

EXAMINING SACRED TEXTS

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The behavioral patterns of family relationship are passed on through generations. The seeds of trauma lie in wait to generate their unique yield: stories that tell of what happened to those who went before. Families hand their legacy of misery from one generation to the next. It began in the Garden of Eden when the original children, Adam and Eve, were initially wounded by a divine father's anger. From this primordial clay, the dominant myths of western civilization sprouted the weeds of discord. Yet from that same mud perhaps will flower something that heals, something that is stronger than this discord for having been cross-pollinated with the Jewish, Moslem, and Christian traditions that have developed since those early moments in the Garden.

The Biblical tale of the origins of the Jewish people, and the forerunner of the Islamic Religions, has parallels in creation mythology from around the world. Stories of a great flood, like the one in the story of Noah's Ark, are told in Australia, the Indian Archipelago, Eastern Asia, Mexico, Central America, and Polynesia. Explanations for the recurrence of this flood motif range from reminiscences of events to scientific studies of geological data that prove the existence of an actual great flood. The narrative of the orphaned Moses and his subsequent journey towards greatness has parallels in the story of the abandonment of Romulus and Remus, the mythical founders of Rome, as well as in the tale of Trakhan, the King of Gilgit, a city in the Himalayas, who survived his childhood abandonment to become a leader.

One theme stands out in Genesis: story after story depicts emotional and/or physical abuse in its families. After God abandoned Adam and Eve in Eden, a sequence of murders, thefts, social destruction, rapes and manipulative schemes followed the first family. Similar cruelty is the manifestation of psychologically disturbed individuals victimized by early family trauma. The Bible and the Koran, the most influential mythological works of all time, contains guides for brutality that influences us from cradle to grave. It is a story of stolen birthrights, rape, murder, violence, intimidation, and control.

Throughout early Biblical history, contentious brothers fight over unacknowledged offerings and inheritance. Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, and ultimately Joseph all engage in bitter disputes.

Preferential treatment by a parent fills the outcast sibling with emotional pain. The discordant relationship processes in Genesis characterize the patterns of the brotherhood of nations currently at war. *“The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground”* God says to the proto-murderer Cain in Genesis 4:8-11. Brothers wrangle across generations until Joseph breaks the mold and begins a kinder dialogue.

The image of brothers at war and fighting over stolen birthrights mirrors modern conflicts between nations. For example, both Israelis and Palestinians fight to the death over what each believes to be its “birthright”: land that each perceives as stolen by the other. However, the potential for positive social transformation also exists. Just as Joseph changes the combative nature of his family in ancient scriptures, visionary leaders initiate plans for peace in our times. Rather than reinforce the existing separation of religious practitioners of different faiths, the new movement seeks to include all denominations. Ancient discord can be addressed and ultimately healed in the present. By establishing points of

agreement within the Bible and the Koran, groundwork is laid for historically discordant brethren to come together in shared worship.

Humanity's earliest recorded Biblical history shows that ancient peoples experienced devastating natural events with few means to protect themselves. Severe weather, famines, and earthquakes – along with the aggression of other groups – prove stressful on ancient man's psyche. Their belief that an almighty God holds the power to protect believers and destroy their enemies is a great benefit for reducing their anxiety. To understand the origins of religious violence and work to prevent it—it is essential to understand people's emotional response as it relates to their concepts of God.

The correspondences between the core Biblical texts and the actual social role of the Jews show the power of religious texts to keep cultures intact for centuries, even when facing tremendous odds. Recent history proves that increasing weapon systems bring destructive level of terrorist acts to new heights.

Concurrently, the hierarchal global society promotes living situations throughout the world that generate feelings of worthlessness, rage, identity confusion, and anxiety. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, for example, dwell in an especially hopeless situation, and they perceive aggressive acts as their only means of relief. The globalization of economic processes also further interrupts individual's meaningful connections to social groups and traditions, thereby creating more psychological difficulties.

Religions serve powerful psychological functions for individuals. Followers use the belief in "An Almighty God" as a soothing release for anxieties and emotional distress. A powerful protector promises safety through answered prayers, but worshipers perceive non-believers as enemies. Worshipers see the threat of violence against non-believers as

justifiable. This psychological reassurance comes with a heavy price for societies, cultivating further violence which eventually leads to terrorism. Although directing despair and anger to an “other” as the enemy target subdues one’s painful emotions, this “projection” process is the root of family, community, and social discord.

Worship of an omnipotent deity can still assuage emotional pain. When combining religious practices that transform cruelty into heroism with readily available means to brutally kill and destroy enemies, new means of terror perpetually generate to provide degraded peoples with emotional sustenance. Insight into the psychological functions that worship of a dominator God provides may help create new pathways for transformation of violence into more compassionate means of relating.

Revealing the peaceful ways that can also be found in the Bible and the Koran allows kinder gentler stories to emerge that can encourage more compassionate societies. The Koran, for example, states, “And never let your hatred of people who would bar you from the Inviolable House of Worship lead you into the sin of aggression, but rather help one another in furthering virtue and God-consciousness, and do not help one another in furthering evil and enmity; and remain conscious of God...”(V2). The Bible, too, supports compassionate co-existence and states, “For my brethren and companions’ sake, I will now ask, Peace be with thee”. (Psalms, c. CXXII, v.8).

Although Biblical families display violent behavior, this conduct is not the only way that human beings can relate to each other. Unique individuals throughout the Biblical and Koranic history emerged and changed the patterns of abuse into social action that brought gifts to their societies. Moses, Joseph, Daniel, and other prominent characters within the Bible sequence would become the revered prophets in the Koran that influenced the development of Moslem religious practices and remain at

the core of present day Islamic worship. A deeper look into the values and actions of these persons revered by both religions can yield a new platform for shared religious worship. Given the current challenges to planetary survival, humankind must discover the means to shift war and strife into cooperative global problem solving. By seeking out common values, the means is established to jointly step higher in the spiritual evolution of humankind.

We need to increase our awareness of the relationships modeled within the religious texts held most sacred throughout Western civilization: the Bible and the Koran. The unarticulated hidden structure of its familiar stories encodes the patriarchal patterns that underlie family and cultural violence. The Bible – whose stories are also integral to the Koran – is still revered throughout the world as the model of wisdom. Yet, repeatedly, tales of brutal relationships give subliminal messages that legitimate violent behavior for those who worship these sacred texts.

The Bible is often understood as a literal instruction from God on how to conduct the affairs of humanity. Both radical Israelis and Palestinians, for example, look to the Biblical texts to find proof of ownership of ancient Middle Eastern lands. The perpetrators of murderous terrorist attacks often claim to act in the name of God or Allah. They justify their homicidal attacks upon others because they view them as enemies. Biblical and Koranic interactions still provide a model for cruel and violent attacks upon innocent others in our contemporary world.

The current world is technologically advanced and armed with nuclear, biological and other weapons systems of destruction which magnify the consequences of attack against perceived enemies. We cannot sustain ourselves by holding on to mythic conceptions of reality, or negative stereotypical images of those in other cultures that are cultivated

through worship of ancient religious texts. Never before has the need to examine our models been greater.

