

Filial Piety in Ancient Judaism and Early Confucianism

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Descartes once vividly compared philosophy, the main form of human knowledge, to a tree. For him, “the whole of philosophy is like a tree. The roots are metaphysics, the trunk is physics, and the branches emerging from the trunk are all the other sciences, which may be reduced to three principal ones, namely medicine, mechanics and morals.”¹ Inspired by Descartes, here I compare Judaism and Confucianism to two knowledge trees. In Judaism, the root is the faith of the transcendent God; the trunk is composed of the ideas of “chosen people” and prophecies, which connect God and Jewish people; the branches and the fruits are the Jewish law system – the Torah. As for Confucianism, the root may be regarded as the theological conceptions of heaven (天)、heavenly destiny (天命) and the way of heaven (天道); the trunk is the theories of the relationship between Heaven and Man, human heart and nature (心性学说), the idea of sages who functioned as the knowers and transmitters of the Heavenly Way; the branches and the fruits are Confucian ethical principles and rites, such as the principle of reciprocity (忠恕之道, golden rule), loving father (父慈), filial son (子孝), kind husband (夫和), submissive wife (妻顺), friendly elder-brother (兄友), respectful younger-brother (弟恭, *di gong*), righteous friend (友义), honorable monarch (君敬), loyal minister (臣忠), etc.

Descartes also said it was not from the root, nor from the trunk, but just from the tip of branches that we picked the fruits.² This indicates that though fruits from branches are not the essences of a tree, they are the purposes and the products. Through tasting different fruits, we can distinguish different trees. If we desire to distinguish ancient Judaism and Confucianism, we could start with studying the ethical norms.³ However, since both Judaism and Confucianism are rich in rites and norms, it's not necessary for us to study them one by one; just “tasting” one fruit of them will be adequate to understand its quality.

Since Pre-Qin Period (475 BC-221 BC), Filial Piety as a virtue has been highly advocated by Confucianism. In biblical Judaism, “Filial Conduct” is an important commandment and virtue. The two concepts play a significant role separately in Judaism and Confucianism. Thereby, there is major comparability based on this point. The article is designed to compare the concept of “Filial

¹ René Descartes, *A Discourse on Method*. Chinese translation: Wang Tai Qing, Bei Jing: The Commercial Press, 2000, page 70. The above English citation of Descartes' “Author's Letter” is from “René Descartes” <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes/Oct.5th,2013>.

² Ibid. René Descartes, page 70.

³ The “ancient Judaism” in this article refers to Biblical Judaism and Rabbinical Judaism. The “ancient Confucianism” here refers to classical Confucianism in the Pre-Qin Dynasty (475 BC-221 BC), including classical texts such as, *The Analects*, *The Mencius*, *The Book of Rites* and *The Book of Filial Piety*. The English versions of main Confucian texts used in this article are as follows: *Confucius Analects*, trans. James Legge, 1893; *The Mencius*, trans. James Legge, 1895; *The Book of Rites*, Trans. James Legge, 1885; *The Book of Filial Piety*, trans. James Legge, 1879; *The I Ching*, Trans. James Legge, 1899; *The Book of Poetry*, trans. James Legge, 1876; *The Doctrine of the Mean*, trans. James Legge, 1893. All these texts are from Chinese Text Project <http://ctext.org/>

Piety” in ancient Judaism and Confucianism, then to analyze its roots from the perspectives of philosophy, religion, social structure and historic milieu.

The first part of the article will exegeses the classical texts in ancient Judaism and earlier Confucianism in order to expound the connotation of Filial Piety and to explore the similarities within the concept; the second part will reveal the main differences on Filial Piety in the two religions by text analysis; The third will try to find out the reasons for the “differences” and “similarities” by studying the philosophical foundation, historical condition, social and political structure of antique Israel and China.

