

## 1<sup>ST</sup> KINGS

### Week 20, chapter 11 continued

To close out the last lesson, we talked about a concept that on the surface seems like something only social scientists ought to care about, however it is anything but that. The concept is that throughout all of mankind's history there have been and continue to be 3 basic and underlying societal platforms that are the foundation of every known culture that has ever existed. Each of these is unique and quite different from one another; most members of these cultural platforms have no conscious realization that they are part of an identifiable category that represents a specific philosophy of society, and in general as we are living out our lives within one or the other of these we either have no awareness that there are other social platforms in existence or we're unable to relate to them.

I need all of your attention because I think you'll find many unspoken questions you likely have had about the Bible and the world we live in today answered for you if you'll stay focused. We'll spend today's entire lesson dealing with what is a truly fascinating subject.

This matter of societal platforms arises for us because in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 11 we encounter a man of Edomite royalty named Hadad. Beginning in verse 14 we are told the story of this fellow who was but a small child when King David and his top general Yo'av decimated the Edomite male population in a war. Hadad's father fled Edom with young Hadad, and years later we find the now grown-up Hadad living in Egypt, married to a member of Pharaoh's household, and ready to take revenge upon Israel.

Hadad gets word that David has died, Solomon is on the throne, and so Hadad leaves Egypt to finish forming an army. It's hard to know the time frames involved, but since Hadad was raised up by God Himself to be an adversary of Solomon because in the latter part of his reign the King of Israel became an idolater of some magnitude, then it must have been around 40 to 50 years or so since the time that David and Joab killed all those Edomite males that Hadad resurfaces. So the questions that this passage poses are: why would Hadad want to come against people who had little or nothing to do with what happened 40 years (or more) earlier? What did he hope to gain? Did he have delusional hopes of conquering this regional

powerhouse called Israel with but a small army and then making it a greater Edom? Solomon didn't lead the Edomite slaughter of 4 or 5 decades earlier; and besides, what would keep a fire of hatred burning inside this man for all these years when he was but a child when the offense occurred?

The answer to those questions is giving me an opportunity to bring to you the enlightening concept of the 3 basic social platforms of history because understanding it is so enlightening when trying to understand the Bible, the Hebrew people, the large-scale effects of the Law of Moses, the modern Muslim and Arab issues and the threats we deal with because of those issues, and even the problems that Christian missionaries face as they venture to far flung places to try and bring the Good News to every corner of our globe, but often come home deeply frustrated.

In brief review, there are 3 basic societal platforms that the world operates under: 1) fear and power, 2) shame and honor, and 3) guilt and innocence. Many (perhaps most) societies in our day operate on some mixture of these 3, but most cultures also are heavily skewed towards one or another of them and so there are but specks of the other 2 that might be identifiable within those societies. In ancient times the main difference from today is that the guilt and innocence societies were essentially non-existent.

Fear and power societies tend to be those whom we view as the most primitive ones and that's because they see themselves as interacting daily with spirits and gods who have power over the people and the environment and thus can cause great trouble. American Indians were (and many remain) of this ilk. So were the Mayans and the Aztecs. Those African nations that have not yet been deeply changed by Islam are usually fear and power societies. These people dwell in a world where living in peace with the spirits and gods, or appeasing them when they're angry, is a daily concern. These supernatural beings don't seem to operate rationally; there don't seem to be any rules or absolutes. Why they do what they do is a mystery. Therefore the people are always fearful of these spirits and gods and are constantly searching out ways to find supernatural power sources to defend themselves or to even use this supernatural power to effect or cause harm to others. The concept of guilt for doing wrong generally doesn't exist in this kind of society because right and wrong generally don't exist. A moral code isn't operable in the way that we might think of it. Rather there is merely behavior that is in line with tradition and custom, or behavior that is outside of it. And behavior that is outside of it is not "wrong"; it is just not wanted or accepted or in line with the group.