If we refine our look at Biblical history through a psychological lens, then what we come to realize is that the founding myth of the creation of western civilization in Genesis tells the story of the conception of a culture born through wounding.

The Father God of the Hebrew Scriptures was emotionally and physically abusive. Contemporary psychiatric practitioners would say he suffered from a “narcissistic personality disorder”. The defining symptoms of such a disorder as defined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders (DSM IV)*, include rage, jealousy, relationship difficulties and lack of empathic attunement. God displayed these personality attributes throughout early Biblical history. As he did, people suffered and died.

When Yahweh cast Adam and Eve out of Eden, destroyed the world he made with a flood, showed preferential treatment to Abel over Cain, demolished Sodom, and used Job as a mirror for his greatness without empathy for the consequences upon Job’s life, he established a model that sowed the seeds of dominance, intimidation and control, psychological pain, discord and strife. This germinated the earth for the flowering of violent civilizations.

The abusive interactions of the Biblical patriarchs would have created great psychological distress. Impacted family members sustained disturbed feelings of inadequacy, abandonment, self-loathing, fear, grief, loss, and anger. As the individual denies, represses, and disowns these intense emotions there can be a tendency to project outward the disturbing feelings so that they are assigned to an “other”, rather than to

oneself. Deeply wounded individuals attach the rejected parts of themselves on to others and then attack their own rage, wishes for revenge, and sadness in their creation of the more manageable external form. The more disturbed the individual or family, the greater the likelihood that projection will be the means through which inner distress is managed. The following painting of the Biblical and Koranic Joseph depicts the process of family scapegoating. His brothers had abandoned him to a well and then sold him to Egyptian traders.

All cultures perpetuate sacred creation stories that influence individual and collective attitudes, values, choices, and behaviors. Various societies believed their original peoples emerged from a golden egg, through magic clay, from above or below the ground, by edict, out of a monster, or through a watery birth. The basic patterns of the core cultural mythology worshipped by varied social groupings reflect much about the ways in which the respective group later experiences and relates to the environment, each other, and the nature of reality.

Stories of origins contain power. In Asia, for example, some villagers believe that when rice fails to grow, the correct means to encourage the rice to flourish is to recite the story of its origins to the rice in the paddy. In Western society, the accounts of the jealousies, wars, power struggles, and inequities of wealth that often characterize the evening news, are informed and predicted by the hierarchal and patriarchal structures described within the images of our creation story, Genesis.

The story of a society's creation is the template for the societies that emerge from its underlying pattern. Native American creation mythology, for example, rises up from the deeply held conviction that the earth and

all of nature is sacred. A reverence for nature serves as the basis for the core religious practices. As Native American stories of animals, tricksters, and plant life were told, the ways of the culture, its religion and philosophies based upon the sacredness of the earth were passed from one generation to the next. Thus the cultural lifestyle, philosophy and religion were taught and maintained. In India, the concepts of reincarnation and karma create the root of Indian religious doctrines. These philosophies are expressed through a social order that allowed the existence of social conditions which produces human suffering and enlightenment. The behavioral patterns found in a society's cultural myths are mirrored by that society. Just as some Native American mythology reveres all living forms, and supports a lifestyle in accordance with nature, the creation story for Western civilization, where the God of the Old Testament severely punishes those who fail to please Him, contains the pattern for relating to others through violence and control.

According to Genesis, God is the creator Earth and all of its beings. Human beings must live up to God's expectations, though sometimes these expectations are arbitrary. When the earliest peoples failed in God's eyes, they faced violent destruction and/or suffering through abandonment, floods, banishment, branding, transformation to matter, or other persecuting means of punishment.

Just as an architectural blueprint defines the structure of a building, the patterns laid down in the founding myth of Genesis outlined the hierarchical forms from which the families, communities, and nations of Western civilization would eventually emerge. They provided the mirror that reflected the functioning of the families in ancient times as the Old Testament God modeled the ways of hierarchical power. Those not willing or able to provide precisely the adulation he needed at the time could be annihilated.

As Western culture eventually attained global power, the social patterns rooted in the cycles of violence depicted in the generational progression of families, and between enemy nations throughout the Old Testament, are now mirrored in the relationships between nations found throughout the world. The seeds of the enemy mentality emerged from God's actions when he labeled humans as "bad" and destroyed them in the flood and at Sodom and Gomorrah. The labeling of one group of humans as "bad" or "evil" corresponds with the act of separating them from the society at large in order to devalue and injure them.

The unquestioned stories of the efforts of enemies to conquer other enemies depicted in The Old Testament, and in The Koran, provide a portrait currently mirrored by the nuclear arsenals held by superpower nations now envied and emulated by developing nations throughout the world. The Genesis creation story can be viewed as a metaphor for the conception of the actual culture of the Jews whose religious philosophies and values became imprinted upon the societies that emerged and flourished throughout the western hemisphere. Perhaps the Jewish history of wounding and being wounded through slavery in Egypt, persecution throughout the middle ages, the Diaspora, and eventually the Holocaust may have had its roots in the earliest social experiences of the Jews.

Archeological evidence exists that point to a period of shared partnership between men and women, a partnership that contrasts with the male dominated societies characteristic of recent history. Sacred objects, cave art, figurines and statues from Paleolithic and Neolithic times have been found that depicted worship of women for their generative powers. Archeological sites, such Catal Huyuk in the Middle East, yielded discoveries that the same agricultural implements were found in the graves of both men and women, a discovery that suggests an absence

of gender role separation. Before the emergence of monotheistic religious practices, earlier societies based their sacred practices upon worship of the earth, agriculture, and fertility. These earth and goddess worshipping religions existed concurrently with the monotheistic practices of the early Israelites. What caused the Israelite culture to develop religious practices so divergent from the tribes surrounding them?

Answers may exist within the processes of group dynamics. Perhaps a natural disaster befell the early earth worshipers that interrupted their peaceable communal life and created stress. Maybe drought or famine brought about scarcity of food. Perhaps epidemic illness, or some other natural disaster, such as an earthquake or floods, was the stressor that interrupted the apparently peaceable coexistence between men and women that they then relieved through aggressive focus upon a different group. If the early Israelite tribe for any reason seemed more vulnerable or different from neighboring tribes, then natural group processes would have cast them into the roles as deviants to be scapegoats. Their religious practices of observing the Sabbath and dietary restrictions would have isolated them and added to their role as "other."

Any different, weaker, more vulnerable individual or group can serve as the necessary sacrifice for the maintenance of the distressed others, or groups. History provides countless examples of these processes, such as the takeover of Tibet by China, the conquering of the Mayans by Spanish Conquistadors, the English supremacy over Native Americans, and the seizure of Africans for slave labor. These processes still occur in contemporary times and can easily be observed in the current global society whenever contemporary discordant nations unite against a common enemy, such as the United States against Saddam Hussein or Muammar Muhammad al-Gaadhafior, Al Qaeda plots to

destroy Westerners, or when American corporations abuse third world, nations by using native lands as dumping grounds for toxic waste and indigenous peoples as low wage workers in substandard conditions.

