

(God is Great,)

God is Good

worshipweekly.com/God-is-Good.html

There was good reason for the ditty sung at the dinner table. Repetition and remembering are important. One can argue good is better than love. Love is a feeling. Whether love is good or evil depends on who or what you love and how you express it. Good, is good. "God is love" is not in the Hebrew Bible. "I will make all my goodness pass before you" (God says to Moses when Moses asks to behold His presence), Exodus 33:19. Let that be a teaser...

Garden of Eden

Cain and Abel. Very Long Lives.

Genesis 2:4 through 5:32

Sources

**Rational Bible: Genesis, Dennis Prager
Dennis acknowledges all his sources in
the book**

Sefaria.org (Bible translation used here)

Only 2 volumes out so far. Exodus was published first because of the Ten Commandments, which, if everyone followed, we'd be practically devoid of human-caused suffering.

2:4 Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created. When the LORD God made earth and heaven



“when” = “on the day” which had to be more the one 24-hour period.

2nd story, deeper description.

JHVH+Elohim (20x here), once elsewhere). “Lord God”. Transcendent AND personal.

Adonai/Elohim – mercy/justice. Either alone doesn’t work.

2:5 when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil,

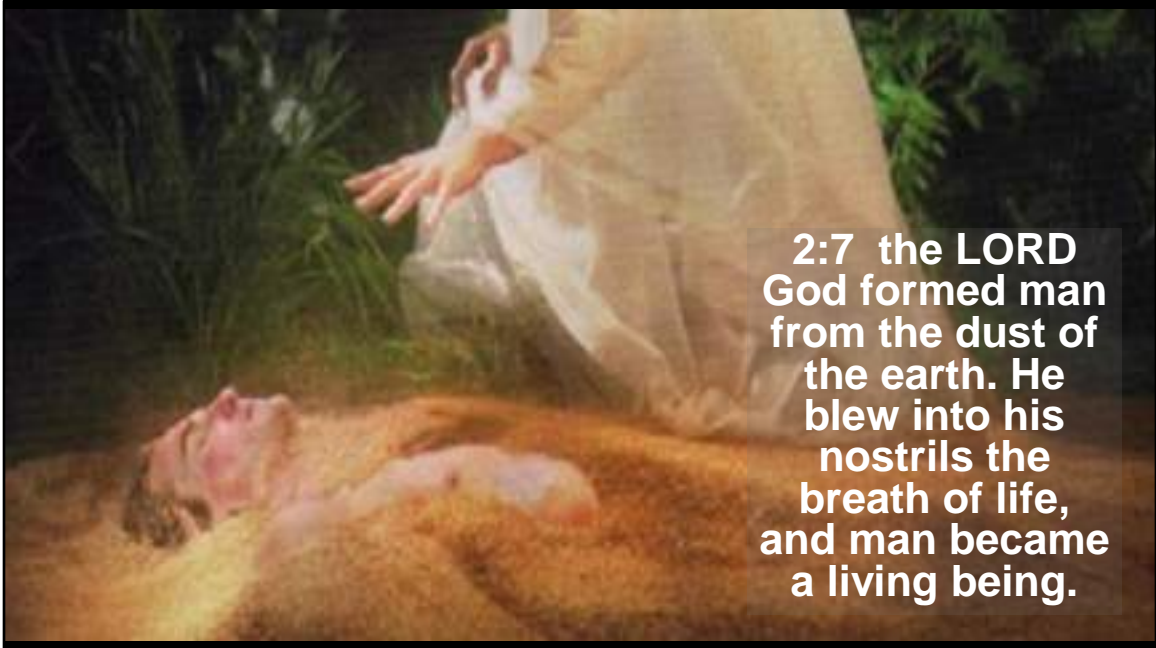


Apparent contradiction of timeline. But:
No need to repeat details from the 1st story.
2nd story is about Man, not vegetation, rain, or anything else.
Rain/nature was created for Man

**2:6 but a flow would well up from the ground
and water the whole surface of the earth—**



Somewhat “fixes 2:5.
4.6bya water from rocks/comets/cooling.
Liquid water.



Not contradiction, more detail/insight.

Adam = earthling.

Adama = earth

“breath of life” could also be translated “soul of life”.

Animals don't get this “soul”, only humans. Animals got something else (different word) earlier.

2:8-9 The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom He had formed. And from the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and bad.



Not the creation of trees, rather the creation of the Garden of Eden.


All good to look at and to eat.

TofKofG&E not unique that way.

“evil” would be better word than bad (last word above). Only one Hebrew word for “not good,” evil.

Tree of Life – innocence, live forever.

Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil = choice, knowledge, death, struggle.



2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat;

Vegetarianism? Not really. Allowing meat comes later. Main purpose (Torah) is to avoid animal suffering. Torah:

-animals to rest on Sabbath

-no muzzling

-no yoking different sizes

-no blood consumption (tearing limbs to keep animal alive for fresh meat longer)

Apply to all mankind (one of Noahide Laws, before there were Jews).

Animal suffering is outlawed, not animal death.

Human suffering AND unjust human death are outlawed.

Cruelty to animals does lead to cruelty to humans.

Kindness to animals does not lead to kindness to humans (Nazis banned animal experimentation but did horrific things to un-sedated humans)

2:17 but as
for the tree
of
knowledge
of good
and bad,
you must
not eat of
it; for as
soon as
you eat of
it, you
shall die.”



This is the second eating directive. First was eat of all the rest of the trees.

Choice: Tree of Life, or Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Humans will choose the latter...

Die “on the day”: obviously not within 24 hours as we know Adam/Eve don’t die.

