

# Redefining Evil: The Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA

By Jim Myers

This email is about redefining evil by using the TOV Standard. After working with Ike (Dr. Tennison) and Jeffrey (Rabbi Leynor) for 30 years, one of the most important things we discovered is the importance of how people define "evil." Genesis 2:9 is the first time "evil" appears in the Bible.

*And out of the ground Yahweh Elohim made every tree grow  
that is pleasant to the sight and TOV for food.  
The Tree of Life was also in the midst of the garden,  
and The Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA.*

Before addressing the words of this verse, I need to make sure you understand the difference between English and Hebrew verbs.

- English: A verb is the action or state of being in a sentence. Verbs can be expressed in different tenses, depending on when the action is being performed – past, present, or future.<sup>1</sup>
- Hebrew: An action is regarded as being either completed or incomplete. Hebrew, therefore, knows of no past, present, or future tense, but has instead a perfect (completed) or imperfect (incomplete), which, in a context, lend themselves to a variety of shades in meaning.<sup>2</sup>

All we need to do, when reading translations of Hebrew Scriptures, is to stop thinking in terms of past, present, and future tenses – and start thinking in terms of complete and incomplete actions. This is very hard to do!

Now we can address the meanings of the Hebrew words TOV and RA. In "Redefining Good: The Creator's TOV Standard," I defined TOV:

*Acts that protect lives, preserve lives,  
make lives more functional, and/or increase the quality of life.*

Acts of TOV are the opposite of acts of RA:

*Acts that destroy lives, threaten lives,  
make lives less functional, and/or decrease the quality of life.*

Below are popular definitions of evil:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://academicanswers.waldenu.edu/faq/72796>

<sup>2</sup> *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew (Second Edition)* by J. Weingreen; © 1959 by Oxford University Press; New York, NY; p. 44

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.yourdictionary.com/evil>

1. *A powerful force that some people believe to exist, and that causes wicked and bad things to happen.*
2. *Profound immorality and wickedness caused by the devil.*

The only things in the **Garden in Eden** are Yahweh, Adam, Eve, and animals made by Yahweh, and named by Adam. There was neither an evil force nor the devil in the Garden. This leaves us with one more word to define – *knowledge*. There are two kinds of knowledge.

1. **reflective knowledge**: *I read a book about an airplane crash.*
2. **experiential knowledge**: *I was in an airplane crash.*

The Hebrew word *yada* means “to know.” *Yada* is the root of the word which is translated “**knowledge**.” It appears in Genesis 4:1.

*“Now Adam **knew** Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain. . . .”*

The Hebrew word for knowledge means “*experiential knowledge*.”

*The Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA is  
The Tree where acts of TOV and RA are experienced.*

- The **act of TOV** was the commandment Yahweh gave Adam (Genesis 2:16-17) -- “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”
- The **act of RA** is found in Genesis 3:6 – “Eve took fruit from the forbidden tree and ate. She also gave it to Adam who was with her, and **he ate it**.”

If Adam had followed the instructions in the **act of TOV**, human ***lives would have been protected***. But when Adam ate the forbidden fruit, that **act of RA** caused ***the process of dying to begin***.

*Death was not a punishment.  
It was the consequence of one human’s act of RA.*

I will repeat the definition of **RA** again:

*Acts that destroy lives, threaten lives,  
make lives less functional, and/or decrease the quality of life.*

Now remember this:

***Acts of RA are the acts of humans!***

Keep in mind that this is an ancient wisdom text, and we haven’t finished the second story yet. We have much more to learn.