The systemic social processes that created untold suffering for the Jews were by no means unique to the Jews, but may be seen and understood in the context of the violent ways in which discordant hierarchical groups maintain their power over others and ensure group cohesiveness.

A similar process occurs within families and other organizations when a deviant person, or one that stands apart from the rest of his or her social grouping, such as a handicapped person or an unusually strong individual, is the pain-bearer for the community

Deviancy per se, particularly during times of stress, is sufficient to attract the attention of the group in power, and that triggers violent response. Perhaps the Jewish history of persecution emerged in primordial cultures. Might the Jews have been the first scapegoats? Did their monotheistic beliefs segregate them from the neighboring tribes? If so, the stress inherent in that role would have interfered with the ability to nurture children. Just as in our time as children of holocaust survivors often struggle to manage great emotional pain, we can assume that children reared in slavery or as homeless diasporic wanderers must have also suffered. If the Israelites provided the necessary focus for other tribes in distress, then psychological injuries sustained due to their social outcast status would have been contained within the collective psyche and then projected outward to form their concept of the nature of God. A feedback

loop was then set and established wherein God created from projections of internalized images of social violence worshipped as the model around which affairs of women and men were conducted.

Much of the Western world is addicted to the power it holds over others in its efforts to amass profit. Many observers of the dynamics of the Iraq war initiated by United States President, George W. Bush, concluded that control of Iraq's vast oil resources was the motive.

Peoples of other cultures are controlled through economics to fulfill profit goals . Our planet, now threatened by global warming, pollution, food shortages, and nuclear proliferation may have had the seeds sown for its current distress in the patterns established in the basic theology of Western civilization. The Old Testament and Koran emerged from and mirrored the often cruel social processes and practices that maintain hierarchical groups.

Anthropologists posit that two forms of social organizations occur naturally: hierarchical and symmetrical. Symmetrical groups share equally, much like the early communal polytheistic earth worshipers, who primarily sustained themselves through agricultural practices, or hunter-gatherer tribal groups. Creation stories that tell of the emergence of the world through processes that resemble naturally occurring growth and development, like a seed becoming a plant, for example, reflect symmetrical patterns.

Hierarchical groups, on the other hand, function according to the domination of the one in charge who holds the major power and authority over others that descend on the ladders of power. Biblically, we see the group dynamic in effect as we read about banking corporations and their excessive executive bonuses, the denigrated role of women, and the powerlessness of third world nations. Many heroic myths reflect underlying hierarchical forms wherein stories often tell of the ways in

which one, small and abused at the beginning of the story, eventually gains strength and power that they then use to dominate and control others

Creation stories can be considered along different dimensions which include philosophical beliefs and cultural mores. For example, the Genesis story can be considered archetypal. According to Carl Jung, an archetype is a basic recurring pattern that exists in the art, religion, and mythology of divergent cultures. A creation story from Borneo, for example, contains this same Genesis motif of a woman born from the rib of a man like in the story of origins in Genesis. The story of the creation of mankind from clay occurs in America among both the Inuits and the Native Americans who live from Paraguay to Alaska.

Genesis unfolds as a generational family history. Family members display dysfunctional behaviors congruent with those who, in our times, would be psychiatrically diagnosed as character-disordered individuals. Family development in Genesis begins with the specter of God's original abandonment and rejection of Adam and Eve, the first family in the Garden of Eden, and the specter of that abandonment haunts all the families that follow.

Genesis family history follows the expected cycles as families function and behave in ways imprinted upon them at conception; later actions are determined by the significant early abusive events they have experienced. We now know that individuals who have experienced rejection or abandonment during the critical developmental stages of early childhood may carry deep wells of rage, jealousy, despair, and depression throughout their lives. Such painful feelings are expressed as self-loathing through depression, suicide, chemical, or substance abuse. Then they too may manifest the cruel and indifferent treatment of others that stems from unwanted feelings. Emotions associated with hatred, projection, and

scapegoating develop early in childhood when an abandoned, abused, or rejected child takes his or her feelings of rage and redirects them against others. The “good” parent is split from the “bad” into distinct feeling states wherein painful emotions are held at bay deep within the unconscious.

This splitting of emotions becomes the either/or, black/white, good/bad way in which the individual perceives the world throughout life. It becomes impossible for such an individual to perceive the shades of “gray” that characterize the choices made throughout much of life. After God created the world, he saw that it was “good.” Soon thereafter, he perceived Adam and Eve as too “bad” to remain in the Garden of Eden. An example of “splitting” can be seen in the Biblical passage in which Abraham says “I am but dust and ashes.” Rabbinic sages have suggested their followers carry two slips of paper: one which reads “I am but dust and ashes” and the other “for my sake the universe was created.” The need to balance Abraham’s negative statement with one more positive illustrates a kind of splitting in which healthier individuals do not engage because they are able to reconcile the duality of life. The splitting off of good and bad aspects of personality is a symptom of disturbed psychological functioning. Healthier individuals are able to hold, simultaneously, the imperfections of life rather than to push away the opposites within. Abraham’s statement conveys the message that the self is worthless.

Some troubled individuals express their sense of worthlessness as they “put down” others in order to elevate themselves to prevent their own awareness of deeply felt inferiority. Others interpret the intensity of their inner feeling states as overwhelming rage and depression. Inexplicable acts of violence may be explained by this process of splitting and projection. Those wounded through early childhood emotional and

/or physical and sexual abuse can create great suffering for themselves and others as they attempt to rid themselves of deeply entrenched emotional pain.

The cruel behaviors manifest in the actions of many predominant individuals and families in Biblical history provide a mirror of God's initial injurious treatment toward those he himself created. In the beginning, Adam and Eve were punished by God's rejection and abandonment because they failed to obey his arbitrary authority. Only God was allowed complete knowledge, and so he wanted them to resist the knowledge that they, too, might gain from the forbidden tree.

In the Biblical story of creation, the Jew's earliest collective experiences are depicted symbolically. Both Adam and Eve, in an act of disloyalty, are rejected and abandoned by God. The pain of being cast out of their father's house passed from Adam and Eve onto Cain, Jacob and Esau, Joseph, and other characters in the Biblical progression—and then onto the experiences of the outcast culture of the Jews. God reviles Adam and Eve, saying:

“Cursed be the Soil for your sake, with pangs shall you eat from it all the days of your life. Thorn and Thistle shall it sprout for you and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread till you return to the soil, for there you are taken, for dust you are and to dust you shall return.”

When He does this, He initiates the Jews with the burden of oppression they were to carry for centuries.

Similarly, the Koran states,

“God has promised the hypocrites, both men and women, and the unbelievers, the fire of Hell. They shall abide in it for ever: a sufficient

recompense. The curse of God is upon them; lasting torment awaits them.”

These essential core themes of Jewish culture of rejection and abandonment were solemnized into the Jewish culture through a scapegoat ritual that became the basis for the Yom Kippur holy day observances. In an analogous way, Islamic culture also had its earliest beginnings in Abraham’s rejection and abandonment of Hagar – the slave who mothered his son, Ishmael.