I. Filial Piety: similarities

The character “孝 (*xiao*, Filial Piety)” in Chinese language is compounded of two radicals; the radical on the top is “老 (*lao*, aged)” and the one at the bottom is “子(*zi*, son or child)”. It is written in *Explaining Simple and Analyzing Characters*(说文解字, *Shuo Wen JieZi*): “*xiao*(孝), is good at supporting parents; the character is composed of *lao*(老) and *zi* (子), meaning that a son succeeds the old.”⁴ The inscription of “*xiao*(孝)” on the bronze ware in the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046 - 771 BCE) symbolizes a son supporting an old man with his hand. In the handed down literatures, “*Xiao* 孝” was often used together with 享 (enjoying sacrifice), such as: “The king will repair to his ancestral temple, to conduct Filial Piety with enjoyable sacrifices” (《易经·萃》, I Ching·Cui) “With rite and auspice fair, thine offerings thou dost bear.” (《诗·小雅·天保》, Book of Poetry·Xiao Ya·TianBao) In Shang and Zhou dynasties (c.1600 - 771 B.C), “*xiao*” mostly referred to offer sacrifices to gods and ancestors, which therefore had strongly religious meaning. From the Spring and Autumn Period (春秋, *chunqiu*, 771 - 476 BC), Confucius and his inheritors developed a system of moral ideas and behavioral norms, in which Filial Piety and fraternal duty (孝悌, *xiao ti*) were vital. The system constitutes an essential part of Confucianism.

The fundamental meaning of Confucian Filial Piety is “*yang* (养)” and “*jing* (敬).” “*Yang*(养)” means material support and care of parents. “To do the necessary in every season (such as growing crops in spring and reaping harvest in autumn), to do the utmost to make lands as fertile as possible, and to be frugal in their expense, in order to keep their parents in comfort, is the filial duty of the common people.”(*The Book of Filial Piety*, chapter 6). That is to say, even a common person has to provide his parents with foods, clothes and living places by hard working and thrift. Supporting parents is the most rudimentary filial conduct. However, Confucius (551–479 BC) thought that only supporting parents with foods and clothes is far away from true Filial Piety. The more important aspect of Filial Piety is “*jing* (敬, reverence),” which means to respect, love and fear parents. When Tsze-yu(子

⁴ Xu Shen (许慎), Duan Yu-cai(段玉裁)commented,*Shuo Wen JieZi Zhu*(《说文解字注》), Shang Hai: Shanghai Guji Publishing House, 1988, p.173.

游)asks about Filial Piety, Confucius responds with a question, “The Filial Piety nowadays means the support of one’s parents, but dogs and horse likewise are able to do something in the way of support; without reverence, what is there to distinguish the one support given from the other?” (*The Analects*, chapter 2) Here, Confucius regarded “reverence” as the criterion to distinguish human beings and animals. Zeng Zi(曾子)(505 BC–436 BC) inherited Confucius’ idea and went even further. He divided Filial Piety into three-layers: “the top Filial Piety is respecting parents, the medium Filial Piety is not insulting parents, and the lowest Filial Piety is supporting parents(大孝尊亲, 其次不辱, 其下能养).”⁵Zeng Zi viewed the reverence to parents as the highest level of Filial Piety and simply material support is the lowest level. Thereby, “support” is the minimum filial conduct; “reverence” is higher and more important. If somebody supports his parents without reverence and love, his filial conduct is reduced to the level of animals.

Judaism also advocates children’s filial conducts to their parents; the fundamental content of Filial Piety is also “support” and “reverence.” In the Bible we read, “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” (*Exodus*, 20:12) In this commandment, the Hebrew word for “honor” is “כָּבֵד”, which means “honor”, “respect” and “glory”. In another verse from the Bible, it is written: “Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the Lord your God.”(*Leviticus*, 19:3) Remarkably, the “honor” here is not corresponded with “כָּבֵד”, but “תִּירָא”; the root of the word is “יִרָא”, which means “fear” or “revere.”⁶ In the *Talmud*, “honor” and “fear” were sometimes alternatively used. For example, in *Kiddushin* 30b of the *Babylonian Talmud*, “fear” is used in the first passage; both “fear” and “honor” are used in the second passage; and “honor” is used in the third passage.⁷ This illustrates that there is no difference between “fear” and “honor” in its general or abstract dimension; both the words could be translated as “honor parents.”However, a Rabbi distinguished “fear” from “honor” with specific cases: “What is ‘fear’ and what is ‘honor’? ‘Fear’ means that the son must neither stand in his father’s place nor sit in his place, nor contradict his words, nor tip the scales against him. ‘Honor’ means that he must give him food and drink, clothe and cover him, lead him in and out.”⁸ From this quotation, we can see that “fear” means “revere” and “respect” whereas “honor” mainly refers to material support. Later Moses Maimonides gave a very similar expression on this point in his *Mishneh Torah*.⁹From it we learn that, in