Shame and honor societies are completely consumed with their concern for social status. These societies have their basis in tribalism and thus they are group-thinkers. That is,

conforming to the group is always the measure and individualism is seen as being against the group and thus a bad thing. Islam and the Arab world and the bulk of the Middle Eastern societies are strongly shame and honor based societies. At the root of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and other Far East societies is shame and honor (but there is also a significant element of fear and power present). Behaviorally speaking, there is no thought of acting rightly or wrongly; rather it is of acting honorably or shamefully. These are not wordplays; right does not equate to honorable and wrong does not equate to shameful. Therefore since there is no wrong, this type of society also has nearly no concept of guilt (at least as the Western world thinks of guilt). Acting shamefully brings dishonor, not guilt. And this is because shame is not the result of being guilty of breaking a law or rule but rather shame is the societal state of one who has lost their honor. Again: shame and honor are definitions of social status and are not the result of doing right or wrong. One is either in a cultural condition of shame or a condition of honor. And what shame and honor amounts to is defined by long held tribal customs and traditions. Therefore "law" in these societies is not so much an absolute codified system of right and wrong as it is a statement of what brings shame and what brings honor. Laws (as this category of society sees them) are not absolutes or even an attempt to state a societal moral code.

The Western world consists of guilt and innocence based societies. Therefore we view all of our decisions and behavior as based on rightness or wrongness; on their legality or criminality. We create a system of laws that are generally absolutes and then that society's members either comply or don't. Complying makes us right and innocent and thus we are free to make use of the many societal benefits. Not complying makes us wrong and guilty and thus we are singled out for punishment and derision, and often that involves losing our societal benefits as well as our liberties. Thus avoiding guilt is paramount in our society. Feeling guilty is the result of having broken a law or perhaps part of our understood moral code, some of which is included in the law and some of which is not. Shame in a guilt-innocence society is merely a loss of self-esteem due to our bearing guilt for doing wrong; shame is a very unpleasant emotion in Western guilt-innocence societies, but it is NOT a statement of our societal status.

Thus at the core of fear and power based societies is the dealing of humans with the supernatural world as their primary societal aim.

At the core of shame and honor based societies is conformance with their tribal traditions and customs as their goal so that they can maintain a desired social status called honor at all costs.

At the core of guilt and innocence based societies is compliance with a firm set of rules and laws that (in modern times) has purely to do with the natural world (as opposed to the

supernatural world of the fear and power based societies). Our goal is be “right” and not to be “wrong”. Because if we are “wrong” we are now “guilty” and the law (and perhaps our family or society) will punish us appropriately.

No doubt your heads are swimming right now; I suspect that you might even be skeptical concerning what I’ve just told you about the fear-power and shame-honor societies because such a way of thinking makes no sense to your mind. I assure you that these other societies feel the same way about our guilt-innocence based notions; it is utterly incomprehensible to them. And this is why when in our time when we observe the Western world interacting with the Middle East both sides are frustrated and angry. It is because we fundamentally do not understand each other. Our values are entirely different. How we make decisions are based on opposing sets of things that matter. We of the West look at every human action as either right or wrong; they of the East see every action as either bringing them shame or honor. Thus we talk, even at the highest levels of government, but nothing comes of it.

We run into the same problem, especially if we are Westerners, when reading the Bible. The Bible was written primarily within the cultural context of a shame and honor society, with varying amounts of fear and power mixed in. That is doubly so in the earliest parts of the Scriptures before the Hebrews received the Law at Mt. Sinai.

Let me draw an analogy for you. Today the USA and Europe have tried to engage Muslim dominated societies in dialogue and in some cases attempted to institute Western-style democracies as an answer to the problem of never-ending conflict between us. The problem is that Western-style democracies are by definition based on the rule of law, meaning they operate in a guilt-innocence societal platform; yet Muslim and Middle Eastern societies have since time immemorial been based on their customs and traditions that define a social code that brings about the status of shame and honor. This is not something they are seeking to change. Any Western-style law that would ostensibly prevent a Muslim who is in a condition of shame from reacquiring their honor is a non-starter. Any law that would necessitate a Muslim giving up any measure of honor or accepting some amount of what is viewed as shame is a non-starter.

So how did these 3 very different societal platforms come to exist in the first place? Understand that in the Garden of Eden, at the fall of mankind, it was not only guilt that was brought into this world by Adam and Eve’s sin, but shame and fear as well. Turn your Bibles to Genesis.

