.” This is our first *wisdom treasure*:

*The Creator is a Being that is unlike  
and incomprehensible to humans.*

The next *wisdom treasure* is “The Creator loves humans.” The Hebrew word translated “love” does not appear in the context of the first story in Genesis. In Hebrew, “*love is demonstrated by **concrete acts.***” The acts of love are the story, even though the word is not there.


<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">אהבה</p> <p style="margin: 0;"><u>Transliteration</u> <b>AHAVAH</b></p> <p style="margin: 0;"><u>Translation</u> love</p>	<p style="margin: 0;"><u>Ancient Hebrew Meaning</u></p> <p style="margin: 0;">To love is to give. Love includes conscious concrete acts done in behalf of the person who is loved.”</p>
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Rabbi Jeffrey Leynor, may his name be for a blessing, discussed the meaning of **AHAVAH** (love) in our May 2014 newsletter.

*When we in the modern world hear the word “love,” we think of an emotion, but when we look to the Bible we see a different meaning. In the Hebrew Bible, the word for “love” is “**AHAVAH**.” The root of the word is “**HAV**”, which means “**to give**” – This is what both the Jewish tradition and the Jewish Jesus teach. Real love is the guide as we walk through the darkness.”*


In Hebrew, “to love is to give.” The Creator of the Heavens and the Earth “gave humans everything from life itself to what humans need to survive and thrive.”

We can literally see the Creator’s love when we see the things He created for us – *the light, skies, ground, air, water, plants, trees, sun, moon, stars, water creatures, winged creatures, animals, the Shabbat, and other people.* The Creator measured those things by the **TOV Standard** -- **The Good Standard.**

	<p><u>Ancient Hebrew Meaning</u></p> <p><b>Acts that protect lives, preserve lives, make lives more functional, and increase the quality of life.</b></p>
<p><u>Transliteration</u></p> <p><b>TOV</b></p>	
<p><u>Translation</u></p> <p>good</p>	

“**Good**” is a divine power and **acts of love** always measure “**good**.” That is another *wisdom treasure*. We will find others as we continue to explore the stories in the Bible.

### Wisdom Treasures About Humans

	<p><u>Ancient Hebrew Meanings</u></p> <p>1. a male &amp; a female human 2. a male human 3. all humans; mankind</p>
<p><u>Transliteration</u></p> <p><b>ADAM</b></p>	
<p><u>Translations</u></p> <p>man; mankind</p>	

The Hebrew word transliterated **ADAM** is where we find many wisdom treasures about humans. As you can see in the graphic, it can mean a couple, one male or mankind. So, it is important to determine which meaning is used in every context in which it appears.

In the first story in Genesis, **ADAM** is “**a couple**” – *one man and one woman*. They are not named. The first wisdom principles we learn about this **ADAM** are extremely important and will help us understand why we do what we do.

- *Humans are creatures with an “earth soul” because they are creatures of the earth and require earthly appetites, desires and longings like animals to survive.*
- *Humans have the Spirit of the Creator with them and have been empowered by Him to function in specific ways.*
- *Humans are creatures with two conflicting forces in them. The rabbis understood this and used the terms **yetzer hatov** (good inclination/impulse) and **yetzer hara** (evil inclination/impulse) to describe it.*
- *Humans are creatures that are lower than the Creator, but above animals. Humans can never be an ELOHIYM or an animal, however they can choose to do acts of TOV (good) like the Creator or acts of RAH (evil) like wild animals.*

This reveals one of the Bible’s most important wisdom principles:

*The greatest dangers to individuals and kingdoms come from within them not from things outside them.*

The primary sources are *individuals who lack impulse control, self-discipline or people to assist them*. However, the Creator's blessing empowered humans to exercise impulse control and self-discipline, but they must be taught how to do it.

<p>שלום T</p> <p><u>Transliteration</u> <b>SHALOM</b></p> <p><u>Translation</u> peace</p>	<p><u>Ancient Meaning</u> <i>A social environment where peoples' lives are complete, healthy, wholesome; relationships are harmonious and mutually beneficial; homes are safe; places are secure and restful; members are loyal and committed to each other and the community.</i></p>
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The Creator's blessing over humans is also a vision for creating the social environment the Creator wants humans to live in. Like "love" above, the name of the social environment isn't in the story, but the description makes it clear that the word is SHALOM.