⁵ Wang Pin-zhen (Qing Dynasty)王聘珍(清)composed, Wang Wen-jin 王文锦 revised, *Da Dai Li JijieGu, Zeng Zi Da Xiao* 大戴礼记解诂, 曾子大孝; Beijing: ZhonghuaShuju, Bei Jing: Publishing House of China, 1983.

⁶ It can also be seen in Deuteronomy 5:16: Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the Lord your God is giving you. The verse is a restatement of the fifth of The Ten Commandments; and in this verse, the Hebrew word for “honor” is כָּבֵד.

⁷ See: *The Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin* 30b. Unless specific note, the version used in this article is: *The Babylonian Talmud*, London: Soncino Press, 1935-48.

⁸*The Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin* 31b.

⁹ See: Moses, Maimonides, *Mishene Torah*, 6:3.

Rabbinic Judaism, “honor parents” has two folds of meaning: material support and spiritual reverence.

In fact, “reverence” in Judaism is identical with the core of Confucian Filial Piety, which is also embodied by rite(禮). “A son should not occupy the south-west corner of the apartment, nor sit in the middle of the mat (which he occupies alone), nor walk in the middle of the road, nor stand in the middle of the doorway.” (*The Book of Rites, khu li*, part 1) In traditional Chinese family, the south-west corner of the apartment, the middle of the mat, the middle of the road and the middle of the doorway exclusively belong to father. Son and daughter are forbidden to occupy these places; otherwise, they would be regarded as irreverence or arrogation in manner. This idea is exactly the same as what the Jewish rabbi taught. Besides, *The Book of Rites* formulated detailed rules on how son and his wife should serve their parents and relatives, including: getting up as early as the crow, serving parents to wash and to dress. When with their parents, (sons and their wives), when ordered to do anything,

“should immediately respond and reverently proceed to do it;” “in going forwards or backwards, or turning round, they should be careful and grave; while going out or coming in, while bowing or walking, they should not presume to eructate, sneeze, or cough, to yawn or stretch themselves, to stand on one foot, or to lean against anything, or to look askance. They should not dare to spit or snivel, nor, if it be cold, to put on more clothes, nor, if they itch anywhere, to scratch themselves.” (*The Book of Rites, neize*)

On the extent of respecting and revering parents, there are also vivid stories in Judaism. For example, it is mentioned in the *Talmud*: There was a filial son, named Dama son of Nethinah. He had an opportunity to make a trade and could earn sixty thousands gold coins; but his key was under his father’s pillow; in order not to disturb his father’s rest, he gave up the deal. Another Rabbi said that Dama gave up a big trade which could bring him eighty thousands gold coins, because he would not disturb his father’s rest. Another rabbi said: once, the same Dama wore a silk garment beset with gold linear, and sat among Roman nobilities. During then, his mother came in, tore up his garment, hit his head and spit to his face; but Dama did not show any angry in order to avoid embarrassing her.¹⁰ Another story said: Rabbi Tarfon was very filial. Every time, when his mother get up or down to the bed, he squatted his body and let she step on his shoulder. Thus, Tarfon came to school and bragged how filial he was. However, his schoolfellows said to him: You are far away from even half of the true Filial Piety! True Filial Piety is: Your mother throws your bulging wallet into sea just in front of you, but you do not blame her at all. Can you reach this? ¹¹These stories tell that in Judaism, children’ filial conducts cannot be compared with money; filial conducts is more

¹⁰ *The Babyloian Talmud: Kiddushin 30a.*

¹¹ *The Babylonian Talmud: Kiddushin 31b.*

important than money.