In the book of Leviticus, the priest Aaron leads a ceremonial ritual that places sins of the community upon the heads of two goats that were then sent into the wilderness. According to Jewish legend, one goat perished from the harshness and danger of the wilderness and the other goat reached the mountaintop. When the dark sides of an individual, social grouping or nation are shifted away and onto an innocent other, then great cruelty is often witnessed as the result.

For example, a Biblical passage states, “And the Lord our God delivered him before us: and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people.; And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones of every city, we left none to remain; Only the cattle we took for a prey for ourselves, and the spoil of the cities which we took....”. Deuteronomy 2:33; 2:3; 2:34

During the Middle Ages the ritual of putting the sins of the community onto the head of goat and sending the animal away was prohibited, but it was carried out secretly by Jewish worshipers through substitution of chickens for the goats. The Israelites may have been the targets for the hatred of the Middle Eastern tribes. They absolved their pain through and adaptation of the scapegoat ritual.

The metaphors of annihilation symbolized by the death of

one goat, and the attainment of spiritual greatness reflected by the symbol of the mountain top, reflect actual powerful themes throughout Jewish history.

The atrocities of violence and persecution against the Jews were counter-balanced by the extraordinary social contributions made by Jews to society. Like the goat that perished and the goat that attained a place of exalted status described in Leviticus, the culture of the Jews has intimate knowledge of darkness and enlightenment.

On the mountaintop, God gave Moses the first commandment. He declared there be no other Gods before him because he was a jealous God. He said, "You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness or anything in heaven or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth: You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God and I punish the father's faults in the sons, the grandsons and the great-grandsons of those who hate me; but I show kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments."

God's statement reflects a position identical to narcissistically disturbed individuals: His jealousy, vengeance, needs for adoration and inability to weigh and balance the complexities of the human personality unmask him and present a picture of a psychologically injured deity. God proclaimed the edict that his followers obey him and only him. A parental relationship wherein a child's self-expression, wants, and needs are discounted in favor of the needs of the parents perpetuates child abuse. He was a black-white and either-or God, unable to tolerate the inherent ambiguous duality that characterizes the nature of actual human experience.

His first edict left his followers without the means for self-soothing typically found in other religions-such as the multiple images of Indian

gods or the statues of the Virgin Mary of the Catholics – to comfort themselves during painful periods. The families that followed the clear example of God’s creation were only allowed by God to relieve their inner distress through his ways of externalized violence, since kinder means of self-soothing were not provided. Similarly, no pictorial representations of the family processes in the Koran nor of Allah are permitted in Islam. Most Islamic art, therefore, is geometric. Violence and group scapegoating are closely linked processes. The scapegoat theme is powerful throughout the entire history of the Jewish experience and continued into Islam as expressed in the focus in the Koran upon the desirability of attacking and destroying “enemies.” In the annual pilgrimage, The Hajj, Moslems trek long distances and throw stones at The Pillars of Mynah

In a larger social movement that spanned centuries, Jews were repeatedly scapegoated by other groups throughout the Middle Ages, the Diaspora, and ultimately the Holocaust. Within their primordial sacred animal rituals, in their families, and even more recent events such as violent relationships with the Arabs, the injurious treatment the Jews received from and delivered unto many slaughtered in Yahweh’s name in Old testament. When emotional pain becomes unbearable, individuals can rid themselves of their great distress by ascribing it to an innocent other, or group, in the outer world.

It was not only Jews who suffered from condoned violent social processes. Leviticus also teaches “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. This injunction has been used repeatedly throughout history to get rid of socially undesirable individuals such as those persecuted and condemned in the witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts or the Spanish Inquisition. Another injunction from Leviticus, “to execute homosexuals and burn alive the perpetrator of incest and his victims” – though perhaps no longer obeyed – still echoes throughout the military and other

power-dominated systems.

The scapegoating process of externalizing perceived inner failings onto an innocent other still occurs within Jewish families: Discordant groups maintain cohesion by drawing attention to the designated deviant. Family members who become the carriers for the unwelcome shadow sides of other family members suffer greatly from profound rejection and abandonment. Family therapists have long noted the generational linked progressions of disturbed family processes. The failure to develop awareness for one's own dark side assures continuance of emotional pain throughout future generations.

God of the Old Testament experiences relationship difficulties. When His relationships are compared with the relationships of gods of other cultures, we see that these other gods are paired or partnered. The Old Testament God's difficulties with relationships contrast with gods of other cultures who emerged paired, or in relationship with, another of the opposite sex, such as the Greek Zeus with Hera, or the Indian Shakti and Shiva. Yahweh never had a partner. The exception perhaps is Shekinah. Her feminine spirit was shattered and scattered throughout Jewish literature for eons, although recent Reconstructionist Jewish movements have honored her symbolic return with space in their prayer books and services to revere her presence.

The behaviors God established, such as the repeated use of his subjects as objects to mirror his greatness and his absolute rejection and complete destruction of those who displeased him, became a pattern emulated and then manifested by many of the Biblical patriarchs who followed in his footsteps. For example, Job's suffering was the result of God's infliction of painful events. God used Job's suffering as the vehicle through which to convince Satan of his power to instill even greater reverence and fear in Job. God's lack of empathy for Job's horrible

situation is like the attitudes and behaviors displayed by narcissistically disturbed individuals.

The patterns of the family dynamics and emotional states established in Biblical family life still erupt into confrontations between Palestinians and Israelis in more contemporary times. Baruch Goldstein's murderous attack in 1993 on Palestinian worshipers in Hebron for example, seems directly modeled for him, by his namesake, Baruch, in Jeremiah in the Bible:

'A message from the Lord, the God of Israel, to thee, Baruch! Woe....to thee, Baruch! Woe is thee, heavy is thy heart; sorrow upon sorrow the Lord gives thee, and respite thou canst find none. Yet this message the Lord has for thee: Here I am destroying what my own hands built, uprooting what my own hands planted; and for thee must it be all prizes? For prizes never look thou; enough for thee that, go thou where thou wilt, safe-conduct of thy life I am granting thee.'

The Lord's words to Baruch continue in Jeremiah:

this day the Lord.... has chosen for his vengeance, when he will take toll of his enemies; fed and gutted his sword shall be, drink deep of men's blood....the Lord, the god of hosts, will claim his sacrifice...Salve after salve thou wilt try in vain; there is no healing thee.... Many he brought to earth."

Perhaps Baruch Goldstein, a schizophrenic, interpreted the word of God in the Old Testament statement as a significant literal mandate to him to protect Israel against the perceived Palestinian enemies when he murdered them in the Cave of The Patriarchs in Hebron. Similarly, the terrorist organization Al Qaeda, takes its directions from the Koran that states, "Never have We destroyed a nation whom We did not warn and admonish beforehand. We are never unjust." Video taped messages from Al Qaeda operatives are shown on television throughout the world as they

caution “infidels” of their impending attacks. Much of the violence and war is the direct result of actions taken from beliefs held by individuals who consider their violent aggression to be a justified and sanctified vengeance against enemies. Obviously, real enemies do exist when other terrorists descend upon innocent citizens with bombs and grenades. But unexamined stereotypical views of an enemy “other” that support and perpetuate aggressive acts of violence will only serve to generate and assure further cyclical acts of violence, as has been demonstrated throughout history.

