A Glimpse Into The Ethics Of Adam & Eve And Cain & Abel

Ethical dilemmas and moral inquiries commonly occur in the book of Genesis, many in relation to the exploration of the human mind and cultural development. More specifically, the creation myth of Adam and Eve and the ethical quandary of Cain and Abel provide examples of innate human emotions in response to conflict. When examining the ethical significance of these stories, it is critical to focus on the interplay of dominance and subordination. The power dynamic in the account of Adam and Eve, for instance, is between the celestial and the mundane, exhibiting God as the dominant figure and Adam and Eve as the subordinates. Dissimilarly, the anecdote of Cain and Abel manifests a conflict between two mortal figures. While the creation story of Adam and Eve provides insight into gender portrayal, the rivalry of Cain and Abel offers a perspective into chaos and order; moreover, both narratives offer examples of reason in relation to human nature.

The creation myth of Adam and Eve gives light to the first man and woman, and serves as an introduction to the doctrines of the fall of man and original sin. In the onset of the creation narrative, God fashions Adam from dust. Thereafter, Eve is formed from one of Adam's ribs, establishing her his companion in the Garden of Eden. In the Garden of Eden, God has provided Adam and Eve with every resource required for living. Despite his myriad offerings, God laments one rule: "[Adam and Eve] must not eat from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, for when [they] eat from it [they] will certainly die" (2:17). Nevertheless, a serpent deceives Eve into consuming the fruit from the forbidden tree. Eve subsequently convinces her companion, Adam, to eat the fruit from the tree as well. Adam and Eve are, therefore, condemned by God for disobeying his authority, as God is dominant to his human creations. In response, their actions led to the fall of man and the concept of original sin.

In the creation story of Adam and Eve, conflict arises in the Garden of Eden when Eve tempts Adam into defying God's sovereignty by eating fruit from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. Discussion of gender portrayal comes into play when Eve entices Adam into unethical doings, akin to the depiction of the snake that declares: "You will not certainly die ...For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (3:4-5). By nature, Eve is described as guileless when she is mislead by the snake, a potential test of her trustworthiness and moral strength. When questioned by God, Adam responds: "'The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.' Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'" (3:12-13). Not only is Eve described to have duped Adam, but God also takes Adam's word at first glance and condemns Eve entirely, refusing to acknowledge her statement regarding the snake. The creation myth is a story of fundamental ethics and morals, and since Eve is portrayed as a disobedient, evil, and self-interested being, all women have been collectively labeled with these negative "truths" regarding their nature and identity. It is a plausible and compulsory question to ponder whether this creation myth could have been written through a different lense, one with Adam as the tempter. Would this change in perspective alter the past and present treatment of women? Does the current perspective make the Bible misogynistic? Both inquires are valid, yet difficult to answer. The power dynamics in Adam and Eve, however, are not only between the celestial and the mundane, but also between man and woman, with women as the subordinate. The unbalanced power dynamics between the celestial and the mundane, as well as men and

women unveils one of many unethical aspects in the Bible.

After the occurence of the original sin in the creation myth Adam and Eve, and the subsequent fall of man, the Biblical story of Cain and Abel is introduced after Adam and Eve conceive their sons Cain and Abel. In this narration, a sibling rivalry — regarding a sacrifice to God — takes center stage as the primary conflict. Eve's firstborn, Cain, takes on the occupation of a farmer, while his brother, Abel, serves as a herdsman. In an offering to God, Cain sacrifices a portion of his crops, while is brother, Abel, provides a generous oblation of sheep. Ultimately, God prefers Abel's blood offering and rejects Cain's, dictating Abel as more worthy and virtuous. In a rage of jealousy and overwhelming emotion, Cain lures Abel to an open field to attack and kill him.

Cain's act of jealousy demonstrates the chaotic power of human emotion and the lack of reason in the wake of conflict. In the narration of Cain and Abel, Cain represents the chaotic aspect of human beings, whereas Abel is symbolic of order due to his praised sacrifice to God. Cain, on the other hand, allows jealousy to override reason and take control of his actions. The essential power dynamics in this story are between Cain and Abel. Despite his fate, Abel seems to take dominion over Cain primarily due to God's favoring of his offering. In response to the murder of Abel, God declares: "Now [Cain is] under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive [Cain's] brother's blood from [his] hand. When [Cain works] the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for [him]. [He] will be a restless wanderer on the earth" (4:11-12). God learns of Abel's death, and curses Cain for his murder. The Earth's soil takes in Abel's blood, making the once fertile ground sterile, inhibiting Cain from farming the land. Additionally, God imposes a life of eternal and aimless wandering. In reference to Plato's theory of the three parts of the soul (appetite, spirit, and reason), Cain's appetitive element is unearthed, releasing an unhinged emotional response to God's preference of Abel's offering. Similarly is Freud's theory of the id, ego, and superego. The most animalistic part of Cain's mind, the id, inhibits reason to take sovereignty, leading to the instincive and passionate murder of his brother. As declared not only in scripture, but also in the social contract, murder or harm unto others is not permitted, and is therefore declared as unethical.

Ultimately, while the creation story of Adam and Eve provides insight into gender portrayal, the rivalry of Cain and Abel offers a perspective into chaos and order; moreover, both narratives offer examples of reason in relation to human nature. The story of Adam and Eve illustrates the conflict of original sin and the fall of man, and demands inquiry of the nature and identity of women. The characterization of Eve in the creation story labels women as naive and evil, therefore marking all women with these negative traits. Similarly, the narrative of Cain and Abel contemplates the state of human nature in response to Cain's unethical actions, but also ponders the disparities of order and chaos. Today, women are stigmatized for their "seductive" and "deceitful" nature, potentially due to the characterization of Eve. Daily occurrences like love and jealousy support the claim that emotion overrides reason, as seen in Cain and Abel.