Just keeping relationships between people harmonious is a constant challenge. In the first stories in the Bible **Adam and Eve** have relationship problems, as do their sons **Cain and Abel**. Those four people changed the course of human history. This created a very complex situation for the Creator.

*The Creator loves humans, but the greatest threat to human life is humans.*

Adam eating the forbidden fruit opened the door for death to become part of human life. When Cain refused to do what God told him to do to control his anger, "do acts of TOV (good)" – **Abel died!** Those acts of evil broke the SHALOM. Their communities were small, but evil acts changed them forever.

This brings us to another very important Hebrew word – TZEDAQAH.

Acts of TZEDAQAH are acts of loyalty and acts of justice.

They are also "acts of love," because the one doing them is a "giver."

<p>צדקה T T</p> <p><u>Transliteration</u> <b>TZEDAQAH</b></p> <p><u>Translation</u> loyalty</p>	<p><u>Ancient Meaning</u> <i>Acts that are TOV (good) and restore the SHALOM of the community by eliminating the things breaking SHALOM.</i></p>
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Isaiah 58:5b-8 provides an example that Jesus used in his teachings.

Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast I have chosen: loose the bonds of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and that you remove every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, bring the poor who are cast out to your house, when you will see the naked that you cover him, and do not hide yourself from your own flesh?

**Then** (after you do the acts of **TZEDAQAH**) your light shall break forth as the dawn, your healing shall quickly spring up, your acts of TZEDAQAH shall go before you and the magnificence of the Lord shall gather you.

Those acts of TZEDAQAH restored **SHALOM**.

*Community members ate, had shelter, were clothed, and helped.  
Lives in the community were more complete, healthy and wholesome.*

And those **acts of TZEDAQAH** did something else – they would be remembered by God and at some point in time, **He will come to gather the people that did them**. Remember this example because you will see it retold in many of the teachings of Jesus.

### **Three Key Blessings of Jesus**

When Jesus said “TZEDAQAH;” **he meant all of those things!** So, what English word do we find in our Bibles instead of TZEDAQAH? It is the translation of a Greek word that is translated either “**righteous**” or “**righteousness**.” Do those words mean what Jesus taught? Now let’s apply the information above to blessings in the *Sermon on the Mount*.

*<sup>5:6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for **acts of TZEDAQAH**.  
They shall be filled.*

What are those people thirsting for? Read the long definition of TZEDAQAH above. The people blessed here are not only “hungry and thirsty for food and water;” they are hungry and thirsty “for the people doing acts of TZEDAQAH to come forward.” They are the poor and oppressed, but they were also Jews who knew about TZEDAQAH and **SHALOM**. This blessing was a promise from Jesus to them and a call to action for his followers.

*<sup>5:10</sup> Blessed are those who pursue opportunities to **do acts of TZEDAQAH**.  
They are the Kingdom of God.*

This blessing sums up what Jesus and his movement were about. His vision was masses of people bursting forth and becoming actively engaged in pursuing opportunities to do acts of TZEDAQAH. Wow! What a powerful vision!

5:9 Blessed are the **SHALOM Makers**,  
They shall be called Sons of God.

**SHALOM Makers** are actively engaged in guarding and restoring the SHALOM of the community. This is a team effort!

## A Salvation Parable of Jesus

This parable changed my life. I was a minister and everything I preached had one purpose – *save unbelievers!* I believed we (all Christians) had been commissioned by Jesus to do this – “Go to all the world, preach the Gospel and **save people from an eternity of burning in Hell!**” This was not just a belief system – **it was our reality**.

*Being saved required believing that Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice for all of sins, praying a prayer and asking him to come into our hearts, and being baptized.*

We believed that “**believing**” was the important thing and that there are only two kinds of people on earth -- **believers** and **unbelievers**. We identified ourselves by an institutional doctrine – *believe or else!* Believers go to Heaven unbelievers go to Hell -- *it was as simple as that!* Now compare what you believe, to what Jewish taught.