Rather, from here on, you’ll live knowing you will die.

No such awareness in animals.

2:18 The LORD God said, “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him.”



The first “not good” that God notes.

God’s observation, not Adam’s. Men do not independently know this. They know they need sex, yes, but that alone does not end loneliness.

Loneliness has become a major societal pathology, increasing with decreasing marriage rates.

In v. 24 it becomes clear God wants man to marry, that’s primary. Friends, children, etc. are good, but marriage #1.

Church community is good, too. Regular attendance religiously is best predictor of altruism (not gender, race, \$, location, marital status, etc.).

Big truth: not good for humans to be alone

2:18 The LORD God said, “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper for him.”



Fitting helper... literally, “a helper who is his equal.”

K’negdo = “equal to him” (in modern Hebrew, too).

Includes the notion of “opposed to him.” Complementary. Perfect fit. Completes the whole.

“In the beginning God created man and critic.”

Ezer = helper. God calls himself ezer several times. In no way inferior. Often a helper in war, warrior.

2:19 And the LORD God formed out of the earth all the wild beasts and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that would be its name.

2:20 And the man gave names to all the cattle and to the birds of the sky and to all the wild beasts; but for Adam no fitting helper was found.



Not a re-hash of Creation. Not a contradiction.

“formed” could also be “had formed” (already done). Only context can tell.

This is to teach something about Man: a suitable companion can not be found in the animals.

Also focuses on Man’s dominion over nature.

2:20 seems out of order. Maybe God wants Adam to 1st try to find his own partner.

Not far-fetched – many have great friends in pets/animals.

Doesn’t say “find a helper”, rather “find a helper who is his equal.” Animals are helpers, but not equals. Only a peer.

2:21 So the LORD God cast a deep sleep upon the man; and, while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that spot.

2:22 And the LORD God fashioned the rib that He had taken from the man into a woman; and He brought her to the man.



Tzela does not mean rib, rather “took from Adam’s side and then closed the skin over it.”

Importance of woman:

Since Creation develops progressively to ever higher-order, woman could be considered the culmination, highest-order of Creation.

Another clue: Adam took 1 verse to create. It took six verses to make Eve. More time/effort.

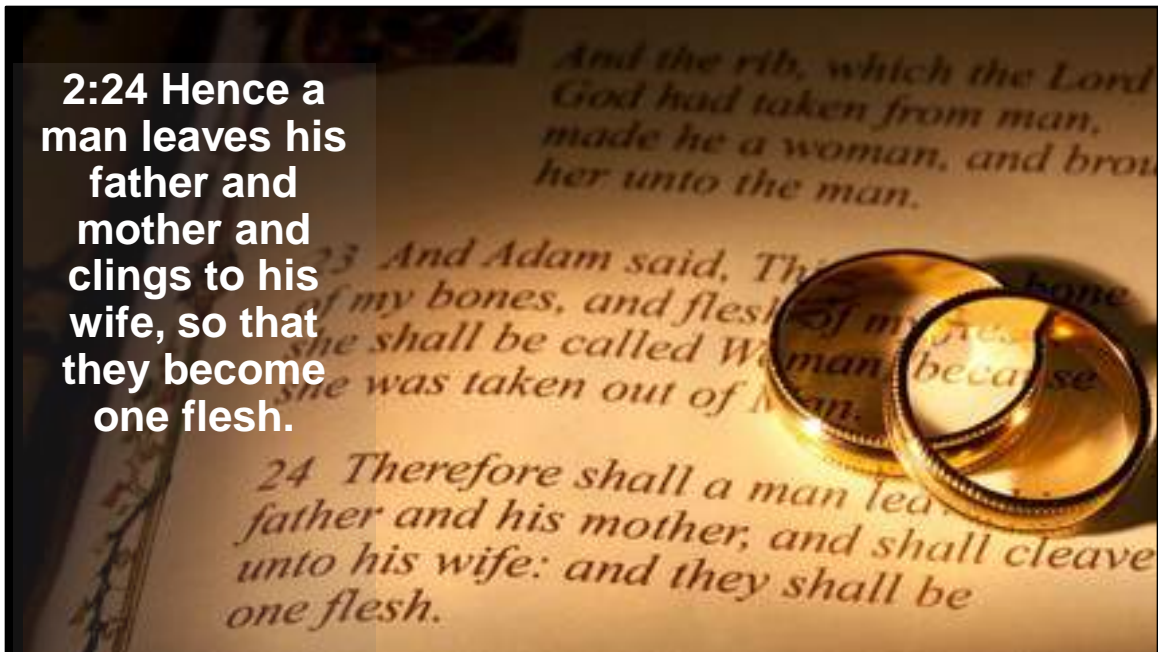
The Creation story is just the 1st of many examples in the Torah of placing high value on women.

2:23 Then the man said, “This one at last is bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called Woman, For from man was she taken.”



Adam awakened. The first wokeness, he literally awoke to what's good for him.
Boys initially want to be alone and carefree.
Humans often do not know what is best for them.

2:24 Hence a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh.



Not just describing a truth – prescribing it!

To become a man, he must leave his parents and marry. Independence first, then marriage.

Too many boys allowed to remain boys too long these days.

