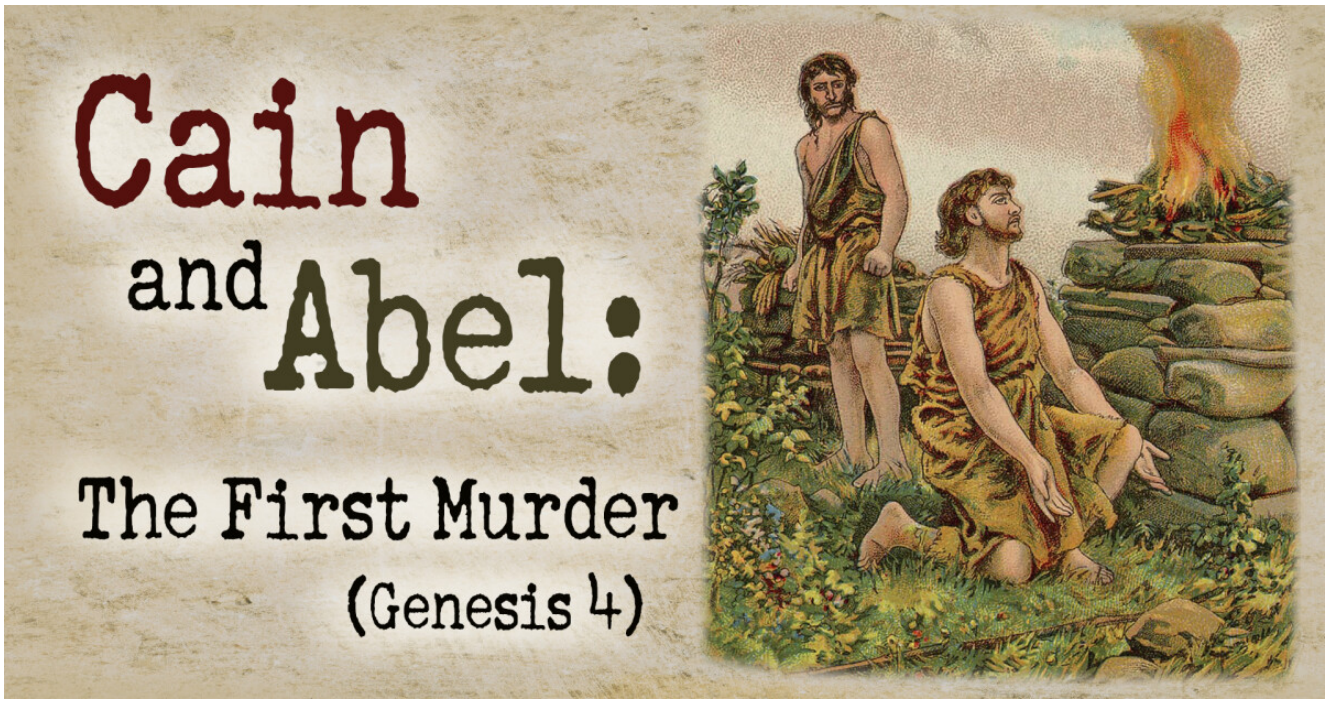
NO FEAR OF THE EVIL EYE: THE TENTH COMMANDMENT & FINGERNAIL CLIPPINGS AND UGLY BABIES



[These are the next two short chapters of Part I: Envy of my forthcoming book NO FEAR OF THE EVIL EYE: Key to Freedom, Peace, and Prosperity. Previous sections and chapters can be accessed here. I will really appreciate any feedback you have.]

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, nor thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's. Exodus 20:17

This is the King James Version (KJV) translation of the Tenth Commandment of Yahweh not to envy. The Living Bible (TLB) translation is more accurate:

> *"You must not be envious of your neighbor's house, or want to sleep with his wife, or want to own his slaves, oxen, donkeys, or anything else he has."*

The original word in Hebrew translated as "covet" is *chamad*. The word can be used in different

contexts, referring to sexual lust for example. But for thousands of years, Jewish tradition has considered the 10th as a proscription not to envy other people.

