

## GENESIS Week 4, chapter 3

### READ GEN.3 all

The great Jewish Rabbis and sages of long ago point to something kind of interesting in verse 1 about the serpent: the serpent was different from the wild animals God had created; he wasn't even *one of* the wild animals. He was NOT just craftier than wild animals, this thing could TALK!! Look carefully at the wording of the verses: our English language, Western Culture minds tend to read-in the word "other" ...making the verse read "than any OTHER wild animal". But, that's not what the Scriptures say.....the verse says "than any wild animal". Apparently the serpent was not even *categorized* as a wild animal. The serpent was unique.....a separate thing...in a very negative way. Now, did the spirit of Satan overtake and possess a poor, unwitting snake? Or was the snake a physical form that Satan took on, different and apparently appealing; a form willed by his own doing, in order to be visible and communicate with Adam and Eve? Satan is able to counterfeit anything.....and I agree with many of the ancient sages that the serpent could well have been Satan's attempt to mimic God by creating life.....counterfeit life. Apparently, at first the serpent was even able to get around on legs.....because we see that God cursed the serpent, with one result being he would have to crawl on his belly.

And, of course, it was that old serpent that led the woman, then the man, to rebel against God. Notice however that the serpent was located inside the Garden of Eden, a Holy Place.

This is one more example of the Garden, a physical, 4 dimensional place, being a parallel of Heaven....a non-physical, spiritual place OUTSIDE of our 4 dimensional Universe. Even what went on in the Garden is a parallel of what went on in Heaven. For, we know that Satan was at one time in Heaven; a special spiritual being, the most beautiful spiritual creature there was, next to God Himself. I don't want to call Him an Angel because there are many other heavenly spirit beings than angels. Cherubim and Seraphim are NOT angels.....they are different, and even MORE powerful, spirit beings than angels. And, Satan, called Lucifer in Heaven, rebelled against God and was cast down to earth when he rebelled. Right? So, here we have the same story, only instead of taking place in a spiritual setting (Heaven), it is taking place in a physical setting; the Garden of Eden. We have the serpent, a very special creature.....different than all the other Living Creatures..... walking up right in the Garden, living in the presence of God. Then, he rebels and his form changes, and he is expelled from the Garden. A complete parallel. The Reality of Duality.

Satan starts by telling Adam and Eve that God is a liar; verse 3, after God has instructed Adam that if he eats from the Tree of Good and Evil he will die, the serpent says ***“It is not true that you will surely die.....”***. As a result, the Serpent is cast out of the Garden. More than that, he is cast down into the dust, that he must crawl on his belly. Satan was cast out of Heaven, and exiled to earth, in Hebrew “Adam-ah”. The serpent was cast out of the Garden, and exiled to crawl on his belly in the “Adam-ah”, the dust of the ground. Another exact parallel. Reality of Duality. This event of eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is what Christianity calls the Fall of Man, the Fall from Grace, or simply “The Fall”. Now, very interestingly, the Jewish Rabbis of old look at this event with a little different slant.

As Christians, evangelical Christians (because not all denominations see it this way) we see The Fall as the place where man’s relationship to God was broken and evil came alive. Where sin didn’t just enter into the world, it became part of man’s very nature, part of our fiber and perhaps even genetic material. And, as a result of our sin nature, we die.....not just physically, but spiritually, and therefore, eternally. Therefore, we need a Savior. One who will rescue us, restore us to a condition equal to what Adam was BEFORE he sinned.

The Jews, on the other hand, see what happened in the Garden as a sort of liberation. That is, man was now given the ability, and responsibility, to make choices. Prior to Adam and Eve’s act of rebellion, they simply did what God said.....almost robotically in these Sages’ view.....because there was no other choice. Why? Because there existed ***for Adam and Eve*** nothing but good, and good was a single pathway laid out by God. But, with the introduction of evil by the serpent, mankind gained a kind of freedom: we could now choose for ourselves whether to love God and obey Him; or, we could choose to follow our own deceived ways, and do as we wished. And, to a degree, mankind could even choose just ***how*** to follow God.....that is, each could work out their own “salvation”.

