

## Psalm 51:5 and the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin:

I think it worth serious reflection that Judaism has never developed the doctrine of Original Sin from thousands of years of reading and interpreting it's Bible, the Tanakh. The brilliant Roman Catholic historian Prof Paul Johnson, makes this clear in 'A History of the Jews' p161<sup>1</sup>.

So why is it that Christian theologians have read these same passages, such as Ps 51:5 and come to a very different conclusion?

I believe it is because they approach the Hebrew Scriptures with a Platonic or Hellenistic mindset, not a Hebraic one. This is how such false doctrines as Calvin's TULIP principles, the Trinity, going to heaven when you die, etc. all developed.

One of the most important Hebraic perspectives that is relevant here is the concept of 'Yetzer HaRa' versus 'Yetzer HaTov' (the evil and good inclinations, or the two hearts). This is what the Apostle Paul is speaking about in Romans 7 – I discuss this principle in my Hebraic Mindset articles at [www.circumcisedheart.info](http://www.circumcisedheart.info)

So how should we read Ps 51:5?

Denis Bratcher, a Christian theologian with a good grasp of the Hebraic mindset writes on Ps 51:5: *'Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.'*

*"This verse has traditionally been interpreted as teaching a specific doctrine of original sin, what is known in systematic theology as the genetic theory of the transmission of original sin. It began with those who used the assumptions of Greek Neo-Platonic philosophy and read this verse from the perspective of philosophical dualism. In this view, all physical matter is inherently evil and therefore sin is located in the physical body.*

*Beginning with that perspective, this verse seems to confirm that human beings are sinful simply because they are born physically, that all human beings are guilty of sin simply because they exist as physical creatures. From that premise, it was easy for some to conclude that as long as human beings exist in a physical world they will always be sinful in every thought and action.*

*But this is not a doctrine of original sin.... To adopt that view is to destroy human responsibility that is at the heart of this Psalm!*

*Verse five is simply a way to say that at this moment, as the Psalmist stands before God in confession, maybe for the first time in his life, he is willing to say, "I really am this bad." At this moment of honesty the psalmist has come before God and finally admits, "I have never been much better than who I am at this moment." "- see <http://www.cresourcei.org/psa51.html>*

However, I believe a still better understanding of this verse is the understanding from Judaism that King David was conceived in circumstances that were not good; that were in some way sinful. This understanding is brilliantly disclosed in this article by Chana Weisberg<sup>2</sup>.

Here she argues that the Psalm is referring to the manner of King David's conception and that it has nothing to do with King David's (sinful) nature. I strongly recommend reading her article to get the full picture.

For a more in-depth look at the Original Sin doctrine I recommend Frank Selch's article. 'Original Sin and the Fall of Adam' – also downloadable from [www.circumcisedheart.info](http://www.circumcisedheart.info)

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<sup>1</sup> "... the Jews usually avoided the positive dogmas which the vanity of theologians tends to create and which are the source of so much trouble. **They never adopted, for instance, the idea of Original Sin.**

*Of all the ancient peoples, the Jews were perhaps the least interested in death, and this saved them from a host of problems. It is true that belief in the resurrection and the afterlife was the main distinguishing mark of Pharisaism, and thus a fundament of rabbinic Judaism. Indeed the first definite statement of dogma in the whole of Judaism, in the Mishnah, deals with this: 'All Israel share in the world to come except the one who says resurrection has no origin in the Law'. But the Jews had a way of concentrating on life and pushing death – and its dogmas – into the background."*

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article\\_cdo/aid/280331/jewish/Nitzevet-Mother-of-David.htm](http://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article_cdo/aid/280331/jewish/Nitzevet-Mother-of-David.htm)