In addition to “support” and “reverence”, Filial Piety in Confucianism contains the idea of “carrying on father’s wishes and undertakings”. We read in the *Book of Rites*, “Now Filial Piety is the skillful carrying out of the wishes of our forefathers, and the skillful carrying on of their undertakings.” (*The Book of Rites, zhongyong*). That is to say, Filial Piety should be embodied in the son’s carrying out of his father’s wishes; a son should be of one heart and one mind with his father, even his father is dead. “*While a man's father is alive, look at the bent of his will; when his father is dead, look at his conduct. If for three years he does not alter from the way of his father, he may be called filial.*” (*The Analects*, chapter 1 & 4) Furthermore, a son should carry on his father’s undertakings; he should commit no change on being a minister of his father, and on his father's mode of governance. (*The Analects*, chapter 19) Zhu xi (朱熹) explained this idea with detailed examples. He says, “The Duke Zhou achieved the virtue of King Wen and King Wu, in order to go after his ancestors; this is a good case of carrying out of father’s wishes.”¹²

Similar to Confucianism, Filial Piety in Judaism embraces analogous ideas. One rabbi taught: “He must honor him (his father) in life and must honor him in death.” For example, when his father is ‘in life’, one who is heeded in a place on account of his father, he should not say: ‘Let me go, for my own sake’, but all ‘for my father's sake.’ When his father is ‘in death’, if one is reporting something heard from his mouth, he should not say ‘Thus did my father say’, but ‘Thus said my father, my teacher.” This is because a son is educated by his father, and he is only the successor or replacer of his father.¹³

In both early Judaism and Confucianism, Filial Piety requires respect and reverence to their parents, and filial conducts should be carried out through life and after death. Confucius said: “That parents, when alive, be served according to propriety; that, when dead, they should be buried according to propriety; and that they should be sacrificed to according to propriety.” (*The Analects*, chapter 2) In other words, Filial sons should respect their parents according to propriety, no matter the parents are alive or dead. “They served the dead as they would have served them alive; they served the departed as they would have served them had they been continued among them. This is the ultimate of Filial Piety.” (*The Doctrine of the Mean*, Chapter 19) “When our parents are alive, we should treat them with love and respect. When they are dead, we should have sorrow for them. By doing so we shall have performed the duty of mankind, and have done what ought to be done by a filial son, and by the living to the dead.” (*The Book of Filial Piety*, chapter 18) .

In Judaism, it is forbidden to call father’s name no matter when he is alive or dead.¹⁴ The idea is the same in Confucianism. In Confucianism, the mourning period for the death of

¹²Zhu Xi (October 18, 1130 – April 23, 1200)朱熹(宋), *The Connotation of Four Books* 四书章句集注, Bei Jing: Publishing House of China, Oct. 1983, p.27.

¹³*The Babylonian Talmud: Kiddushin* 31b; Also See: Moses, Maimonides, Mishne Torah, 6:4-5.

¹⁴ Moses, Maimonides, Mishe Torah, 6:3.

a father is three years, while in Judaism it is one year (eleven months in fact). In Judaism, when the mourning period is up, the son should say to his dead father “may you have life in the coming world”.¹⁵ Although the mourning duration is different in Confucianism and Judaism, the essential spirit of Filial Piety in the two religions is common.