Several Biblical stories convey this theme of casting out the unwanted, unwelcome individuals. In the beginning, of course, Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden. Then Cain was banished by God for the murder of Abel. Jacob was rejected from his family group after his Mother, Rebecca, plotted the deceit that enabled him to get away with stealing the birthright of his brother Esau. Abraham sent his slave mistress, Hagar, away with his son Ishmael because of the expected discord between his wife Sarah and Hagar, due to the decision that Hagar would bear Abraham’s child since Sarah was barren. Joseph was abandoned by his family and sold to slave traders. Moses, through no fault of his own, was sent down the river in a basket as a result of an Egyptian decree to kill the Israelites’ firstborn male children.

The repetition of core events in Biblical history, such as the preferential treatment shown through blessing and birthright to one sibling over another in the families of Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph, depicts a causal process wherein a deviant is created within the family group. This “black sheep” then enables the discordant family to function and stay together. Intense sibling rivalry was a main feature in Genesis.

What turned Cain against Abel and started this tragic cycle of violence? God had preferred meat offerings and favored the shepherd Abel, and thus created the overwhelming jealousy in Cain, “a tiller of the ground.” Blatant preferential treatment may create powerful feelings in the family member who remains unrecognized. These powerful feelings overwhelm the unrecognized individual and lead to “acting out.” In the Bible, this process was expressed through Cain’s murder of Abel and the planned deceit in the story of Jacob and Esau. The underlying family group process was the critical factor that caused these unfortunate events to occur. The preferences shown by the Biblical fathers—as illustrated by the custom of granting the eldest son exclusive right of inheritance, or by showing preference for one child over another—served to inflame and exacerbate the feelings of resentment and betrayal in the disfavored one. Thus, one sibling often suffers greatly and may bear the pain for the family’s psychological disturbance.

Biblical parents of Jewish culture acted in ways to ensure the scapegoat function. Abraham is considered the father of the Jews. His willingness to murder his own child was child abuse. Although other tribes also practiced child sacrifice, there was room for more awareness.

God demanded that Abraham sacrifice Isaac, the precious son produced in his old age, to show his allegiance to God. Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son was not really a sacrificial act after all. God was merely testing Abraham. A ram caught in the thicket became the sacrifice and served to establish Judaism as the first monotheistic religion. Earlier in the familial sequence of events, Sarah, in her longing to bear a child, condoned Abraham’s sexual relationship with her handmaid, Hagar. After Hagar had conceived, Sarah became abusive to her and Hagar fled. An angel of God found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness and instructed her to return to her mistress and submit to her abuse.

After many years of longing Sarah conceived Isaac. God later tested Abraham's obedience by ordering him to offer Isaac up as a burnt offering. The violence of this act of sacrifice was expressed in a Biblical passage describing Sarah's pain as so great her "soul flew out of her body." Isaac carried the effects of the death threat into his adulthood. When Isaac was old and his vision was failing his early trauma became evidenced in a described nervous quality wherein he could not go out alone to acquire game and therefore depended upon Esau to provide for his needs.

If God, and the patriarchs that followed in his footsteps, are considered as part of the same lineage, we find continuous examples of individuals who were chosen for special treatment, which subsequently engendered the jealousy of others and violence often resulted. In his willingness to sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham demonstrated an unquestioning allegiance to God and generated a psychological wound, which became the inheritance of the Jews, Moslems, and Christians—a legacy that defined the pattern of disturbed family interactions for centuries to come. Wars that spanned centuries have roots in the soil of Biblical and Koranic teachings wherein Abraham's abusive actions are revered.

The family inheritance of emotional pain passed on from Adam and Eve to Cain and Abel. The pain was then passed to Esau, as Rebecca enabled Jacob to steal Esau's rightful birthright. This allowed Jacob to obtain Isaac's deathbed blessing from his enfeebled father whose wounding was perhaps initiated in the ritual sacrifice of Abraham by God.

God appeared to have been in compliance with Rebecca's ruse when he later appeared to Jacob in the form of an angel and wrestled with him all night long only to reveal his identity in the morning and to favor Jacob by renaming him Israel. One cannot help but wish that somewhere along the line God might have taken a stand and halted the cruel repetitive

sibling rivalries. But this never did happen. Although just as God disappeared from the stories, Joseph appears to eventually break the cycle of sibling persecution he experienced with his own brothers, the sons of Jacob. A more ideal God might have interacted with the families of the Israelites in a more compassionate way. But Yahweh, God of the Israelites, never embodied the qualities of justice and compassion. Ultimately Joseph learned to love his brothers in ways that God could not. God's "godliness" was his shadow side, which eventually emerged through Joseph's caring behavior.

Human beings contain a full range of potential for varied emotional responses and means of interaction. When a group becomes too narrow-minded and insulated from the rest of the world—as did the scheming, often enraged Israelite family—a hero often emerges to create opportunities for growth and positive interaction. Joseph fulfilled the destiny of the hero by making the choice to expand his full human potential.

The multigenerational perpetuation of emotional disturbance is clearly depicted in the stories of the families in Genesis. In the story of Joseph, for example, his brothers viewed him as the family candidate for sacrifice. Except for Reuben, no one in the family considered him worth saving. The abusive family processes represented through the brothers' cruelty to Joseph are clearly evident in their plan to leave him for dead. Their cruelty continued with their decision to sell him to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar. These actions show that the brothers were psychologically injured and needed to defend their fragile sense of themselves by treating Joseph as the source of their problems. Of course, Joseph often conveyed his brothers' shortcomings to Jacob. In doing so he created a source of real distress for them.

Jacob's sons were coarse people. Their treatment of Joseph was part of a pervasive pattern of abuse. A Canaanite had sexual relations with, and was believed to have raped, Dinah, their sister. In Biblical times, rape had serious social and economic consequences. Only women who were virgins were allowed to marry, and marriage was the only economic means of survival for women because they were the property of men.

The offending young man, Shechem, however, made a heroic attempt to repair the damage he caused. He strongly expressed desire to marry Dinah. In addition, he attempted to obtain the requisite circumcision for himself and all male members of his tribe in order to make himself fully acceptable to the Israelites. The men were vulnerable as they recovered from the circumcisions, and Jacob's sons took advantage of their predicament by murdering them all and taking all of their possessions. A striking absence of an ability to relate empathetically to others characterizes most of the families of the Israelites. Their narcissism and anti-social behavior was underscored by the events leading to the vengeful murders of the well-meaning Canaanites by Jacob's sons.

Of course, animal and human sacrifices were common in the cultures of Biblical times. Yet, much is written that suggests that the Israelites denounced the uses of sacrifice. However, the story of Abraham and Isaac is perhaps the most important teaching in the Old Testament. That teaching was this: Anything less than unquestioning, absolute faith could result in extreme punishment.