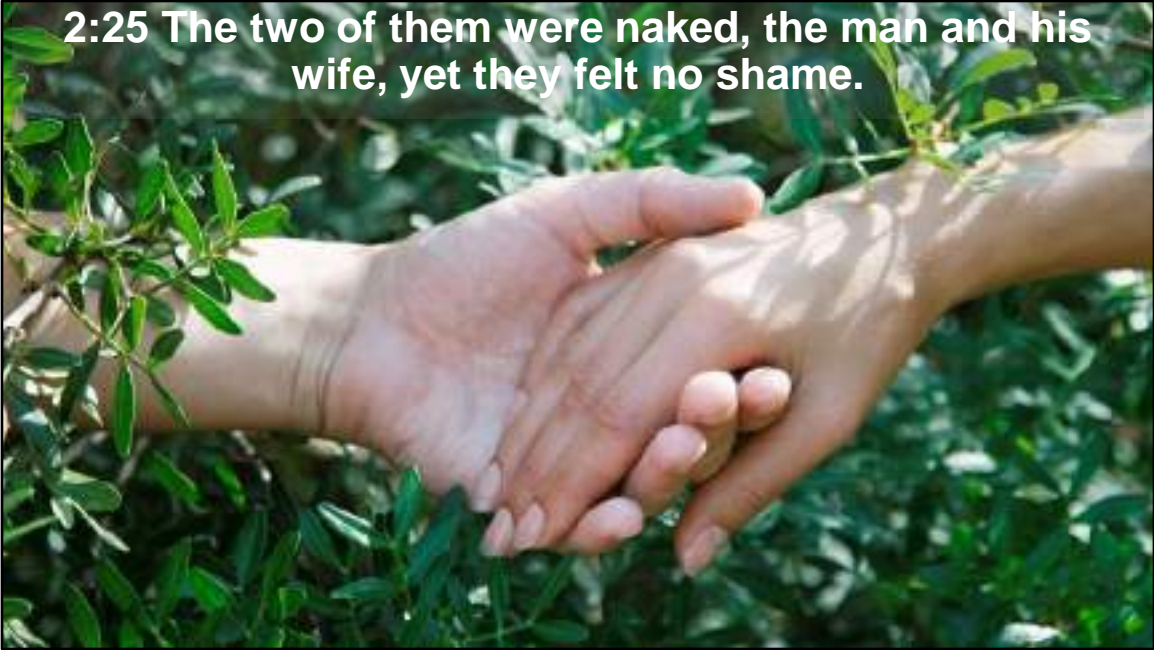
Parents should not feel bad at all about a child becoming independent and married.

That's supposed to be.

While polygamy was permitted, the ideal is one man one woman. Polygamy in the Bible is almost always unhappy.

The Natural population male:female ratio is about 50:50 – points to 1:1.

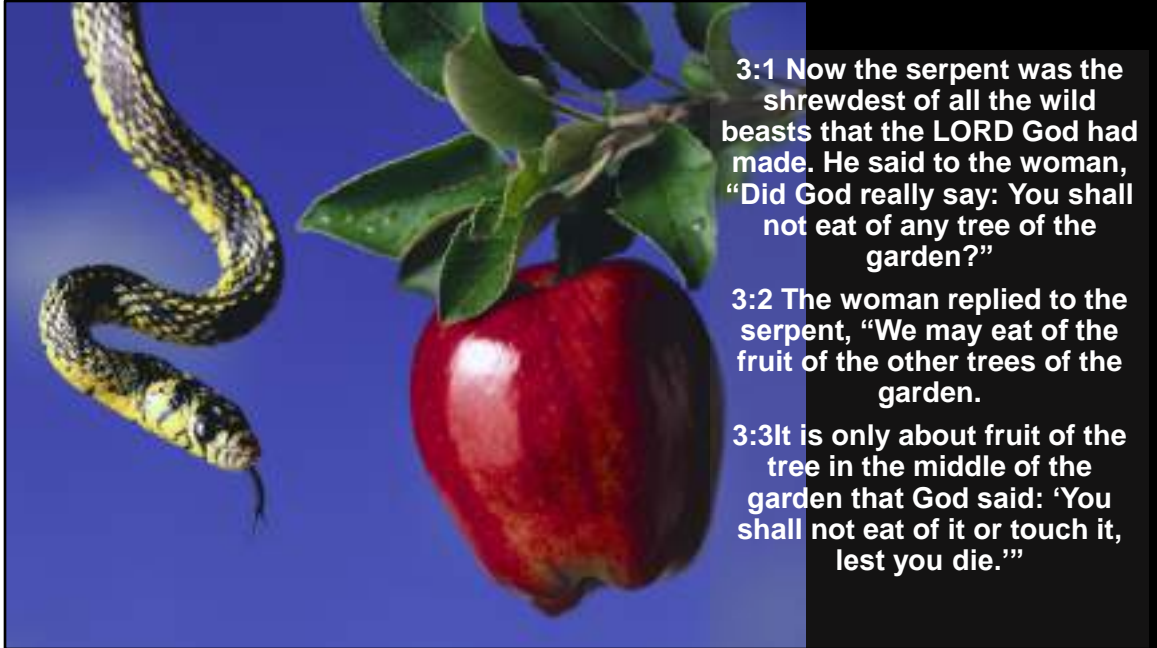
2:25 The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, yet they felt no shame.



Innocence. Not at all embarrassed.
Not unlike the animals.



Garden of Eden literally true? If God could create the entire universe, why not a garden and a snake that talks? But... could be a divinely conceived parable – that's an acceptable understanding. What matters is what God wants us to learn.



God made the snake. Not supernatural or some deity.

The snake went to Eve, not Adam, maybe thinking she would be more persuadable. But she proved harder to persuade. The snake unfurled an entire line of questions at Eve. Eve merely had to say "Eat" to Adam. More likely, the snake THOUGHT Eve would be easier to convince since she got the command second hand.