### READ GENESIS 3:6 – 11

The Creator had given Adam and Eve a kind of Torah (so to speak) that consisted of but ONE law: do not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. They broke the law, which is defined as doing wrong, and so became guilty. Notice the name of the tree: knowledge of good and evil. Good is right, evil is wrong. Adam and Eve lived for a time in a utopian world in which innocence and guilt didn't exist, because they didn't even have a concept of good and evil, right and wrong. They had total freedom and perfect harmony with God.

Also notice that as a result of the fall they became afraid (in this case afraid of God, but soon we'll see they became afraid of other people and of some animals and later of imagined spirits and gods). And they became shamed (the term "naked" is a standard term indicating shame not in the Western sense of emotion, but in the Eastern sense of losing honor). Let me be very clear: ashamed is a Western concept; shamed is an Eastern concept. So Adam and Eve did not become ashamed; rather their status before God was reduced to shame.

So we see that the basis for all 3 of history's societal platforms were the result of the fall of mankind in the Garden. But was man supposed to have operated under ANY of these concepts as fully systemized societal platforms? Ideally, no. If Adam and Eve had stayed in harmony with God, then there wouldn't be need for an extensive law code that would be given eventually at Mt. Sinai. If they had remained in perfect harmony with God, they would never have known fear of any kind, and men wouldn't have incorrectly turned various natural things like storms and stars into supposed supernatural gods and spirits. Had they determined in their free wills to merely believe and trust God they would not have seen their place of honor of knowing and communing with God face-to-face taken from them and thus enter a condition of shame that separated them from God. Thus from that fall into sin also came mankind's fashioning of our own perverted system for defining shame and maintaining honor among a family or a tribe.

Early in mankind's history the Bible (in Genesis chapter 4) tells us of the first recorded murder; Abel was killed by his brother Cain. One of the questions that Theologians love to debate is what, exactly, was the cause of Cain's hatred towards his brother? The answer is well understood by shame and honor based societies but the Western World can't quite find it.

In a nutshell Abel brought an offering of an animal before God, and Cain brought one of produce from the ground. Yehoveh accepted Abel's offering, but not Cain's. Cain killed Abel

because of it. But why? What had Abel done wrong? It was because Cain became shamed that Abel outdid him. Cain lost his honor among his family. Abel would have wiser to see to it that Cain was given a way to maintain his honor (perhaps by giving him an animal to offer to God). And in an honor-shame based society, the basic premise is that shame must be remedied and often violently. Revenge is an action taken against another in a hope to remedy shame and thus regain personal honor. And revenge regularly involves killing the offending party.

In another much later, but well known Bible story, we read in Genesis 38 of Judah and Tamar. And when a Christian reads it, we struggle to find right and wrong, guilt and innocence, in the strange actions of the characters; and that's because it's not there (even though we can extrapolate it from the Law that would be given a long time later). The short version of the story is that Judah marries a woman, she gives him 3 sons and then the oldest son marries a girl named Tamar. The oldest son dies. In keeping with the traditions of the times, the next son in line marries the widow Tamar, but before he can produce a son with Tamar he also dies. By custom then Judah's 3<sup>rd</sup> and youngest son was obligated to marry Tamar, but Judah refused to let it happen in fear that his sole remaining son would also die.

As a Middle Eastern female, Tamar felt strongly that she had to produce children to keep the family name of her first husband alive, but having children was also how a woman obtained honor. So she disguised herself and tricked Judah into sleeping with her and she became pregnant. When Judah heard about her pregnancy (not knowing it was he who was the father), he demanded that she be burned alive. When she informed him that he was the father, he understood why she did what she did and sang her praises.

So we have death, prostitution, incest, illicit sex, and the whole nine yards going on here. What is this story really about? It is about shame and honor. Tamar was greatly shamed by Judah refusing to let his youngest son marry this twice widowed family member. Remembering that right and wrong has no place in a shame and honor society, all Tamar could think about was regaining her honor. So using deceit and committing fornication and incest, she became pregnant by her father in law Judah. And in a shame and honor based society, wrong doesn't exist when it comes to excising shame and regaining honor and nothing she did was even considered in the context of right or wrong.