The apparent inability of God and the Israelite families to feel empathy for the experienced hurts of others reemerges again and again in familial and tribal relationships, and in the ways in which God relates to his people. By destruction of the world by flood, God established a model of problem solving through violence. Many children throughout the world are told the stories of a Great Flood, but little criticism is mentioned about

God's methods of problem solving. Of course, after the people in the world were devastated by the flood, God made a covenant with his people by sending a rainbow as a promise that he would never destroy the world with a flood again. Nevertheless, he continued to act out his destructive ways whenever he became displeased by people's behavior. For example, he destroyed the communities of Sodom and Gomorrah. One is reminded of the behavior of physically abusive spouses: After an injury occurs, the abuser promises never again to cause such great pain. Predictably, however, the cycles of violence continue.

The family processes that produce great psychological pain continue throughout the stories of the Bible sequence and were honored for centuries. One is led to consider whether they modeled and encoded a lesson of critical significance: Though the Jews survived assault after assault throughout history, families typically stayed together. Perhaps the intensity of feeling created by disturbed family processes that spanned generations was the glue that enabled the Jews to "stick together" through centuries of abuse. Perhaps the intense rage, depression, jealousy, and fears of abandonment that correlate with family discord engender powerful bonds among family members. During the historical periods characterized by threats to Jewish survival, the long-established emotional connections between family members might have been a critical factor in the preservation of Jewish culture. Deep bonds between family members may protect the family from persecution and death would ensure its survival.

A closer look into the family relationships that permeate the story of Joseph reveals that family enmeshment guarantees survival. Jealousy and rage erupted earlier in the Biblical family sequence when one sibling was favored over another. At first glance, it might seem that the stories reinforce this expectation that violence and jealousy are in the heart and

that there is no hope that the family will redeem itself.

But God's treatment of the first people engendered the violence and jealousy that continued through the generations: just as God favored Abel over Cain, and Isaac favored Esau over Jacob, so did Jacob single out Joseph by leaving him a coat of many colors, which was a very special gift. Jacob was no stranger to the powerful feelings that were evoked around issues of birthright, for he himself had duped his brother out of the special status afforded Esau given by their father. Jacob, by his special focus upon Joseph, also singled him out for inevitable abuse arising from the intense jealousy and rage of his brothers. Perhaps unintentionally, Jacob set up Joseph's destiny to be hated by his brothers. On the other hand, like the Leviticus Goat who reaches the mountaintop – his father positioned Joseph to potentially attain greatness – if he survived.

“The story of Joseph mirrors hero tales found throughout the world. In many stories, the youngest child, initially believed to be stupid and inferior, is badly treated by his elder siblings. Later, when presented with an impossible task, the youngest child excels and succeeds, whereas his earlier tormenters fail miserably. Joseph, too, as he struggles to cope with the traumatic events of his life – emotional abuse and eventual abandonment by his family and then imprisonment by the Egyptians – he develops into a person of unusual strength and power. Joseph, like other mythic heroes, transcends the effects of early abuse and restores a conscious, healthy condition to his tribe that had previously deviated from a healthy pattern of interaction.

Joseph was known as a dreamer. His dreams provide good examples of Jung's archetypes. For example, the recurring patterns, such birth and death, are found in art and religion all over the world. The archetypes are also seen in the extremely positive and negative images of Joseph's dream interpretations. And they also appear in fairy tale images

wherein a protagonist, who is abused and rejected at the beginning of the tale, eventually changes places and reverses roles with his or her oppressors. The lofty brothers are brought low and bow down before Joseph. Recounting one dream, Joseph says, “We were binding sheaves in the countryside; and my sheaf, it seemed rose up and stood upright; then I saw your sheaves gather round and bow to my sheaf...I thought I saw the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowing to me.”

Interestingly, Joseph’s dream interpretation is repeated later in God’s first commandment to Moses. Bowing down before graven images or other Gods is specifically prohibited. The same predominant themes that highlight hierarchal processes repeat throughout the Old Testament via dreams, edict, and experience. For Joseph, his dream compensated him for his inferior status in comparison to his brothers, and proved prophetic of the influential stature that he was to eventually achieve.

When Joseph was in Egypt, Pharaoh related to him the following dream: “He was standing by the Nile, and there coming up from the Nile were seven cows, sleek and fat, and began to feed among the rushes. And seven other cows ugly, and lean, came up from the Nile after them. The ugly and lean cows ate the seven sleek and fat cows.”

In a subsequent dream, Pharaoh saw “growing on one stalk were seven ears of corn, beautifully ripe – but sprouting up after them came seven ears of corn, withered, meager, and scorched by the east wind. The shriveled up ears of corn swallowed the seven ripe ears of corn.”

Perhaps Joseph’s experiential knowledge of the split between all good and all bad psychological states, as a result of the emotional abuse in his family, enabled him to understand the meaning of the linked states of starvation and plenty seen in Pharaoh’s dream. The images of the shriveled corn and starving cattle may have been deeply known to him because of the absence of emotional nurturance in childhood. Joseph’s

ability to comprehend the dream probably stemmed from the split good and bad imagery of the dream that also reflects the symptoms of borderline character disorder – a psychiatric syndrome associated with childhood abuse. It was familiar to him because of his own psychological makeup.

Joseph ultimately follows the path of other mythic heroes. By leaving home and entering the darkness of the pit, Joseph emerges as a transformed individual to gather strength from the Egyptians who, unlike his own family, greatly valued dream interpretation. His talk of dreams that evoked the hatred of his brothers was prized in the Egyptian culture. Joseph's special ability to understand dreams led Pharaoh to place him in the position of leadership. Ultimately he returns to bring healing to the troubled family of the Israelites who, before him, inflicted much cruelty on one another down through the generations. By bringing compassion to his brothers, Joseph lays the foundation for a different sort of interaction among them.

What enabled Joseph to ultimately break the established family pattern of cyclical cruelty, violence, and indifference to the emotional experiences of others? After all, Joseph was reared in the family that murdered the tribe of Canaanites despite their strongly expressed desire for reconciliation and peaceable coexistence with the family of Jacob and his sons. Joseph transcended the abusive events that marked his childhood.

Joseph's father, Jacob, had his strengths. Jacob had wrestled all night with the angel, and may even have seen the face of God. Joseph's strength might have been connected to his relationship with this father. Even though Jacob "set up" Joseph by leaving him the coat of many colors that was sure to inflame his jealous brothers, he also provided him with a model of power.

If we consider Joseph's life within the context of the journey of other heroes, more answers emerge. Christ, Buddha, and Moses developed unusual and special qualities. They spent time in isolation, separate from society, as did Joseph. Joseph was cast into contact with his own inner world both while in the pit and later in the Egyptian prison.

Perhaps one important common denominator in the life processes of those who take the hero's path and achieve spiritual greatness is this period of extended solitude. Periods of extended meditation might indeed enable ordinary men and women to transcend the daily concerns of communal and family life in order to ascend to a higher level of being.