The snake deliberately misquoted God. Eve distorted God's words, too (God never said don't touch). This may have been what Adam told her to make sure she stayed away.

Talmud: "One who adds to God's words actually detracts from them." Adding to or subtracting from anyone else's words is immoral.



**3:4 And the serpent said to the woman, “You are not going to die,
3:5 but God knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you
will be like divine beings who know good and bad.”**

The snake tried to tell Eve that God didn't want competition.

This was the 3rd step in the snake's attack plan:

1st – overstate the prohibition

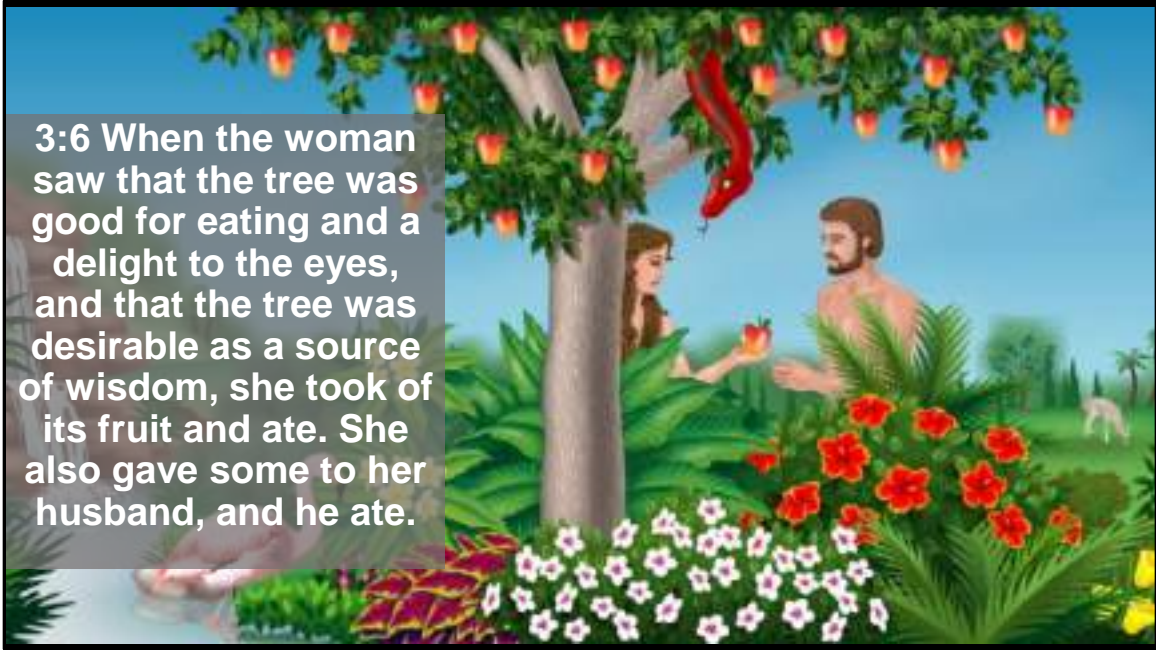
2nd – attack the (God's) motive

3rd – you won't suffer, you'll greatly benefit

The same snake-y tactics are used today... Represents the root of human evil –
displace God as a moral authority. The snake tries to say, in essence, you can rely on
yourself to say what's right and wrong.

When you decide what is right and wrong, you are your own god.

3:6 When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate.



How much trouble our eyes get us into. “Eye candy.” The ear is ultimately more trustworthy. “Hear, O Israel”, not “See, O Israel.” To her credit, Eve did not use Adam as a guinea pig, she went first, buying the snake’s argument. Eve concluded the snake was right as she did not die. Adam followed readily.



3:7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they perceived that they were naked; and they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves loincloths.

Discovered sexuality. Already knew about procreative sex, “innocent” sex. Now erotic, sexual.

The word here for naked is different than the earlier word translated as naked. This is different.

3:11 Then He asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat?”

3:12 The man said, “The woman You put at my side—she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”



Adam shifts blame to the woman, and blames God. And Eve blamed the snake (later). Blaming others is as old as humanity.

Humans need four things: air, food, drink, and someone to blame.

Not only immoral, but also makes moral growth impossible.

Epidemic proportions. Adults blame parents, criminals blame poverty/childhood/society.

3:16 And to the woman He said, “I will make most severe Your pangs in childbearing; In pain shall you bear children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.”



Unlike for the serpent, God did not use the word “curse” for Eve. Punished, not cursed. Childbirth pain was multiplied, suggesting there always was some pain. God is saying he will no longer protect them from nature. But this does not prevent people from trying to conquer the harshness of nature. Human progress.

