A couple I knew, misunderstanding the meaning of being loving parents, raised their children with no rules and little restraint. You won’t be shocked to hear that their two kids grew into demanding little monsters.

The parents blamed the children’s teachers for why their children were ‘difficult’. They explained that their children ‘had issues’ because of preservatives in food. They blamed the tiny tyrants’ grandparents. But they never were able to see their poor parenting as the central problem.

It’s hard to live an effective life when you are blind to cause and effect.

Imagine someone waking up on a recent morning in Washington DC, to discover that forty inches of snow fell in the night. Shivering with cold, he turns up the thermostat to no effect. He tries to turn on the lights, but the electricity is out.

Listen to him saying, “I can’t believe this! What bad luck! On the same morning, no heat, no lights, and on top of that, there’s a load of snow all over my yard.” He sees three separate, simultaneous but disconnected inconveniences, not comprehending that they are all linked.

Snow reminds us of some otherwise invisible links in life.

Most of the elements and compounds that God created in the universe can exist in what we call three phases: solid, liquid, and gas. For example, one can heat solid gold until it melts into a liquid, and if we were to heat it further, it would become a vapor or gas. Another element, mercury, which we know as a liquid, can be cooled into a solid and heated into a gas.

In the case of water, we know the phases respectively as ice, water and steam or clouds. However, only water possesses a mysterious fourth existence—snow. Weirdly, snow seems to possess the characteristics of all three phases. It is a solid—just look at a snowman or the hardness of a snowball. For that matter, try shoveling it.

Almost instantaneously, snow becomes a liquid when you place it upon your tongue. Finally, it behaves a little like a vapor as it drifts downwards from the sky in a way quite different from how rain and hail fall.
Ancient Jewish wisdom teaches that the solid phase of any substance reminds us of the past. It has its shape and is unalterably fixed. Events in our past are what they are—they have happened.

Similarly, the liquid phase is comparable to the present. Our present is fluid. We can influence it by our actions as we can make a liquid take the shape of the container into which we pour it. The gaseous phase is the future—cloudy, uncertain, difficult to grasp and quite unknowable.

Water nearly always carries a hidden double meaning in the Bible. In addition to the life sustaining liquid we know, it also alludes to knowledge and wisdom. This is why in many languages we use the metaphor of ‘thirsting for knowledge.’

The magic of Hebrew stresses the interconnection between the three phases of matter, life and learning, through the Hebrew word for snow, SHeLeG. The word for this unique substance is made up of three letters whose numerical values are 300, 30, and 3 respectively. Each letter of the word is distinct, yet also linked to the others.

The word SHeLeG reminds us that the three phases of life, past, present, and future, are actually linked into one entity through connection with God’s transcendent wisdom; granted to us through His Word.

Whether as parents or in our work, we are encouraged always to be aware of how the totality of our beings is shaped by our past actions and how they and our current activities inexorably sculpt our futures. We can positively direct that path by constantly learning God’s message to us—the Bible.

If you are married or wish to be married, may I suggest you take advantage of the sale this week on my audio CD set, Madam I’m Adam: Decoding the Marriage Secrets of Eden. Having it on hand will allow you the opportunity to sculpt your future rather than fritter away bonus hours when you next receive some unexpected free time.

Susan’s Musings

This week’s musing - More Money, Please

To post comments and feedback, or to print, go to www.susanlapin.com

Last week, I read an extremely disturbing article concerning the inability of the VA system to cope with female soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan. Problems ranged from a lack of sufficient women’s bathrooms and other facilities to a shortage of psychological counseling geared towards women’s specific needs. Unbelievably, some VA physicians were reported as being skeptical as to whether women could indeed have battle wounds. While the article tugged at the heartstrings...

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