Not surprising considering that according to the Old Testament, the first crime ever committed, Cain killing his brother Abel in Genesis 4:3-8, was an act of envy.

The Catholic Church is exactly the same. From the Vatican Catechism Archive:

2536: When the Law says, "You shall not covet," these words mean that we should banish our desires for whatever does not belong to us

2539: Envy is a capital sin. It refers to the sadness at the sight of another's goods and the immoderate desire to acquire them for oneself, even unjustly. When it wishes grave harm to a neighbor it is a mortal sin: St. Augustine saw envy as "*the* diabolical sin."[327] "From envy are born hatred, detraction, calumny, joy caused by the misfortune of a neighbor, and displeasure caused by his prosperity."[328]

There is no major religion that has not condemned envy from its inception. In Hinduism and Buddhism, it is *irsha*[1], in Islam it's *hasad*. Further, there is no culture known to anthropology or history that has praised envy as a moral virtue. Always and everywhere it is condemned as a moral vice.

And always and everywhere from dawn of time to today, it is ignored, the commandment not obeyed.

---

[1] *For some reason, many English translations of irsha insist on confusing envy with jealousy. The emotions are very different. Envy is malicious hate for someone who has what you don't. Jealousy is fear that someone will take away something only you should have.*

Yahweh in the OT is a jealous god, qanna, demanding his worshippers only worship him. A husband is jealous of his wife, demanding no other man have access to her except him. Jealousy is not envy.

FINGERNAIL CLIPPINGS AND UGLY BABIES

"*You have to learn so much to remember so little."* It was my high school geometry teacher, Mrs. McGrath, who loved to remind us of that. So it was that of all my freshman anthropology classes at UCLA, the one thing that stuck in my mind was what one professor said about fingernail clippings.

He said it was a common practice among many primitive tribes (this was in 1961, way before such descriptions were very Un-PC – the PC term is now, I believe, "traditional") that both men and women would carefully collect their fingernail clippings and dispose of them in secret, making sure no one would see what they did with them.

I thought this was incredibly weird. Why would they care? I asked. The professor's answer: "So that no other villager could use a part of their body to gain power over them with what we'd call sorcery or voodoo."[1]

Then when I was a senior at UCLA in 1965, a visiting lecturer gave a talk on the tribe he was studying in the Amazon. He had the memorable name of Napoleon Chagnon, and he told us about the Yanomamo, a people living in the borderless rain forests of southern Venezuela and northern Brazil.

> He called them "The Fierce People" for their penchant for violence, explaining that up to half of Yanomamo men die violent deaths in conflicts with other Yanomamo neighbors. But what really caught my attention was this story he told us:

> *"When a Yanomamo woman gives birth, she will tearfully proclaim her child to be ugly. She will wail and cry loudly enough so everyone in the village can hear. She will keep this lament up for some time, loudly asking why the spirits have cursed her with such a repulsive infant, until she is sure all the villagers have heard her.*
>
> *I have witnessed this many times. Yet whenever I was able to look into where the mother was alone with her newborn, she would look at me with that smile of absolute bliss that all mothers feel towards the beautiful miracle she had given birth to. As I was an outsider, she could furtively share her secret with me."*

Then he looked at us to ask: "What do you think is going on here?" I raised my hand and he invited me to answer.

"She's pretending to be miserable because she is afraid the other villagers will resent her happiness and curse her for it with sorcery."

He stared at me with a peculiar intensity, then asked me, "You mean it's like a shield of protection for her?" I nodded. He smiled and said, "That's precisely correct."

It was one of my better moments as an undergrad.

---

[2] , A friend of mine who read this chapter told me: "In the mid-1970's my wife, Nina, and I were physicians on the Navajo Reservation in Ganado, Arizona. Our Navajo friends urged us to be careful about our nail clippings in just the way you describe."