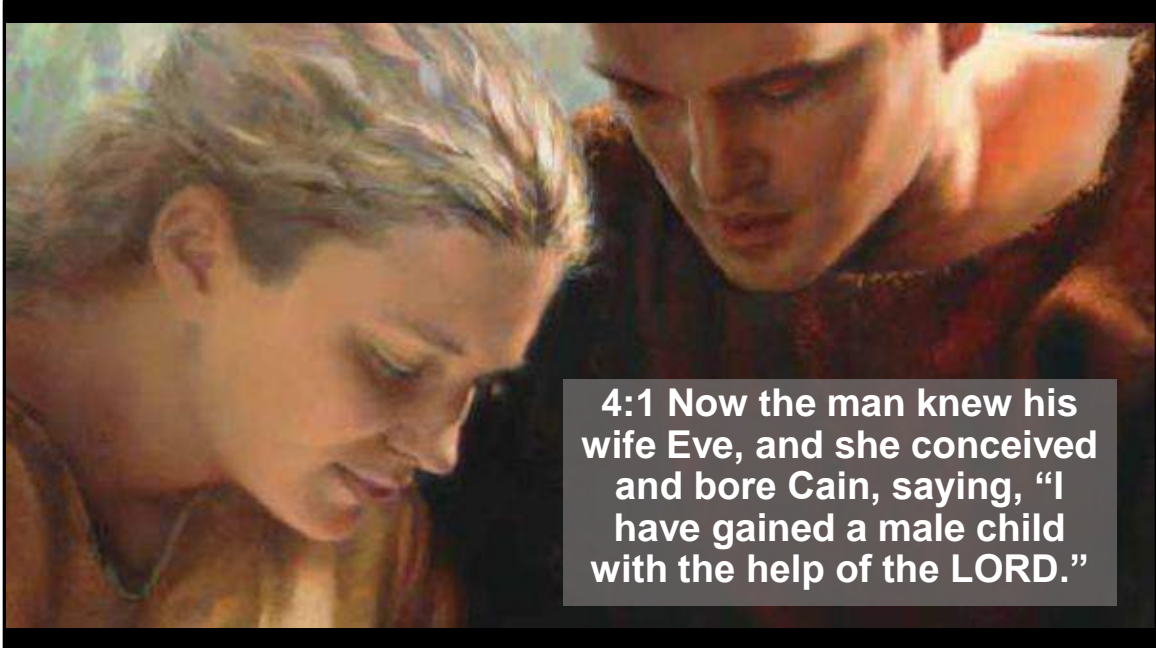
In most cases, a woman’s urge for a man is reality. Humans are now in the real world. That’s neither curse nor punishment, just is reality. It remains to be seen if today’s tendency for woman to be urged toward careers as much or more as a man will be healthier or not for society.

“Rule over you”: Most women do seek stronger, smarter, more successful men. Makes sense even if secular, natural. To deny this drive is also to deny reality. It should go without saying that abuse of any kind is not what is meant. Also, this does not negate the equality of man and woman stated earlier.



God does not want human beings walking around naked. Sexual modesty, perhaps. But more importantly a distinction from animals.

Story of all of us. We're rarely satisfied with what we have. More importantly, humans prefer knowing and experiencing all of life, even if it means suffering and death, as opposed to a childlike innocent existence. Prager suggests this was "The Choice of Man" rather than "The Fall of Man." Interestingly, the punishment of Adam is macro (earth, work) and to Eve micro (feelings, pain, desire). Also reflects the natures of men and women.



4:1 Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, “I have gained a male child with the help of the LORD.”

Knew = sexual intercourse. Same root as Knowledge in the Tree of Knowledge of G&E. It is indeed a unique form of knowing someone. Intimate. Special.
“Cain” may mean “acquire.” Could also come from “create/make” – Eve partnered with Adam and God in making...



4:2 She then bore his brother Abel. Abel became a keeper of sheep, and Cain became a tiller of the soil.

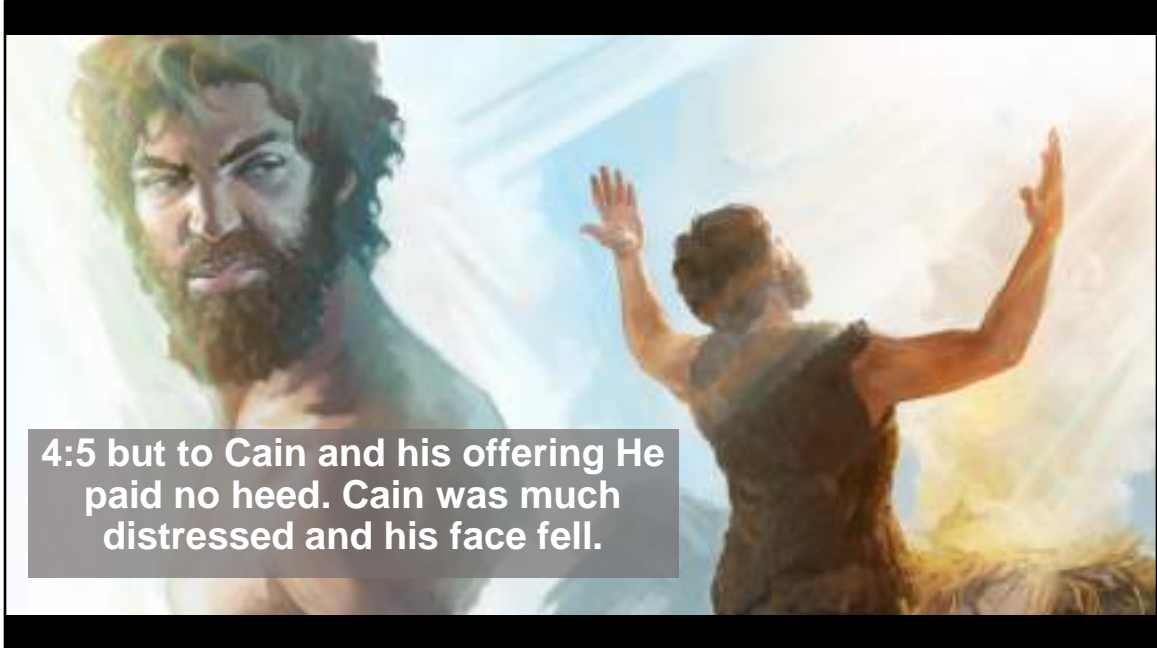
Abel was a shepherd. Cain a farmer.

