

Doctrine of Evil in the Old Testament

1. The English word evil is used 481 times in the Old Testament.
2. The first usage of the term is found in relation to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.
 - *Genesis 2:9 And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.*
3. The Hebrew word translated evil is רַחַּ **ra`** (rah); bad or (as noun) evil (natural or moral).
4. רַחַּ **ra`** (rah) is derived from רָעַרְ **ra`a`** (raw-ah'); a primitive root; properly, to spoil (literally, by breaking to pieces); figuratively, to make (or be) good for nothing, i.e. bad (physically, socially or morally).
5. The presence of evil was in the universe prior to creation and was a potential for mankind at creation.
 - *Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*
6. Because of the Fall men can know both good and evil. Good is to obey the known will of God; evil is to violate the known will of the LORD.
 - *Genesis 3:5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*
7. By being able to know good and evil, man is like God with this exception. Man knows evil experientially while God knows evil objectively.
 - *Genesis 3:22 And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:*
8. The following can be considered examples of moral evil.
 - Inappropriate thoughts. *Genesis 6:5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*
 - A negative report. *Genesis 37:2 These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.*

- Doing someone harm after they have done good. *Genesis 44:4 And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?*
- *Lex Talionis* or the Law of Retaliation. *Genesis 50:15 And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.*

9. Young people as well as older people can have evil thoughts.

- *Genesis 8:21 And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.*

10. There is not only moral evil but physical evil in the sense of calamity, hardship or injurious behavior.

- *Genesis 19:19 Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:*

11. Animals that hurt someone are referred to as evil.

- *Genesis 37:20 Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.*

12. Mental or physical sickness is referred to as evil.

- *Genesis 44:34 For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.*

13. Days and years filled with sorrow and difficulties are referred to as evil.

- *Genesis 47:9 And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.*

14. God is able to deliver people from every expression of evil although He is under no obligation to do so.

- *Genesis 48:16 The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.*

15. The essence of evil is deliberately hurting self or others for a selfish and inappropriate purpose.

- Evil actions. *Genesis 50:17 So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.*
- Evil thoughts. *Genesis 50:20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*
- Evil vows. *Leviticus 5:4 Or if a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these.*

16. The Lord is sometimes charged with doing evil to others.

- By Moses.

Exodus 5:22 And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me?

Exodus 32:12 Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Exodus 32:14 And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

17. Individuals can be charged with doing evil.

- Pharaoh. *Exodus 5:23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.*

18. The presence of evil is a constant danger.

- *Exodus 10:10 And he said unto them, Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you.*

19. Individuals are not to follow others in acts of evil.

- *Exodus 23:2 Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:*

20. Evil should produce mourning.

- *Exodus 33:4 And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments.*

21. Dangerous animals that hunt and kill are called evil beasts.

- *Leviticus 26:6 And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.*

22. It is possible to convey an evil report that instills false information and fear into the hearts of others.

- *Numbers 13:32 And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.*

23. Sin can corrupt a society to the point it is declared to be an evil congregation in the sight of the Lord.

- *Numbers 14:27 How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.*

24. When sin has saturated a society, God is sometimes willing to destroy all the people.

- *Numbers 14:35 I the Lord have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.*

25. Purveyors which provide an evil report are singled out for divine discipline.

- *Numbers 14:37 Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the Lord.*

26. A place of blessing can become an evil place where there is emotional revolt of the soul against God and against His divinely ordained leadership.

- *Numbers 20:5 And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? It is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink.*

27. One form of divine discipline against evil found in a society is national displacement.

- *Numbers 32:13 And the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the Lord, was consumed.*

28. Some generations are divinely classified as an evil generation.

- *Deuteronomy 1:35 Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give unto your fathers,*

29. Up to a certain age children are declared to be unable to know between good and evil.

- *Deuteronomy 1:39 Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.*

30. It is predicted that men will do evil in the sight of the LORD. Sin is no surprise to God.

- *Deuteronomy 4:25 When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger:*

31. In grace the LORD will forgive sin, remove sickness, and put none of the evil diseases of Egypt upon His people based upon gospel repentance.

- *Deuteronomy 7:15 And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee.*

32. Some people are intrinsically evil manifested in the fact they turn the hearts of people away from the LORD.

- *Deuteronomy 13:5 And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.*