The path of the hero's journey contains the essential descent into solitude; perhaps it was this transforming factor that moved Joseph to a different, compassionate level of being that distinguished him from the members of his own family. Like the shaman figure found in cultures throughout the world, Joseph experienced the initiation into the dark of the pit and prison. This experience ultimately provided the necessary insight to bring healing, first to himself from the early abuse from his brothers, and then to return it as a gift to his family. The Shaman, a wounded individual who subsequently develops to power to heal others, exists throughout the Biblical stories through the injured characters. Joseph, and later, Jesus Christ, subsequently contribute greatly to benefit their societies, and by doing so, urge greater spiritual evolution.

Inner and outer realities reflect each other according to mystics and contemporary physicists. Thus, the holocausts of the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah created by God's hand in the Old Testament can also be seen as a psychic wound remembered for generations and expressed in later violence.

Throughout the Old Testament, Israelite acts of destruction and violence directed toward the Canaanites, such as those during the flood, and also the murders committed by the sons of Jacob, are illustrative of the same processes of social violence that culminated in the persecution and suffering of the Jews.

The same cycles go on with regularity today between the turns of violence taken by the Palestinians against Israel that then becomes a source for revenge for present day Israelis, and the terrorists acts committed against western nations that are punished by the agents of international “security.” The attack on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001 illustrates that good people who do not know that their acts are not good, but that they believe honors their God carry out evil.

A remarkable imbalance appears throughout Genesis. No women play significant roles in the stories that follow the story of Eve in the Garden of Eden. Through the stories of Cain and Abel, Noah and the flood, Jacob and Esau, and throughout the Joseph saga, all major interactions are between influential males. Interestingly, after Joseph is separated from his brothers, through his experiences in the pit and relationships with Egyptian women, he develops a compassionate side that he uses to bring healing to his family. Perhaps some Egyptian women taught him the softer side.

After that, women appear in a more supportive positive role, such as Moses’ wife, Zipporah, who is seen as a nurturing force. She established a protective feminine stance by strategizing the immediate circumcision of her son in order to protect him from the threatening advances of an intruder. Her maternal behavior is contrasted with Sarah’s, who failed to protect her son Isaac from the sacrificial action that Yahweh ordered. Interestingly, Zipporah was not Jewish. Perhaps her own roots were

connected to the earth-based religions that worshiped goddesses, agriculture, and fertility rather than the monotheistic religion of the Israelites.

According to the psychological theories of Carl Jung, the feminine aspect represents the emotional side of the personality, or the ability to nurture and relate empathetically to others and the world. These are the qualities lacking in the relationships described in the Old Testament. Other cultural models have represented women as goddesses with great power. For example, the Greek corn-goddess Demeter would, if mistreated by males, wreaks great havoc by initiating crop failure. Or the Asian Quan Yin, who was a Goddess of compassion. Usually though, the women in the Old Testament appear in a negative form. For example, Rebecca uses her strategic powers to enable Jacob to trick Isaac into giving him Esau's deserved birthright.

From the beginning of creation, women were viewed as "bad." When God formed Lilith, Adam's first wife, he made her from filth and sediment instead of the dust from which he created Adam. Eve's act of disobedience in the eating of the forbidden fruit created the misfortune of the loss of paradise and the expulsion of the couple from the Garden of Eden. After that, the voice of women was not significantly heard through the Biblical generations that followed. Religious rituals that reinforced proper behaviors for women further solidified the idea that women were dark and dirty creatures, needing to be controlled and redeemed by male owners. For example, the separation of women during religious worship and menstruation and the prohibitions from sexual relations during that time underscored the images of women as bad or unclean. By contrast, other cultures use religious worship to celebrate woman's fertility and nurturing generative powers.

The Koran, however, offers an image of equality between men and women:

The Koran says, “O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty toward God in Whom ye claim (your rights) of one another, and toward the wombs (that bear you)” (4:1). This passage can be highlighted as a means to encouraging women’s rights throughout the world.

If the Old Testament is one of the models for the development of Western Culture, we see the effects of its marginalization and disregard for the role of women presented in contemporary times. Typically, large corporate business decisions are made without consideration for those impacted by those decisions. Multi-national corporations establish operations in underdeveloped countries where native peoples are paid less than the minimum wages guaranteed in the United States. Children are often used as forced labor. Their lives are sacrificed to the production of soccer balls, clothing, and other commodities valued by Western Society. This example illustrates the lack of empathy for other human beings. It reflects the missing side of our masculine society. Just as Lot’s wife was changed into a pillar of salt, which can be seen metaphorically as the unshed tears of injured women, so a similar pillar of salt might be seen to represent the suffering found throughout the world in the form of sanctioned abuses such as the contemporary sex trade forcibly serviced by poor women and children around the world and maintained by wealthy international travelers.

Other models for behavior established in the Old Testament reverberate throughout our contemporary world: “And God said, Let us make man, wearing our own images and likeness; let us put him in

command of the fishes in the sea, and all that flies through the air, and the cattle, and the whole earth, and all the creeping things that move on earth. So God made man in his own image, made him in the image of God.” Here, too, God’s shaping of man has proved to be a problem. The model presented in Genesis of man’s sovereignty—as contrasted with the biological reality of the complex mutual interdependence of all life forms—has contributed to serious ecological and environmental problems. Individuals cannot escape the connection to all life forms; we are dependent on each other and the earth for survival.

Despite the consequences, deep within its tales of family disturbance, the Bible’s creation story contains a special offering: Most of the rejected Biblical and Koranic outcasts transform their experienced traumas into the development of leadership qualities which allowed them to provide great gifts to their cultures. Lot’s daughters, were offered by their father to a mob for sexual service, eventually conceived the offspring that would create great nations. Cain became the ancestor of the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph became the leader who brought healing to his family. Ishmael became the progenitor of the Arab people and the religion of Islam. And Moses freed the Jews from Egyptian slavery. These individuals became models for the transformation of psychological pain that resulted from abandonment or abuse. They attained unsurpassed cultural achievements.

Perhaps their achievements reflect the greatest lesson of the Old Testament and Koran: After great wounding, the psychological pain that accompanies experiences of abuse is projected outward in violence towards oneself and/or others, or becomes the basis of creativity, character, and strength that enables achievement later in life. The Old Testament portrays violence as the solution to conflict, but also provides alternative, more compassionate, models.

Through the actions of its heroes such as Joseph and Moses, the qualities of leadership, strength, courage, intelligence, and sensitivity – that help create and sustain flourishing societies without relying on violent means of control—can be amplified as guides.

After the greatest wounding of all, The Holocaust, the Jews created Israel—complete with its intellectually advanced society. If the Bible and Koran reflect the Jews’ processes of family and group abuse, and scapegoating, it also encodes in its stories the means by which we can transform the pain of abuse to great gifts to society.

The stories of Moses, Joseph, and Solomon—shared protagonists in Islam, Judaism and Christianity—model a different way of managing psychological distress. Rather than directing vengeance towards outer enemies or just forgiving those likely to abuse again, they develop their creative inner resources and strength that are used to further generate peaceful interactions.