Confucian “reverence to parents” does not mean an unconditional approval of father's fault. In fact, Confucianism emphasizes obedience to parents, as well as the tradition of “remonstration(谏诤).” In a manner of speaking, the concept of “remonstration” is another important filial conduct beside support(养), reverence(敬), carrying out of wishes(承志)and serving the dead (事死).Confucius said: “In serving his parents, a son may remonstrate with them, but gently.” (*The Analects*, Chapter four) . Zeng Zi(曾子)continued with this idea and advocated that a virtuous person conducts Filial Piety.(see *Da Dai Li Ji*, *Zeng Zi Ben Xiao*, *Zeng Zi Da Xiao*) . XunZi claimed: “Follow *Dao* but not monarch; follow righteousness but not father.” (*The Book of XunZi,Zi Dao*) Directly, XunZi set “way (道)”, “righteousness (义)” against “king (君)” and “father (父)” by which he advances Filial Piety up to a high place in moral rationality. It is written in the *Book of Filial Piety*: “If a father has a son to resist his wrong commands, he will be saved from committing serious faults. When the command is wrong, a son should resist his father.....therefore, resist when wrongly commanded.” (*The Book of Filial Piety*, chapter 15) . In other words, if a son appeases his father's wrong words or behaviors, he is not filial; but the harmonious relationship between father and son still hold in esteem in Confucianism; therefore, a son should follow a proper way to resist his father's wrong commands, and the way should premise on “not losing reverence”. It is just like what Confucius said: “when he sees that they do not incline to follow his advice, he shows an increased degree of reverence, but does not abandon his purpose.”(*Analects*, chapter 4)

Zeng Zi suggested children should “remonstrate but not oppose(谏而不逆)” to their parents' faults. (*The Book of Rites*, Chapter 21) *The Book of Rites* told us how to handle this situation: “If a parent has a fault, the son should with bated breath, bland respect and gentle voice, admonish him. If the admonition does not take effect, he will be the more reverential and the more filial; and when the father seems pleased, he will repeat the admonition. If he should be displeased with this, rather than allow him to commit an offence against anyone in the neighborhood or countryside, the son should strongly remonstrate.” (*The Book of Rites,neize*) This is to say, when a son remonstrate his parents, he must do it with reverent attitudes and gentle words; if the parent does not listen to his son's admonition, the son still should be as filial as usual; he should wait for the proper time or till the parent is happy, and remonstrate again. Confucius said: “The father conceals the misconduct of the son, and the son conceals the misconduct of the father. Uprightness is to be found in this.” (*The Analects*, chapter 13) The Confucius' teaching aims at protecting the familial love between son and father; it does not mean to indulge or encourage father's evil deeds. Hence, in familial or

¹⁵Moses, Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 6:5.

private field, a son has to prevent his father from fault. In short, the purpose of a son's admonition is to stop parents from wrongdoing. Therefore, remonstrance is a filial conduct.

According to the teaching of rabbinic Judaism, if a son finds his father's behavior is against law, he should admonish the father's fault in time. However, the son should remonstrate in euphemistic way. Maimonides suggests a wise way for it. He says, "When someone finds his father acting contrary to the laws, he should not say: 'father, you violated the laws of Torah.' Instead, he should say: 'father, isn't it written like this in the Torah?' He acts like asking his father a question, not warning him."¹⁶ Such method can preserve the holiness of the laws, and also protect the father's dignity. It is a flexible Filial Piety.

From the above mentioned, we can see that Judaism and Confucianism share a lot of commonalities in the content of Filial Piety: Confucianism advocates "honor parents", and Judaism command the same. The fundamental idea of Filial Piety in Confucianism is to support parents, to respect and revere parents; so is it in Judaism. The Filial Piety in Confucianism contains "son's carrying out of father's wishes and carrying on father's undertakings; so does it in Judaism. Confucian Filial Piety requires "honor parents" when they are alive and after their death, so does Judaism. Confucianism advocates to remonstrate parents' faults without offending them, so does Judaism. Now we can conclude that Judaism and Confucianism have a common ethic of Filial Piety.

II. Filial Piety: differences

If we study further on Filial Piety in Judaism and Confucianism, we may find some differences between them. They are mainly concerned with the following three aspects: the reverential extent of filial conducts, the range of filial ethic and the status of Filial Piety in each system.