As a result of this view, for the Jews a Savior has not generally been about a person being restored, individually, to a right relationship with God. Nor has it been about having our sin natures destroyed, and then our being recreated with a new nature. For the Jew, a Savior, their Messiah, has always been about making the Hebrews the dominant world culture.... a culture of God, the Kingdom of God, that revolved around the ways of the one true God. Salvation was seen as a more or less national issue, and the Savior as the national leader of the cause. But, this Savior would be a man....in fact, he’d be an offspring of the greatest warrior-king Israel ever had: King David. It’s no wonder that so relatively few Hebrews/Jews accepted Jesus as their Messiah; because He simply didn’t fit the mold ***or the purpose*** that the ancient sages had built for the Messiah.

Look at verse 8. Now, I don’t want to belabor what might seem like a trifling point, but I can assure you that what I’m about to put before you has kept many a Rabbi and many a Christian Scholar awake at night trying to discern: and that is: was God actually, physically walking in the Garden? Better yet, does God have any of the ***physical*** human characteristics that allow him to “jump for joy”, “weep bitter tears”, “swing a sword”,

and other attributes that we recognize as needing a physical body to perform? What are we to make of words like these that are used so often in the Bible?

In general, evangelical Christians have a ready answer every time a physical attribute of God is spoken of as making an appearance: we say it must have been Jesus. Perhaps. If one read only the NT, and ignored the OT, then most certainly Jesus would be a logical, though not entirely satisfactory, answer.

The Jews have alternative points of view as to what these human emotions and characteristics ascribed to God mean. I'm not here to convince you of any particular answer, because I have no problem accepting some things as simply mysteries beyond the human intellect's ability to ponder. Quite the opposite, actually, because more and more I have a LOT of problems with the very simplistic answers that we so easily accept; answers to some complex and often times vague statements we find in the Bible. Man has a real tendency to "fill in the blanks" when something in the Bible isn't made readily apparent, and that can really be dangerous.

While there is no single Jewish point of view on much of anything, what I'm about to read to you is of general agreement among Rabbis and Jewish sages, with only a smattering of dissenting views.

Maimonides was perhaps one of the greatest and most revered Jewish scholars of all time. He lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century AD. Rather than paraphrase his thoughts on this matter, his view is concise enough that I prefer to simply quote it: ***"Since matters concerning bodily experience are such, then all words connected to this mentioned in the Torah and in the Prophets are all exemplary and figures of speech. Examples of this are: "He who sits in the Heavens, laughs", and ".....that they provoked me (Elohim) to anger", and "...as the Lord rejoiced", et cetera. The Sages of old said that the Torah is phrased in our terms. In Jeremiah 7:9 it says: "Do they provoke me to Anger?", whereas in Malachi 3:6 it says: "For I am the Lord, I do not change". If God really was sometimes angry and sometimes joyful, then He would be changing. Such characteristics are found only in the dark and gloomy existence of having a body, which lives in huts of mud and created from dust, but God is higher and raised above all this."***

He continues in another commentary: ***" These phrases are in line with the level of understanding of people (humans) who can ONLY comprehend physical existence (NOTE < me>: the 4 dimensions of our Universe), and so the Torah speaks in terms that we can understand. For example, when it says: "If I whet my glittering sword....", does God really have a sword? Does it actually glitter and does He actually use a sword to kill? Such phrases are figurative."***

I'll let you wrestle with that for yourselves. The point is, we need to be very careful that we don't go around subscribing to God OUR human attributes. God is not a man, He is spirit. Yet, how else is a being so far above us, who operates outside our realm of time and space, supposed to communicate with us, if it's not in OUR terms? And, yes, of course, somebody is now going to say well, Jesus was God, and He was certainly a

physical being....that is, he was God with human attributes. Yes, that is true. But, Jesus was also a real flesh and blood man....born from a woman, a very specific woman, Mary, who had to come from the line of King David. Although Jesus' Father was God, Christ was 100% human; yet 100% God.....He wasn't a 50/50 Bar. That is, He wasn't part man and part God, nor was He sometimes man, and at other times God. I don't know about you, but I can't quite get my mind to picture or comprehend just what that all means or how all that works.....yet, I know its true. This is just one of those mysteries that is not explainable in any term that a human can understand. It's a God thing. And, the Bible is chocked full of these difficult God-things.