Jews and Moslems perceive each other as “different.” But scratch the surface and commonalities become evident. Their evolution from the same religious and cultural roots is apparent when their religious practices and values are examined. The Koran emphasizes the shared roots of Jews and Moslems, and states, “Before this there was the revelation of Moses, guide, and a sign of God’s grace: and this Qur’an is a divine writ confirming the truth of the Torah in the Arabic tongue, to warn those who are bent on evildoing, and to bring a glad tiding to the doers of good.” (XLVI.12).

Although myriad variations exist in the expression of religious worship, core elements unite them:

Both the Jewish and Islamic important religious observances of Yom Kippur and Ramadan, respectively, have correspondences. During each respective holy day, both religions use fasting as a means of

expressing reverence. Keeping the head covered during worship is a significant way that both groups show their reverence for God. The core prayer for each group proclaims that there is One God—and the belief in an almighty God is at the core of the religious structure. Prophets and Angels play significant roles both in the Bible and the Koran. The prophets of the Koran, and heroes and prophets of the Bible interact as the texts emerge through time in important ways that maintain the deep linkages between them. They display qualities of compassion, leadership, strength, courage, intelligence, and sensitivity—qualities that create and sustain flourishing societies without relying on violent means of control.

For example, the Koran demands respect for all monotheistic religions:

“Those who are Jews and the Christians whoever believes in Allah [God] and the last day is good, they shall have their reward from their Lord” (II: 62). Similarly, the Koran speaks favorably of the “churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allah’s name is much remembered.” (XXII: 4)

The Koran emphasizes that all prophets are to be honored and respected—including, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed: “We do not make any distinction between them.” (II: 136) “We [Muslims] make no difference between any of His apostles.” (II: 285) “Every one was of the good.” (VI: 85) “The Messiah, son of Mary is but an apostle” (V: 73), yet God “put in the hearts of those who follow him kindness and mercy.” (LVII: 27) The Torah “in which there was guidance and light” is considered part “of the Book of Allah” (V: 70), and so are the Bible and Koran (IX: 111).

Religious tolerance is advocated in the Moslem scriptures as well: “There is no compulsion in religion.” (II: 256) “You shall have your

religion and I shall have my religion.” Still other passages encourage peaceable relationships: “And if they incline to peace, then incline to it and trust in Allah.” (VIII: 61). As these passages demonstrate, many avenues exist to encourage more peaceful relationships between discordant religious groups.

Currently, shared endeavors such as Palestinian and Israeli orchestras, comedy groups, children’s camps, and women’s gathering further support positive relationships. Encouragement for these myriad movements toward reconciliation enables expansive peace building among Jews, Christians and Muslims. The centuries long family discord of the families of Abraham may once again re-align through shared efforts to manage contemporary threats of global warming and wide economic recession. Should rapid climatic changes impact the jointly inhabited regions of Israelis and Arabs, perhaps sharing may evolve—although increased war might also be the potential outcome. Or, new splits and/or alignments with other nations in the now technologically connected global family system may cause them to join together in fights with newly shared common enemies.

The potential exists for larger reconciliation within the human family. A new story, through focus upon commonly held ethical heroes and shared positive spiritual values held in common in the Bible and the Koran will provide a stepping-stone to a more peaceable planet. A social order based upon compassionate direction, rather than cruelty, needs to be encouraged. Each individual can choose to model his or her personal actions upon the behavioral patterns of heroic individuals in the sacred texts who took action to heal the world. The actions of our ancestors need be reevaluated—their worthwhile behaviors consciously used as role models for healing a troubled world. New pathways will then widen for social transformation and the healing of ancient conflicts.

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SUPPLEMENT

Message from the Angel Gabriel

In the beginning God created heaven and earth. He separated light from darkness and made day and night. The land he split from the seas so plants and trees grew fruit with seeds and flowers. He positioned the sun, moon and stars in the heavens. He generated sea creatures, birds, and animals. But man and woman he created in his own image. After his creation, God rested and blessed and hallowed that day.

The first man He named Adam, and his wife called Eve. God made them good, and commanded them to obey his rules and let them live in the Garden of Eden.

But Adam and Eve broke God's rules and ate forbidden fruit. God shamed them and cast them out of the Garden. Adam and Eve's tears carried to their children and their children's children. When God separated the actions of people into good and bad, like he parted the sea and the land, and the light and the darkness, he created problems. Because men and women have both light and dark sides, they could not live up to his expectations. Thus all their families carried the wound that first came from God's rejection of Adam and Eve. Rage or grief and sadness followed Cain, Abel, Jacob, Esau, Sarah, Abraham, Joseph, Hagar, Job, Moses, Lot, Ishmael, Mohammed and others across ages.

But God also loved his children. Perhaps that is why He created the situation that caused their strong emotions that the families that they expressed in murder and discord over blessings and birthrights. Their feelings bonded them through centuries of abuse from others--and this helped them survive.

The Islamic peoples began when Abraham rejected Hagar, the mother of his first son, Ishmael, and sent her away, just like God cast out Adam and Eve. Their family's hurts erupted in the birth of the vengeful Mohammed. Abraham is still standing before God. Abraham endures. We carry Abraham, Isaac and Jacob within us.

Mohammed went to heaven with Moses and received the Koran, the word of Allah, from the Angel Gabriel. Gabriel was always with the peoples of God and Allah, and brought them the important messages. The Great Angel even helped Daniel interpret dreams. Mohammed learned that Allah, like God, had great authority and gave severe punishments if people could not obey. Rage and hurt continued through all the peoples of Abraham. Across eons and into our times, wounds from the beginning in the Garden erupted into discord and wars--and climaxed in the Holocaust. Peoples in Israel and Palestine direct their ancient pain against each other and still fight today. Their violence adds new scars to those who dwell in the troubled regions. Their discord spreads across the world. Gabriel, the mediator between heaven and earth, is bringing messages that it is time for reconciliation and healing for families and nations. He whispers in ears of Israelis and Palestinians to make music together and play together in orchestras, camps and

meetings. Women of both religions meet to share their wisdom, compassion and visions for a peaceful family.

Gabriel tells that what appears as differences among Jews, Moslems and Christians, upon a closer look reveal their likeness. They revere the teachings of Moses, David, Joseph, Daniel and other prophets. They understand that Joseph fostered reconciliation with brothers who hurt him, and that he is still offering lessons to warring nations that ancient discord can realign. Their holidays of Christmas, Chanukah and the Islamic New Year are in the month of December. They show reverence for God and Allah through holy days of fasting and head covering.

Now our ways of life are changing. Gabriel enfolds them in the warmth and comfort of giant wings. He warns them that the world is threatened, and that the families must again join together. Through mutual compassion for their shared wounds, it is time to create a newer, gentler world. Gabriel announces, "Collect the kindest words of God and Allah and focus upon the actions of the peace bearers and combine them into a book that guides." *Bette U. Kiernan*

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