The difference in reverential extent of filial conducts firstly lies in the support of parents. Confucian Filial Piety is not limited to materially supporting parents, but also to make parents joyful. Confucius used "the difficulty is with the countenance (色难)" to answer Zi Xia's question about Filial Piety. He continues, "If, when their elders have any troublesome affairs, the young take the toil of them, and if, when the young have wine and food, they set them before their elders, is this to be considered Filial Piety?" (*The Analects*, chapter 2) Confucianism demands the young people to care about their parents with work, and supply them with food and drink. Surely, these conducts are manifestations of Filial Piety, yet are not the true Filial Piety. The true Filial Piety for Confucius, which is harder to achieve, requires the children to be nicer so as to make parents joyful all the time. *The Book of Rites* requires: "A filial son, in nourishing his aged, (seeks to) make their hearts glad, and not to go against their wishes; to promote their comfort in their bed-chambers and the whole house; and with leal heart to supply them with their food and drink." (*The Book of Rites*, *neize*). It is thus

¹⁶ Moses, Maimonides, *Mishne Torah*, 6:11.

clear that, in Confucianism, “support” is not only to provide food and clothes, but also to make parents delighted psychologically.

Similar saying can be seen in the Bible: “May your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice!” (Proverbs 23:25) However, such teaching is quite rare and there is no details on how to make parents delighted. The Jewish stories of the two filial sons, which were mentioned earlier in this article, mean that Jewish people view respecting and revering parents more important than the son’s profits and dignity; but, on the degree of supporting parents, Judaism has not yet reached the Confucian extent, that is, “to make parents joyful” .

On mourning dead parents, there are also differences between Judaism and Confucianism. Confucian Filial Piety highly values “death”, which means it highly values children attitudes and behaviors to the death and the after-death of their parents. It is written in *the Mencius*: “The nourishment of parents when living is not sufficient to be accounted the great thing. It is only in the performing their obsequies when dead that we have what can be considered the great thing.” (*The Mencius, li lou*, part 2) Mencius highlighted the importance of valuing the death of parents, but how a filial son should behave? *The book of Filial Piety* answered this question: “When a filial son is mourning for a parent, he wails, but not with a prolonged sobbing; in the movements of ceremony he pays no attention to his appearance; his words are without elegance of phrase; he cannot bear to wear fine clothes; when he bears music, he feels no delight; when he eats a delicacy, he is not conscious of its flavour:--such is the nature of grief and sorrow.” (*The Book of Filial Piety*, chapter 18). This is to say, the grief and sorrow should be from his inner heart, and be embodied by his behaviors.

Besides, there are also clear regulations on funeral in the *Book of Filial Piety*: “An inner and outer coffin is made; the grave-clothes also are put on, and the shroud; and (the body) is lifted (into the coffin). The sacrificial vessels, round and square, are (regularly) set forth, and (the sight of them) fills (the mourners) with (fresh) distress. The women beat their breasts, and the men stamp with their feet, wailing and weeping, while they sorrowfully escort the coffin to the grave. They consult the tortoise-shell to determine the grave and the ground about it, and there they lay the body in peace.” (*The Book of Filial Piety*, chapter 18). After the funeral, they “prepare the ancestral temple (to receive the tablet of the departed), and there present offerings to the disembodied spirit;” “In spring and autumn, they offer sacrifices, thinking of the deceased as the seasons come round.”¹⁷ (*The Book of Filial Piety*, chapter 18). Confucianism stipulates that son should be in mourning for three years after the funeral. This can be seen in Confucian texts, such as *The Book of Historical Records*(尚书), *The Commentary of Zuo*(左传), *The Analects*(论语), *The Mencius*(孟子), *The Xuncius*(荀子), *The Book of Rites*(礼记) and *The Book of Filial Piety*(孝经).¹⁸“The three years’ mourning, the

¹⁷ Also see *The Doctrine of the Mean*.