And, here's yet another one of those difficult God-things. The Midrash Rabba makes a very interesting point by making a connection between some words of King Solomon and what happened regarding the eating of the forbidden fruit in Genesis. In Ecclesiastes 1:18, the Holy Scriptures tell us this: <sup>NAS</sup> ***Ecclesiastes 1:18 Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.***

The Midrash Rabba goes on to explain that in Genesis 3:6, Havah discloses that there were 3 things about that tree that caused an irresistible attraction to well up in her: 1) the fruit on it apparently looked delicious to eat, 2) that the tree itself was beautiful, and 3) that partaking of the tree would made one wise. That is, what she was seeking MOST was wisdom. Look at the NAME of the tree; the tree of KNOWLEDGE of good and evil. Her act was largely about acquiring knowledge. And, as we grow older in life, we indeed find Solomon's statement to be true; that the more you know, the more you wish you DIDN'T know. When we talk about seeing life through the eyes of a child, we mean that most children have not yet learned about the bad things of life; they still believe that if you just work hard enough, or dream big enough, or behave good enough, that nothing but good things will happen to you. Children have not yet learned that people don't always do what they say they'll do. Or that some people, for no discernable reason, will hurt you.....even take your life and freedom from you. We call this the innocence of childhood. How is that innocence taken from them? Knowledge. So, knowledge and wisdom brings with it it's own set of problems. Yet, it is a human desire.....as with Eve.....to seek knowledge and wisdom.

This Midrash goes on to explain that there was another fundamental at work here: Havah distorted God's instructions to her husband, Adam....OR.....Adam ADDED to God's command about not eating from the forbidden fruit when HE instructed Havah. Because when we look in Gen 2:17, we see God say this to Adam: <sup>NAS</sup> ***Genesis 2:17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."***

But, when the serpent asked Havah why it was she was not to eat of that particular tree she responded in Gen. 3:3 with: <sup>NAS</sup> ***Genesis 3:3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'"***  Where did the notion of "you can't touch it" come from? Somebody, either Adam or Havah added it to God's Word. The Midrash points out this saying of Proverbs 30:6 <sup>NAS</sup> ***Proverbs 30:6 Do not add to His words Lest He reprove you, and you be proved a***

*liar*. This is exactly the situation here with Eve, or both Adam and Eve; because some words were added and it proven them liars.

Man has a real tendency to add to God's Word even more than subtracting from it. And, the old serpent knew the instant Havah (or perhaps Adam) lied.....by embellishing what God's instruction actually was.....that once they lied, he had them. It is really dicey to add to God's Word. The Hebrews did it. The Church does it. And, it has all come to no good.

OK, on to something else. In verse 15, we get this very messianic, very prophetic....but if we're honest, also very vague..... statement. <sup>NAS</sup> ***Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."***

Yet, here we have, so very early on in the Bible, just a peek at God's plan for restoring humanity to Himself. I have to say, if this was all I had to go on in Moses' or David's day, I don't think I'd ever have even remotely seen it as a messianic prophecy.....just confusing. It's an awful lot easier in hindsight, and with Jesus having come and gone, to recognize these, and other, verses of the OT for what they are....a prophecy of the coming of Christ. Sometimes the Church likes to criticize or look down on the early Hebrews for not understanding what God's plan was. But, it is absolutely typical of man, then as now, to only believe God after the fact. No matter how many prophets God sent to Israel, few Israelites ever believed what those men had to say, and the consequences were terrible.

In fact, look at us, the Church, today. God has told us unequivocally that when Israel returns as a nation, and when Jerusalem is retaken from the gentiles (things which have both occurred rather recently), that is the indication that we are living in the last of the last days. We are told that Jerusalem and the Land of Israel will become a "cup of trembling" for the whole world, and it most certainly is so. When, in all of history, was Jerusalem at any other time a cause for *anybody* but the Israelites to tremble in fear? Oh, the Jews aggravated the daylights out of the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Egyptians, and the Romans. But, never was Jerusalem the center of something that others feared would destabilize the globe. But, it most certainly has become that way in our lifetimes. We are told that when we see all these things, look up, for our Salvation, and the end of the world as we know it, is near. We have watched these events unfold before our very eyes; we have been forewarned in our own Holy Scriptures that this time in history would come, and yet only a few within the Church have paid much attention. Let us not be blind any longer to the incredible day in which we live.....and what it means.....and how we should respond. In general, when we turn a blind or disinterested eye towards these events, we're behaving just like the Hebrews of old when Yahweh forewarned them of what was coming, and they just sniffed at it and went on about their lives as usual. The results were devastating for millions of Israelites.

