

### GENESIS

#### Lesson 4 - Chapters 3 and 4

Today we're going to study Genesis chapter 3, so let's jump right into our Scripture reading.

#### READ GEN. 3 all

The great Jewish Rabbis and sages of long ago point to something rather 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 being 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 reads "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 and distinct living being...but 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 so that he might 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 of the consequences that he would have to crawl on his belly from this point onward.

And of course it was that old serpent that led the woman and 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 (and Heaven is 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 ever was, next to God Himself. I don't want to call Him an angel because there are many other varieties of heavenly spirit beings than angels. Cherubim and Seraphim are spiritual beings but they are NOT angels; they are different and even MORE powerful spirit beings than angels. And Satan, called Lucifer when he resided in Heaven, rebelled against God and was cast down to earth for that rebellion. So here in the story of The

Serpent's expulsion from the Garden we have essentially the same story, only instead of it 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 upright 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 of Lucifer being cast out of Heaven. The Reality of Duality at work).

Satan begins his onslaught by telling Adam and Eve that God is a liar; verse 3. In 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 of such blasphemy the Serpent is cast out of the Garden. More than that he is cast down into the dust such that he must now crawl on his belly. Satan was first cast out of a spiritual realm, Heaven, and exiled to the physical realm earth (in Hebrew the word for earth, soil, is "Adam-ah"). Next the serpent was cast out of the Garden and cursed to crawl on his belly in the "Adam-ah", the dust of the ground. Here is another exact parallel, and another demonstration of the Reality of Duality. This event of Adam and Eve's unauthorized eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is what Christianity calls the Fall of Man or 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 event whereby man's relationship to God was broken and evil came alive in a way that had physical consequences as well as spiritual. It was that moment when sin didn't just enter into the world, it became part of our human 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 deliver and rescue and 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 many of the 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 with no alternative. 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, infected hearts, 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 Jewish people a Savior has not generally been about a person being restored (as an individual) to a right relationship with God nor has it been about having our sin natures destroyed and then our being re-created with a new nature. For a Hebrew a Savior, a Messiah, has always been about making the Hebrews the dominant world culture; a culture defined by God, lived out as the Kingdom of God, that revolved around the ways of the

one true God that are taught in the Torah. Salvation was seen as a more or less national issue and the Savior as the national leader of the cause. But this Savior would necessarily 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 accepted Yeshua 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. 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 its meaning. The question 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 and actions 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-like attribute of God is spoken of as making an appearance; we say it must have been Jesus. Perhaps; if one reads only the NT and ignores 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 physical-like characteristics ascribed to God mean to indicate. 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 them. It is quite the opposite, actually, because more and more I have a LOT of problems with the very simplistic answers that we seem to so easily accept from our Pastors, Rabbis, and Priests; answers to some complex and often times vague statements we find in the Bible. Man has a tendency to "fill in the blanks" when something in the Bible isn't made readily apparent; such a thing can really be dangerous.

While there is no single Jewish point of view on much of anything (any more than there is a single Christian viewpoint), what I'm about to read to you is of general agreement among Rabbis and Jewish sages, with only a minority 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 that we need to be reluctant about going 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 of 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, Yeshua was God and He was certainly a physical being; that is, he was God with human attributes. That is all 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 Christ's 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 that it's true. This is just one of those mysteries that are not explainable in any term that a human can deal with. It's a God thing and the Bible is chocked full of these difficult God-things.

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 tells 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 urge to well up in her: 1) the fruit on it apparently looked delicious to eat, 2) 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 bad will happen to you. Children have not yet learned that people don't always do what they say they'll do or are supposed to do. Or that some people for no discernable reason will hurt you; some may even take your life and freedom from you. We call this the innocence of childhood. How is that innocence eventually taken from them? Knowledge. So knowledge and wisdom brings with it its own set of problems. Yet it is a human desire.....as with Eve.....to seek knowledge and wisdom.

Can we accept that all knowledge is not good for us? Apparently not because humans seem to have an insatiable appetite for it. It seems that there is knowledge that humans (at least humans that don't have God's spirit in them) cannot handle or properly discern. It is said that we are in the Information Age and have been for at least 25 years. Is the world a better place because of all this knowledge? Or does all of this information, available at our fingertips, seem to produce as much evil as it does good? Are our lives more peaceful and meaningful because of this vast expansion of knowledge?