¹⁸ See: *The Analects*, chapter 1& 17; *The Book of Mencius*, *TengWeng Gong* part 1 1& *Wan Zhang*, part 1; *The Book of Xuncius*, *Li Lun*; *The Book of Rites*, *Tan Gong* part 1, *San Nian Wen*; *The Book of Filial Piety*, chapter 18.

garment of coarse cloth with its lower edge, and the eating of congee, were equally prescribed by the three dynasties, and binding on all, from the sovereign to the mass of the people.” (*The Mencius, Teng Wen Gong, part I*) During the period of mourning, the son should observe several rituals, which mainly include: wearing coarse cloth with its lower edge un-sheared (*zhanshuai* 斩衰); handing a non-wrot bamboo cane (*qiezhang* 苴杖); living in a temporary thatched cottage (*juyilu* 居倚庐); eating congee (*shizhou* 食粥); sleeping on straw mattress (*qinshan* 寝苫); resting head on soil block (*zhenkuai* 枕块), etc.¹⁹ The rite of three years' mourning was stipulated as a state system by subsequent dynasties.

In Judaism, parents' death is also an important thing. During the time of parent's death, familial relatives should be there; after the death, they should bury the dead as soon as possible. Unless the death is on Sabbath or during festivals, the dead person should be buried at the same day of his death. All the relatives who attend the funeral should tear their clothes to express their grief. The first seven days after funeral is the mourning period; during this period, children, closed relatives and friends perform prayers; they should keep the candles lighted all the time. After the seven days of mourning, there is no strict demand on "being in mourning", but usually, children are forbidden to have entertainment within the eleven months after their parents' funeral.²⁰ Hence, Judaism and Confucianism similarly claim that children should mourn for their dead parents and bury them with propriety. The extent of mourning in Judaism is less than that in Confucianism; namely, Judaism holds much easy demands on the rites of funeral, the period of mourning, and the regulations about mourning.

Moreover, both ancient Judaism and Confucianism discussed the concept of "non-filial conducts" (不孝). In fact, the elaboration on "anti-filialness" is a discussion about Filial Piety from the reverse side; from what is "non-filial", we can infer what is "filial"; therefore, the study of "non-filial" belongs to the range of Filial Piety. *The Book of Mencius* mentions "three non-filial cases" and "five non-filial cases." Mencius said: "There are three cases which are non-filial, and to have no posterity is the greatest of them." (*The Mencius, li lou, part 1*). According to Zhao Qi (赵歧), a scholar in the Han dynasty: The first is not obeying parents, going against parents or making parents un-rightful; The second is not serving old parents because of poorness, which results parents have no enough food and cannot afford a doctor; not honoring his parents because he cannot get a study degree or get a position in the government. The third case is not getting married and having no male offspring to perpetuate his family. Among these three cases, having no posterity is the greatest

¹⁹ See: *The Book of Rites, San Nian Wen*; On the study of the "three year's mourning", see Ding Ding 丁鼎: "san nianzhi sang" yuanliukaolun, 三年之丧 源流考论 *shixuejikan* 史学集刊, 2001, No.1.

²⁰ See: *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, A new translation and commentary on the classic guide to Jewish law* by Rabbi Avrohom Davis, Vol.2, Metsudah Publications, New York, 1996, pp.1181-1189; Dadid J. Goldberg and John D. Rayner, *The Jewish People, Their History and Their Religion*, Penhuin Books, London 1989, pp.380-381.

anti-filialness.²¹

Another passage in *The Book of Mencius* mentioned: “There are five things which are pronounced in the common usage of the age to be non-filial. The first is laziness in the use of one’s four limbs, without attending to the nourishment of his parents. The second is gambling and chess-playing, and being fond of wine, without attending to the nourishment of his parents. The third is being fond of goods and money, and selfishly attached to his wife and children, without attending to the nourishment of his parents. The fourth is following the desires of one’s ears and eyes, so as to bring his parents to disgrace. The fifth is being fond of bravery, fighting and quarrelling so as to endanger his parents.”²²From the two passages in *The Book of Mencius*, we can conclude that the division of non-filial behaviors is quite exquisite in Confucianism.