Abel is from Havel = vapor, nothing – he did soon disappear.

4:3-4 In the course of time, Cain brought an offering to the LORD from the fruit of the soil; and Abel, for his part, brought the choicest of the firstlings of his flock. The LORD paid heed to Abel and his offering,



Both brought offerings to God, in keeping with the times.
No known society was atheistic. All did sacrifices to their gods.
Existence of secular/atheistic societies is relatively new; we'll see how they do.



4:5 but to Cain and his offering He paid no heed. Cain was much distressed and his face fell.

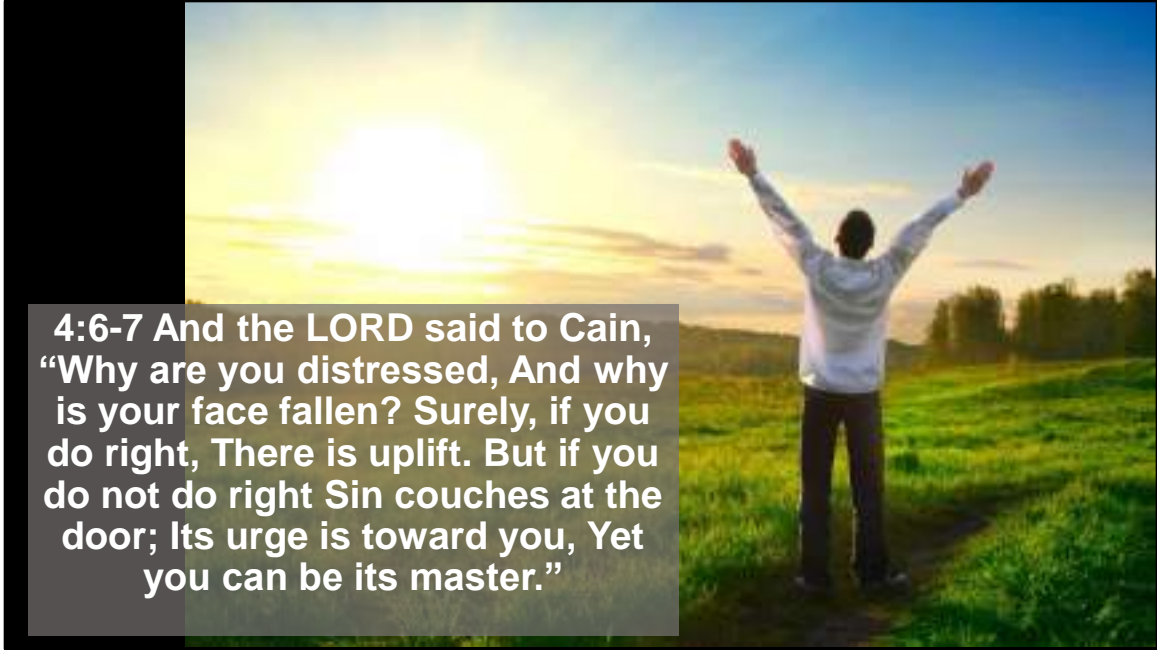
God preferred Abel's offering.

Torah does not say how Cain knew that. Maybe he sensed it. Maybe he saw Abel's gift was the choicest. Maybe Gods' reaction was unrecorded.

INTENTION, re. ethical behaviour, is irrelevant. The ACTION is what counts.

Build a hospital to put your name on the building saves as many lives...

BIG Question: When someone does better than we, do we envy (often leads to evil) or emulate (often leads to more good) them.



4:6-7 And the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you distressed, And why is your face fallen? Surely, if you do right, There is uplift. But if you do not do right Sin couches at the door; Its urge is toward you, Yet you can be its master.”

Doing good uplifts. Good leads to Happiness (Prager’s book, “Happiness is a Serious Problem.”)

So why do not more people do good?

It’s not fun - fun produces pleasure immediately. But not long lasting.

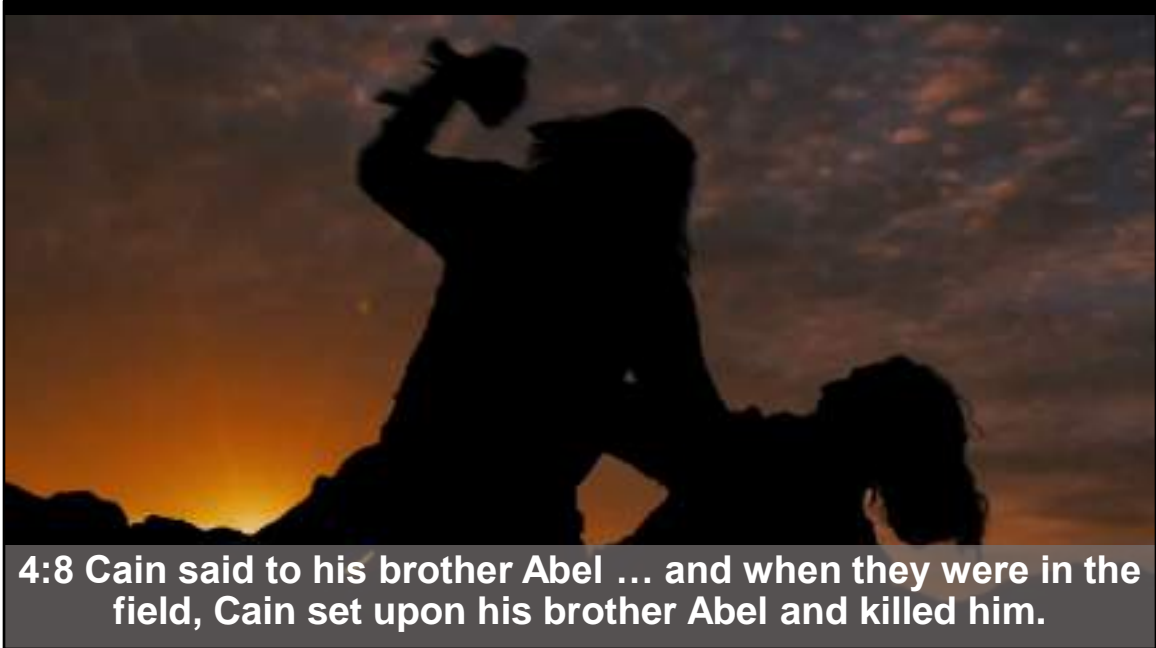
Sin couches at the door: the less good we do, the more that sin is tempting.