This Midrash Rabbah goes on to explain that there was another fundamental at work in the story of Mankind's Fall: **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 prohibited from eating 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 decree. The Midrash points this out by 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 proved 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..... he had them in his grasp. It is really dicey to add to God's Word. The Hebrews did it and do it. The Church does it everyday. And it has all come to no good.

OK on to something else. In verse 15 we get this 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 honestly that 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 of deliverance; rather it just see it as confusing. It's significantly easier in hindsight, and with Messiah having come and gone, to recognize these and other verses of the Old Testament for what they are: a prophecy of the coming of Our Redeemer. Sometimes we like 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, Yeshua's Church, today; the Lord has told us unequivocally that when Israel returns as a nation and when Jerusalem is retaken from the gentiles (things which have both occurred recently from a historical standpoint) that is the sign 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 has become exactly that. 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 daylight out of the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Egyptians, and the Romans but never was Jerusalem the center of the world or a place where what went on there could destabilize the globe. But it most certainly has become that way in our lifetimes. We are told that when we see all these things happening 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 relative few within Christ's ecclesia have paid much attention. Let us vow not be blind any longer to the incredible time in which we live; nor be oblivious to what it means; nor passive in 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 YHWH 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.

Note in vs. 24 that God made animal skin clothing for Adam and Eve. Why animal skins for garments? They had already made clothing out of vegetation for themselves and it must have done the trick. But apparently it wasn't good enough as far as God was concerned and this is because Adam and Eve made their own coverings, and not God (man cannot create his own covering for sin). 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? It seems not. These animals whose skin was used to clothe Adam and Havah (Eve) didn't die from old age; they had to be killed. Here we have another fundamental God-principle 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 forfeit their lives in order to atone for the rebelliousness of human beings, so that humans can have **some** relationship with God (although 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 in this instance 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?

The ancient Hebrew Sages' take on this is that God CREATED man with both a good and an evil side to him; they call it a good and an evil inclination. In Hebrew the phrases are **yetzer hatov** and **yetzer harah**.....the good (**tov**) inclination and the evil (**rah**) inclination. So according to this view Havah or Adam or both were just acting out their inherent evil inclinations when they (first) added to God's command by including the words "and not to touch it" and then second when they deliberately disobeyed His command by eating the fruit that God had unambiguously told them not to. Yes Havah tries to deflect blame and says the serpent "tricked her".....but is that really the case? All the serpent did at first was to ask a question, and Havah's response was not truth. Once she told a lie the gate was open and the Devil took her to the next step.....disobedience.

This really stings most Christian doctrine on the subject of evil and the Fall of Man 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 that He created) then evil must have pre-dated mankind. Did evil just self-generate? Did evil just appear from nowhere? Or was evil actually part of Creation? We're not going to debate that headache-producing subject today but we will look more closely at the subject of good and evil when we get to Genesis chapter 6. 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 just 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"—**

And that statement corresponds with another 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's since they had already proven that they were not trustworthy. God couldn't allow them near it; in fact they couldn't even be allowed to stay inside the Garden anymore. God cannot allow uncleanness and sin anywhere near His perfect holiness.

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 placed in the east end of the Garden. We'll see a whole bunch more "east" as we move along.

### READ GEN. 4:1 - 9

Here we have Cain and Abel, sons of Adam and Havah. And we have the first **recorded** murder (although 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 these Biblical names meant because it gives us an insight into both the mindset of the people involved and into 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 forerunner of the Hebrew LANGUAGE (Akkadian) 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 the Serpent 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 others 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 and 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 was located at the entry to the Garden of Eden because they would not have been allowed into the area that God dwelled, the Garden.

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 that 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 life, innocent animal life, 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 or 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 the more valuable firstborn (a male animal) 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 (which is not really described at all); still others cite what we just discussed, that it was just ordinary produce and not the

best, which is a must if it's to 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 and 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 also to provide covering (its own innocent blood) for man's spiritual nakedness, his sin. But it was not meant for his nourishment.

We'll continue with this chapter next time.