OK. Note in vs. 24 that God made animal skins for clothing for Adam and Eve. Why? They had already made clothing out of vegetation for themselves, and it must have done the trick. But, it wasn't good enough as far as God was concerned. Primarily, because

THEY did it, and not God. Here we see the end results of the first blood sacrifice in the Bible. Where do you get an animal skin? From a dead animal. Was there death of ANYTHING up to now? No.....these animals used to clothe Adam and Havah (Eve) didn't die from old age....they had to be killed. Here we have another fundamental set down for all time that we MUST pay attention to: the only suitable payment for sin is the shedding of innocent blood. God had to let one of His own created and innocent creatures die, to pay for Adam and Eve's rebellion. Living Creatures, created from the same dust of the earth as humans.....given animation and life from God's own breath just as were humans.....are now having to die to atone for the rebelliousness of human beings, so that humans can have *some* relationship with God, though not to the extent that Adam and Havah originally did.

We hear the term "covering" in this vein: that is, that shed blood was a covering for man's sin. This is where the notion of blood being a covering comes from: those animals skins "covered" Adam and Eve's nakedness....their sin.....and the sin it covered was their rebellion of stealing from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and now sin lived in them.

And, yet, when Havah lied and told the old serpent that she was not allowed to even *touch* that tree, she had not yet eaten the fruit. She had not yet gained the knowledge of good and evil. So, whether it was Adam's lie or Havah's lie, where did their notion to lie come from if the Fall of Man.....the eating of that fruit.....had not yet occurred?

Well, the ancient Hebrews' take on this is that God CREATED man with both a good and an evil inclination. In Hebrew the phrases are yetzer hatov and yetzer harah.....the good inclination and the evil inclination. So, according to this view, Havah or Adam or both were just acting out their evil inclinations when they, first, added to God's command by including the words "and not to touch it", and then second, by blatantly disobeying His command by eating the fruit that God had unambiguously told them not to. Yes, Havah says the serpent "tricked her".....but is that really the case? All the serpent did at first was ask a question, and Havah's response was not truth. Once she told a lie, the gate was open and the evil one took her to the next step.....disobedience. This really stings most Christian doctrine on the subject, but it is hard not to see that, at the least, the Hebrew sages have a point. After all, if God created everything, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was His creation, put by Him into the Garden He created, then evil predated mankind. Did evil just pop-up on it's own? Or was it actually part of Creation? We're not going to debate that headache-producing subject today, but if we are honest about what Scripture tells us (and what it does NOT tell us), then the pre-existence of evil cannot be taken as a simple, cut and dried, easy on our conscience, doctrine-ized matter.

In verse 22, we get another piece to the puzzle of who God is; and what His attributes consist of. For we get the statement <sup>NAS</sup> *Genesis 3:22 Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever "*— Which corresponds with the statement back in Genesis 1:26 <sup>NAS</sup> *Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule*

*over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*

So, here we have 2 places in the Bible, early on, in which God speaks of Himself as "us".

Note also that Adam and Eve were removed from the Holy place of the Garden of Eden. Mankind was now separated from God...physically and spiritually. And, God put an angelic guard on the approach to the Tree of Life to keep Adam and Eve away from it.....they had already proven they were not trustworthy, and God couldn't allow them near it. In fact, they couldn't even be allowed to stay in the Garden anymore. God cannot allow uncleanness and sin anywhere near His perfect holiness.

Now, notice again that direction, east. God placed his angelic guard at the eastern part of the Garden....apparently, there was an entrance into the Garden from the east. So, we now have the Garden in the eastern part of the Land of Eden, and the angel in the east end of the Garden. We'll see a whole bunch more "east" as we move along.

