

Is a Bible Story Written 2700 Years Ago Relevant to Lives Today?

If you have been reading my emails for very long, you have read a great deal about the *Parable of the Great Day of Judgment* Jesus taught in Matthew 25:31-46. By using our Exploring the Bible guidelines and linguistic models we discovered that the Scriptures Jesus used to create the parable were *The Creator's Blessing and the Alliance in the First Creation Story in Genesis 1:1-2:4a* and *Isaiah teaching about freeing people from oppression in Isaiah 58:1-10*.

Jesus used the parable to take members of Jewish crowds hearing him back to a story they had heard all of their lives -- *The Creator's Blessing and the Alliance in the First Creation Story in Genesis 1:1-2:4a*. The Creator is an **Elohim**, a type of entity that is different from all other entities.

The English word "**god**" does not accurately describe or apply to the Creator in Genesis. Creation stories from other Ancient Near Eastern cultures contain many stories about gods, but they are not entities like the Elohim in Genesis.

- *The skies and the earth exist because He chose to create them!*
- *No gods exist because He chose not to create them!*

The Creator is clearly a very powerful entity – *but power is not the only thing that sets Elohim apart from the gods of other ancient creation stories*. In those ancient cultures the "wisdom of a god" was highly valued. *There are well-known stories about journeys of people who tried to acquire that wisdom*.

Jesus gave the parable to remind people of the wisdom they learned from the first story in Genesis. *Elohim gave mankind **The TOV Standard***.

***TOV** describes actions that protect human lives,
preserve human lives, makes human lives more functional,
and increases the quality of life for humans.*

The Creator used the **TOV Standard** to measure His actions. The Creator gave the **TOV Standard** to humans and **invited them to judge His actions** – *acts that directly affect all human lives*. Do you understand how remarkable this is?

- *Gods from other stories did not give humans standards to judge their actions.*
- *For gods from other stories, humans were "afterthoughts."*
- *The wisdom of the gods from other stories revealed that the purpose of life for humans is to serve the gods.*

When the Creator gave the **TOV Standard** to humans, He **empowered humans to judge any and all acts that directly affect their lives.** The stories that follow the first story in Genesis are instructions about how to use the **TOV Standard.**

- *The Garden of Eden Story – using the **TOV Standard** for their **past actions.***
- *The Story of Cain – using the **TOV Standard** to **make current decisions.***
- *The Story of Seth – using the **TOV Standard** to make **future plans** about how their third son will be raised.*

Jesus included the words from Isaiah 58:1-10 in his parable in order to instruct people how to use the **TOV Standard**; specifically, to free people from the oppressive political and economic actions of rulers that were oppressing those they ruled. The oppressors believed the standard Creator used to judge them was based on “**religious rituals.**”

- *The oppressive rulers faithfully practiced their “religious rituals” and prayed daily.*
- *While they prayed their subjects lacked the basic requirements for life -- food, shelter, and clothes. Even family members of the rulers lacked those things.*

The **TOV Standard** appears in the prophecies of Isaiah in stories with the Hebrew words **TZEDAQAH** and **SHALOM**. Isaiah 58:3b-4a defines the word **TZEDAQAH** and reveals the Yahweh’s Standard for judging the rulers.

*Break **your** bread with the hungry,
bring the wandering-poor to **your** house,
when **you** will see the naked that **you** cover him,
and do not hide **yourself** from **your** own families!*

Each of those acts is an act of **TZEDAQAH**, which is also an act of **TOV**. Acts of **TZEDAQAH** increase **SHALOM**.

*SHALOM is the completeness and richness of living in
an integrated social milieu, in which human lives are
total and complete, healthy and wholesome,
people live in harmony with one another,
and leaders use the TOV Standard to govern all of their actions.*

But the opening words of the book of Isaiah 1:21-23 reveal how wide-spread oppression was in Jerusalem at that time. Below is my translation for 21st century readers:

*The rulers of Jerusalem are murderers,
they have corrupted the money supply,
they are manipulating the markets,
they are controlled by bribes and gifts of thieves,
thieves who use the justice system to protect their power and wealth –
a justice system that does not hear the cases of orphans and widows.*

The words of the Bible above written over 2,700 years ago. They have been relevant to lives from the Isaiah's time to our lives today -- *so is the Creator's wisdom and TOV Standard*. It empowers us with a way to measure anything that affects human lives – *and identify their sources*.

The Creator's **TOV Standard** gives us a way to measure human actions, and determine how to respond when those actions are **not TOV!**

Shalom,
Jim Myers

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