HABITS!

“Urge is toward you” = humans tend to sin.

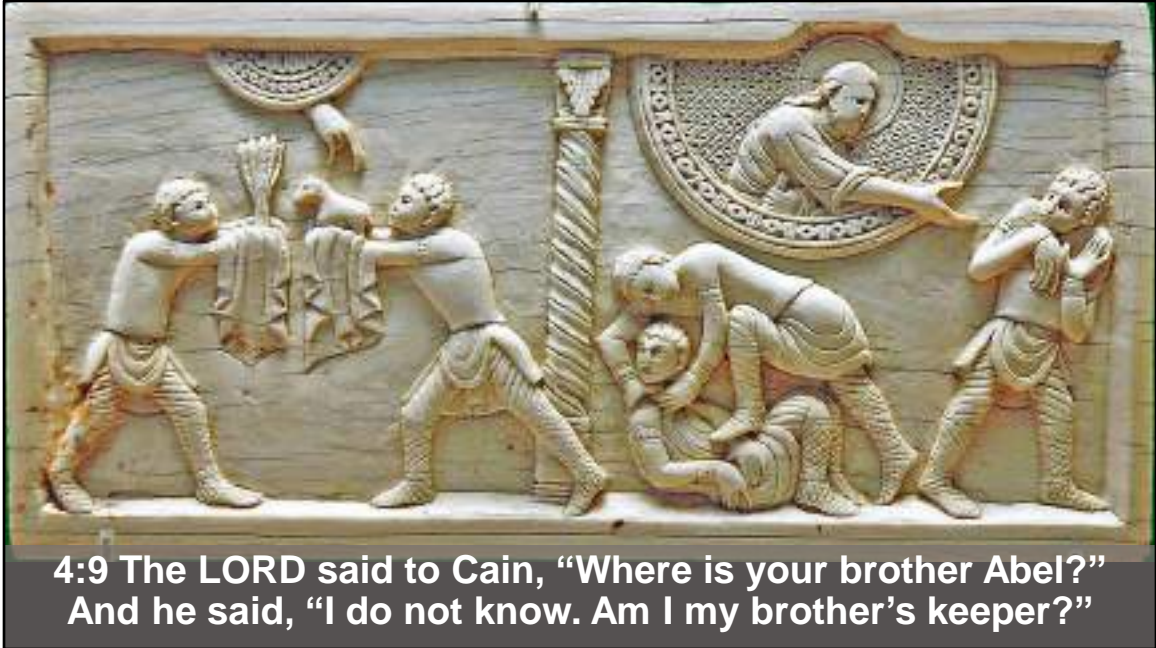
One of Torah’s most important statements: “You can be its (sin’s) master.”

Whether you think you can or you can’t, you’re right.



4:8 Cain said to his brother Abel ... and when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him.

The Torah does not say what Cain said. Perhaps he was so mad he couldn't speak coherently. Perhaps what he said wasn't important. But in any case, Cain killed Abel. That's what is significant.



God questioned Cain just as he questioned his parents.

Cain could have said ‘I killed him, so what?’ Murder was not yet outlawed. Cain may have not even known it was possible to kill a person?

But he felt he had to lie. Implies a conscience, even without divine revelation, the human has an inner voice.

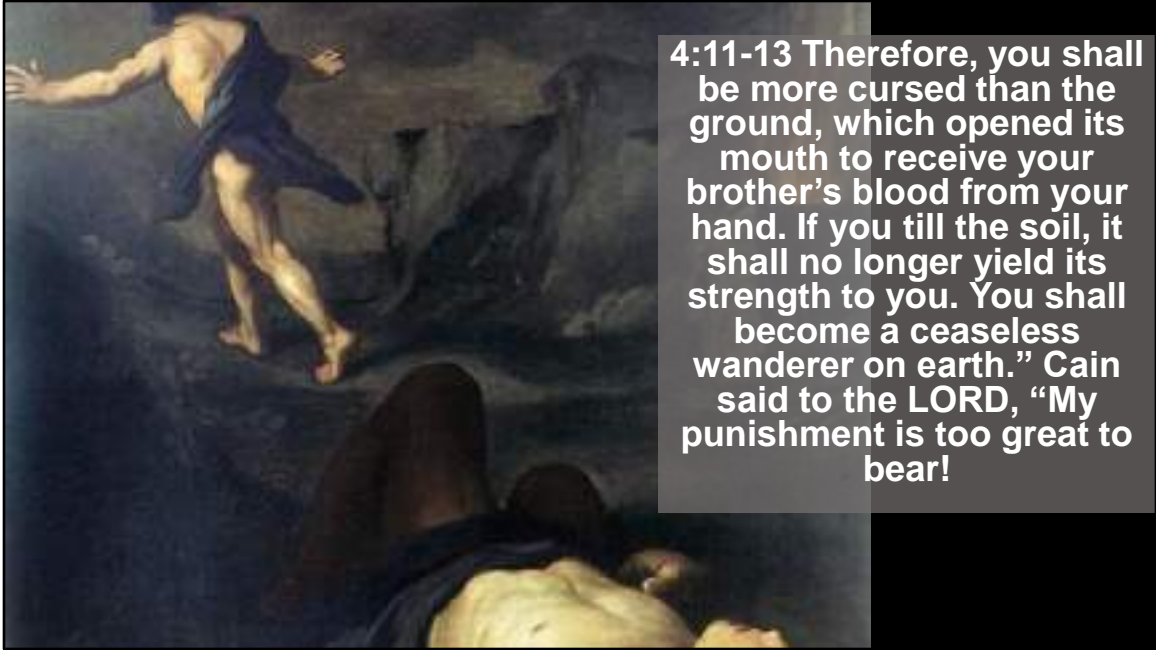
Clearly, though, conscience is not enough. Plenty of people do great evil with a clear conscience. If conscience was good enough, we would not need the Bible or even the Ten Commandments.