Judah, hearing of his daughter in law's pregnancy (a scandal to be sure!), demands her death because he and his entire family were now in a state of shame due to her action of becoming pregnant outside of wedlock. The only way to regain his family honor was by means of her death. But when he found out that what she did was honorable after all, he pronounced her

“righteous” (meaning honorable in this context). Then because by tribal custom he should have given his youngest son to her as a husband but didn’t, he was the one who lost some of his societal status; his honor was diminished. And in a typical Middle Eastern display of exaggerated wordplay, he declares the WOMAN Tamar as having a greater degree of honor than he for doing what she did to so cleverly reclaim her honor. Right and wrong, guilt and innocence is only an issue at the fringes of this story and even then, right and wrong in this context is all about how to regain honor and to escape shame. Whatever it takes to regain honor is “right” so to speak. Whether it is the death of the offender, a lie, deceit, or even successfully concealing the event, none of this produces guilt because the goal is always to regain the social status of honor.

This issue was not debated or questioned by the people of that era. Tamar’s actions were representative of the basis of society. It was a given and so as ingrained as it was we find no condemnation of her behavior in this story. If anything it is Judah who is mildly rebuked and this for not giving Tamar to his youngest son.

And as our final Biblical example of the influence of a shame and honor based society we need look no further than Messiah’s famous “turn the other cheek” admonition to His followers and fellow citizens. Keep in mind that Yeshua’s day was around 1600 years or so after the time of Judah and Tamar yet the shame and honor mentality was still the dominant societal force among the Hebrews. Which, by the way, is one reason the Romans (who were by now a primarily guilt-innocence society of laws) had such a difficult time trying to govern the Holy Lands.

<sup>CJB</sup> **Matthew 5:39** *But I tell you not to stand up against someone who does you wrong. On the contrary, if someone hits you on the right cheek, let him hit you on the left cheek too!*

Or in a translation that gets it a bit closer to the cultural sense of that era since the word “wrong” is nowhere present in the original language text:

<sup>MIT</sup> **Matthew 5:39** *I say to you: Do not fight back when harm is done to you. On the*



***contrary, if someone slaps your right cheek, turn toward him the other cheek too.***

Here's the thing to understand: today in most Western societies being slapped on the cheek is a criminal offense called assault. One could be arrested and go to jail for it, or it is seen as something rather trivial and just sloughed off. But in the Middle East from time immemorial, it was not a criminal act at all nor was it trivial; rather it was the slap was an act intended to depart shame to the other party. It was one of the greatest insults that could transpire among humans. A man who was slapped on the cheek only had a couple of options: wander away and accept being in an indefinite status of shame before his family and tribe (which was a nearly unthinkable choice). Or react violently and take revenge thus keeping his honor even if it costs him or the other fellow his life. There was no right or wrong to it, no guilt or innocence.

Yeshua said in the previous verse:

<sup>CJB</sup> **Matthew 5:38** ***"You have heard that our fathers were told, 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.'***

That is, the proportional concept of justice for breaking a law (a God-given principle) was regularly being misapplied to cases of shame and honor. And from the moment Moses was given the law right up until today, separating issues of shame and honor from issues of guilt and innocence has remained a thorny problem.

Yeshua was telling the one who had been shamed NOT to take revenge to recoup their honor. God's justice system (the Mosaic Law) did NOT permit revenge for an insult. So Christ was dealing with the central philosophical platform of His society at that time: shame and honor, not law breaking. He wasn't telling anyone, ever, that if someone steals from you, or brutally attacks you in a criminal fashion, or commits some kind of civil crime against you (as defined by the Torah) that we should just look the other way and excuse the perpetrator. Or that you must never defend yourself, or come to someone's rescue if they are attacked or prosecute a criminal. Turning the other cheek was not at all about criminal acts. Rather Jesus gave us a whole series of cases whereby one should react entirely differently in matters of shame and honor in a shame-honor based society than what was typical for His day: violence and vengeance.