#### **READ GEN. 4 all**

So, here we have Cain and Abel, sons of Adam and Havah. And, we have the first **recorded** murder (though, by now there apparently were many inhabitants on earth, so this may not have been the first killing of a human). But, before that event, we are witness to God accepting one sacrifice, an animal, but not another, food from the earth...plants. Once again God reinforces the fundamental that only innocent blood is suitable for atonement.

Hebrew names have great significance; the ancients tended to name their children after some event or attribute or hope that was of current significance to the family. So it works to our advantage to learn what their names meant because it gives us an insight into both the mindset of the people involved, and the events that were shaping their lives. To be clear, though, Cain was **not** a Hebrew, because it would be hundreds of years after the forthcoming Great Flood before the first person designated as a "Hebrew" would come to exist..... so what we're really talking about here is the Hebrew LANGUAGE, not the Hebrew RACE.

Kayin, Hebrew for Cain, meant "acquired from God". It appears that Kayin was probably Adam and Eve's first child. And, because it was a male child, and because of the name Eve gave to him, it appears that Havah, Eve, made this connection that we read about a little earlier concerning how Eve's seed would bruise the head of the Serpent's seed. She must have logically concluded that this was the man that would deal with Satan.

We're also told that Kayin was a farmer.

Next to be born was Hevel, Hebrew for Abel; Hevel was a shepherd. There is some disagreement as to what the significance of the name Abel is: some scholars say we can deduce no meaning from it. However, Hebrew scholars say that Abel is taken from the Hebrew word "hebel", which means "breath" or "vapor"..... it carries with it a sense of

being transitory...here for a moment, then gone. We are told precious little about either brother, but we do know that there was a time at which they were summoned by God to present a sacrifice, an offering, to Him. As there was no sense of surprise or unexpectedness assigned to verse 3, bringing a sacrifice to the Lord was probably a regular event; at the least this was NOT the first time a sacrifice for the Lord had taken place. Likely, the altar where the sacrifice took place would have occurred at the entry to the Garden of Eden because they would not have been allowed into it; and God would not have come to them, because He would not set foot on anything but Holy Ground.... Which, at this time, on earth, was ONLY the Garden of Eden.

We're told that God accepts the offering of a slain first-born sheep from Abel, but rejects the plants that Cain brought. The question here, of course, is why did God rebuff Kayin's offering? A couple of very likely possibilities: First, it was likely the particular *kind* of sacrifice offered was either a burnt offering or a purification offering; in Hebrew an 'Olah or a Hata'at; and, the only suitable sacrifice before God for either of these two types of sacrifice is blood. Innocent blood. **Firstborn** innocent blood, which is exactly what we're told Hevel brought as his offering. Now, it is near certain that all the ritual and requirements we find in Leviticus for sacrificing was not involved; it was simpler and straightforward and there is no mention of a mediator, a priest, of some sort. But, the point is that these two brothers would have known full well what God expected of them, for they grew up with it. Long before these two were born, God had given their parents that command and instruction by way of the animal skins He required Adam and Havah to wear for clothing...for a covering. They were reminded of it 24 hours a day.

Another interesting facet of the sacrificial issue concerned the *nature* of the produce from the field that Kayin brought: it was ordinary. **Gen 4:3, "... in the course of time Kayin brought an offering to Adonai of the produce of the soil; and Hevel too brought from the firstborn of his sheep..."**. Abel's sacrifice was properly a firstborn..... but as for Kayin's produce of the soil, there is no mention at all of it being firstfruits or the best of the field, or anything that would make it set-apart from any other of the produce. The Sages don't fully agree on the nature of the defect of Kayin's offering: some say he shouldn't have brought plant life at all, that it should have been an animal. Others say that the problem was the haughty, non-repentant attitude he brought his offering with; still others cite what we just discussed, that it was just ordinary produce and not the best.....which is what MUST be offered to God.

Let's remember that at this time, man was only to eat plants..... not animals. Therefore, the purpose for Sheep in this era was NOT for meat: rather it was for sacrifice and clothing. The animals Hevel was producing could have served no other purpose than as a service to God.....except for the wool or skins for clothing and perhaps tents. So, we could further combine these two purposes for the Sheep under one title: covering. Do you see this? The Sheep, the Lamb, was to provide covering (clothing) for man's physical nakedness, and it was to provide covering (its own innocent blood) for man's spiritual nakedness, his sin. But NOT for nourishment.