## **The Great Day of Judgment** **Matthew 25:31-46**

<sup>31</sup> When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> He will put the **sheep on his right** and the goats on his left.

Be sure to note that all the nations of the earth are being judged and everyone is standing with members of their own nation. Everyone will be placed in either the group on the right or the group on the left. Now pay close attention to the criteria that determined in which group people were placed.

<sup>34</sup> 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**. <sup>35</sup> 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**, <sup>36</sup> 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**.”*

If you made it to this page of the newsletter, you know the things the people did were **acts of TZEDAQAH!** The next thing Jesus said verifies that conclusion.

<sup>37</sup> Then **those who did acts of TZEDAQAH** (the righteous) will ask him:

*“Lord, when did we see you hungry and **feed you**, or thirsty and **give you something to drink**? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and **invite you in**, or needing clothes and **clothe you**? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to **visit you**?”*

Their question reveals something very important about their thinking. There was no doubt they did those things, but they didn't remember doing them for him.

<sup>40</sup> The King will reply:

*“Amen! Let me explain! Whatever you did for one of **the least of these brothers and sisters of mine**, you did for me!”*

Jesus was referring to the Creator's Blessing in Genesis 1. Mankind is the Creator's family and kingdom. The “**least members**” are as much the “**image of God**” as the “**greatest members**.” God's vision of life for **all members of His family and kingdom** is to **experience life in a SHALOM community**.

<sup>41</sup> Then the King will say to those on his left:

*“Depart from me, you who are **cursed**, into the **eternal fire** prepared for the adversary and his messengers. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and **you gave me nothing to eat**, I was thirsty and **you gave me nothing to drink**, <sup>43</sup> 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**.”*

<sup>44</sup> They also will ask:

*“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**?”*

<sup>45</sup> The King will reply:

*“Amen! Let me explain! Whatever **you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me**.”*

<sup>46</sup> Then **those who did not do acts of TZEDAQAH** will go away to **eternal punishment**, but **those who did acts of TZEDAQAH** will go to **eternal life**.

People were judged for the way they treated the least members of their nations. Those who went into eternal punishment did nothing. This is why the penalty was so severe.

1. *They were unfaithful to God, the community and to other members of the society.*
2. *They were indifferent to God, the community and to other members of the society. In Hebrew, “indifference” is the opposite of “love.”*
3. *They did not fulfil their roles as the Creator’s Co-Shepherds over all life on earth.*

Remember, this is a *parable* not a *commandment*. It is *wisdom* and it contains *practical rules for living moral lives*. The afterlife was in the parable, but the parable was **“how to live in this life; not the afterlife” – and that is all he taught!** He taught the same message when he said, **“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”** It was based on Leviticus 19:18 – **“Love your neighbor as yourself.”** He also taught, **“The only way you can love God is by loving your neighbor as yourself.”** Now you know the meanings of the Hebrew words behind **good**, **love**, **righteousness** & **peace**.

<p><b>טוב</b></p> <p><u>Transliteration</u> <b>TOV</b></p> <p><u>Translation</u> <b>good</b></p>	<p><u>Ancient Hebrew Meaning</u></p> <p><b>Acts that protect lives, preserve lives, make lives more functional, and increase the quality of life.</b></p>
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<p><b>צדקה</b></p> <p><u>Transliteration</u> <b>TZEDAQAH</b></p> <p><u>Translation</u> <b>loyalty</b></p>	<p><u>Ancient Meaning</u></p> <p><b>Acts that are TOV (good) and restore the SHALOM of the community by eliminating the things breaking SHALOM.</b></p>
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Chances are you now realize that your beliefs about salvation didn't come from Jesus. I had the same experience. *It changed my beliefs about what my future would be like, what God wanted me to do, and what Jesus wanted me to do.* It also changed my salvation message to this -- **Choose Life 1<sup>st</sup> by Doing Things that are TOV!** **BHC**