Now let me throw one other thing out to you. Hopefully now that you have some feel for the nature of society in ancient times (including Hebrew society), you'll understand that the idea of a set of laws suddenly being thrust upon the Israelites; laws introduced from God (rather than manmade traditions and customs), laws which were to become the new basis for a redeemed Hebrew society, was a nearly incomprehensible matter for the wandering Israelites. God was literally in process of transforming the standard shame-honor based society of Israel into a guilt-innocence based society and for good reason. Because as imperfect as any earthly societal platform might be, until mankind understood that there was such a thing as absolute right and wrong in God's eyes and that it was not relative to the circumstance; until humans could see that doing wrong brought guilt to them just as it did to Adam; until these chosen people understood that God's principles were unchangeable and that their status of shame or honor was bestowed upon them by God according their standing with Him and NOT by some fuzzy set of tribal traditions, then they could never see their own sin no matter how deeply they were wallowing in it.

So, St. Paul in the New Testament explains the reason for God introducing the Law and thus the basis for a guilt-innocence society:

### **Rom 5:12-14 CJB**

***<sup>12</sup> Here is how it works: it was through one individual that sin entered the world, and through sin, death; and in this way death passed through to the whole human race, inasmuch as everyone sinned.***

***<sup>13</sup> Sin was indeed present in the world before Torah was given, but sin is not counted as such when there is no Torah.***

***<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless death ruled from Adam until Moshe, even over those whose sinning was not exactly like Adam's violation of a direct command. In this, Adam prefigured the one who was to come.***

So, says Paul (and I paraphrase), Adam's sin was obvious because there was a rule violation (don't eat the fruit from that tree!). And once Adam's sin entered the world the death it brought with it passed to the whole human race and it could not be eradicated except by extraordinary measures taken by God. But what about the centuries immediately following Adam and before the Torah was given to Moses? What were the rules during that timeframe for mankind to live by? And if there weren't any known written rules, does that mean that sin was dormant and essentially didn't matter? Remember, this would be a time when all human

societies were either fear-power based or shame-honor based because up to now there had been no guilt-innocence societies because there was no law. And without laws to break there is nothing to be guilty of. Adam couldn't have been guilty of anything if there hadn't been a rule to break.

For these ancient societies the concept of "sin" was very hazy. It more applied to doing some kind of unwarranted harm to another person, or it was some perceived offense you must have committed against a spirit or god when you experienced troubles (otherwise you wouldn't have had troubles). Life was either appeasing the gods simply because they had power over you, or you were doing whatever it took to maintain your honor or avoiding shame within your tribe and there was no wrong in whatever approach you might take to achieve honor. So right and wrong was a concept that had very little meaning. And when right and wrong have no meaning, then sin has no meaning. Again: where there is no law, there is no trespass.

So, says Paul, just because God had not presented the world with His laws yet doesn't mean that those laws didn't exist in heaven. God had very deliberate standards for people to live by (since mankind was created). And even though humans may not have been aware of the standards per se, it was because of our innate sin and evil inclinations that they had no concept of trespassing against God. Thus, for the longest time even though sin was of course in the world, men didn't see any of their behavior as sin because God hadn't given His laws to men in a form they could physically see and thus measure their behavior against it as a standard. But once He did that, now men were aware of their own sin. And now that they were aware of their sin, they were aware of their guilt. But they also had the opportunity to either obey God and not sin; or to seek a remedy for sin if they failed.

I'll end today's lesson with this thought: I probably haven't done you any favors with this new knowledge you now have. You are going to see things in the Bible that others don't. You are going to understand Biblical instructions and stories in ways that others won't (especially those of the doctrine oriented Church leadership). And while I've added a piece to the puzzle of God's infallible Word, the puzzle also just grew in size.

In reference to our modern times and the violent confrontation between Islam and the Western World that will likely be at the root of never ending conflicts that will eventually lead to Armageddon, you will hear what our Western governments say to the Islamic governments, and notice how the Islamic governments respond, and probably better predict an outcome or understand a response than your government leadership will. Part of this is because you are now cognizant of something most of them are not: the very different societal goals and values between the 3 types of societal platforms that dominate our planet. But even more because

you are also able to incorporate God's promises and commandments and prophecies into what you see happening, you will have a better lens through which to view all the turmoil and understand what it is you see.

Next week we'll get back to 1<sup>st</sup> Kings and the character called Hadad.