The word is actually “bloods” with an s.

Refers to not just Abel’s blood, but to the blood of all who would have been his descendants.

The suffering may not stop at the initial murder... Alan Dershowitz story. “How many of you suffered from the holocaust?” A few hands. Then, “How many of you or your family have had cancer, coronary problems, diabetes, or stroke?” Nearly every hand went up. “How can you be sure the cures for any of those did not go up in the smoke of the holocaust?” Silence.



4:11-13 Therefore, you shall be more cursed than the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. If you till the soil, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. You shall become a ceaseless wanderer on earth." Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!

God curses Cain but does not kill him. God is generally hard on murder. But only pre-meditated. This, on the other hand, would be called a crime of passion today. Again, Cain may not even have known he could kill someone; no human being had ever died at this point. The ceaseless wandering part must have been later retracted as Cain became the founder of the first city. "My punishment" (his sentence) could also be "My sin" (his own guilt). Somewhat ambiguous. When the Torah does this, it's reasonable to think it means both.



4:21 And the name of his brother was Jubal; he was the ancestor of all who play the lyre and the pipe.

The Torah includes the origin of music. Music is primeval and foundational. Prager says music points to God (but is not a proof). A gift from God. No intrinsic value. For pure joy. Darwin even noted that man's faculties for enjoying music are most mysterious.



5:1 This is the record of Adam’s line.—When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God;

People are far more likely to love one another if they recognize we all come from the same parents (Adam and Eve). We are literally all related. And “in God’s image” alludes to tremendous value.

The Hebrew word for “record” is actually the word for “generations.” One who saves a life saves generations, and one who destroys a life destroys generations.

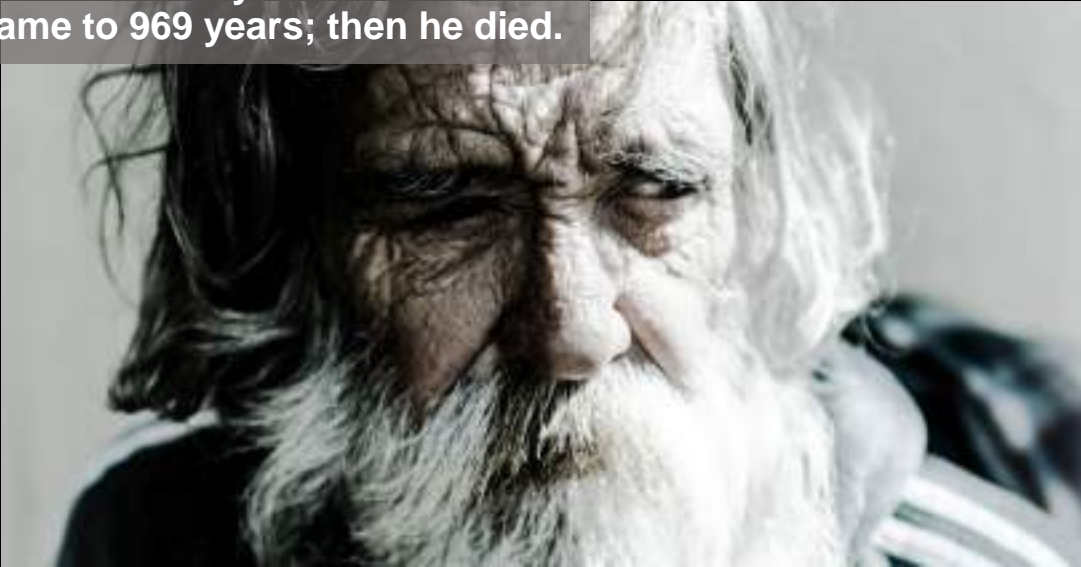


The only distinction the Torah makes about the creation of human beings: male and female. Nothing else.

Men and women are equally important. And...

There are two types of human beings: male and female. Not one and no more than two. Tamper with this distinction at your own peril.

5:27 All the days of Methuselah came to 969 years; then he died.



Three possibilities:

1. Literally true, we just can't explain.
2. The numbers mean something (unknown) other than literal. Common in the Torah, 7, 40, etc.
3. God limited lifespans after the Flood. God is obsessed with goodness. Destroyed the world to end evil. Shortening man's lifespan also shortens opportunity for evil. But remember, not science. Wisdom.

Next session: August 18th, 6pm PDT

Noah's Ark City of Babel