In Judaism, we can find some recordings of non-filial behaviors in the Bible. For example: “anyone who attacks his father or his mother” (Exodus 21:15); “anyone who curses his father or mother” (Exodus 21:17); “the man who dishonors his father or his mother” (Deuteronomy 27:16); “he who robs his father and drives out his mother”(proverbs 19:26); “the eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother” (Proverbs 30:17),etc.Generally speaking, the non-filial cases mentioned in the Bible could be concluded as disrespecting parents and abusing parents. Comparing with the “three non-filial cases” and “five non-filial cases” in Confucianism, they are much less exquisite and systemic. Indeed, many non-filial actions, which are discussed in Confucianism, are not mentioned in Judaism.

The most obvious distinction on Filial Piety between Judaism and Confucianism is itsbreadth or range. In Confucianism, Filial Piety includes not only material support and hearted reverence to parents, but also indirect honor to parents, which embodies in how children treat themselves. For example, Zeng zi(曾子) claimed that taking care of his own body is filial to parents. Confucianism claims that human body is given by parents; therefore, to respect parents means to respect what parents give, including not harming his own body. Otherwise, he is not filial.²³ This point is obviously missing in Judaism. In addition, there is a unique filial conduct in Confucianism, which is to make his name famous in future ages; as a saying goes, “to glorify the ancestor is to perform filial piety.”

It is written in the *Book of Filial Piety*: “Our bodies -- to every hair and bit of skin -- are received by us from our parents, and we must not presume to injure or wound them; this is the beginning of Filial Piety. When we have established our character by the practice of the (filial) course, so as to make our name famous in future ages, and thereby glorify our parents; this is the end of Filial Piety. It commences with the service of parents; it proceeds to the

²¹Zhao Qi commented 赵岐注, forwarded fromZhu Xi (October 18, 1130 – April 23, 1200)朱熹 (宋), *The Connotation of Four Books* 四书章句集注,Bei Jing: Publishing House of China, Oct. 1983, pp.286-287.

²²*The Book of Mencius, Li lou*, part 2.

²³ For example, it is written in *Da Dai Li Ji, Zeng Zi Da Xiao*(大戴礼记·曾子大孝): Our body is the continuation of our parents' bodies; we live with our parents' body, dare to disrespect?

service of the ruler; it is completed by the establishment of the character.”(*The Book of Filial Piety*, chapter 1). Such ideas can barely be found in Judaism.

In addition, it is said in Confucianism: “While his parents are alive, the son may not go abroad to a distance. If he does go abroad, he must have a fixed place to which he goes.” (*The Analects* 4:19); “A son, when he is going abroad, must inform (his parents where he is going); when he returns, he must present himself before them. Where he travels must be in some fixed (region); A filial son will not do things in the dark, nor attempt hazardous undertakings, fearing lest he disgrace his parents.” (*The Book of Rites, qu li*, part 1). A son should follow these teachings, so he can avoid his parent’s worry. This kind of Filial Piety is actually mental concern to parents, and it is not found in Judaism.

Another distinction is more important: Confucian Filial Piety was extended from the initial familial ethic to the range of whole society. It is “*ti*(悌 fraternal duty)” while Filial Piety is spread to brothers, “*zunzun*(尊尊 respecting the elders)” while to the old, and “*xixiao*(移孝作忠 transfer Filial Piety to loyalty to the king)” while to sovereigns. “The Filial Piety with which the superior man serves his parents may be transferred as loyalty to the ruler; the fraternal duty with which he serves his elder brother may be transferred as submissive deference to elders.”(*The Book of Filial Piety*.chapter 15) In Chinese history, many people who were actuated by high ideals chose loyalty over Filial Piety -- being filial to the emperor.

Judaism does not claim being filial to sovereigns and especially not advocate the loyalty to the king. This is because Filial Piety in Judaism basically is an ethical norm within family. It mainly concerns the behaviors of loving parents, and is not an obligation for a young brother to obey his elder brother. **However, Filial Piety can be extended to teachers, because teachers are raisers of the soul, and soul is more important than body for one’s life. In this sense, honoring one’s teacher is a filial conduct like honoring one’s father.**

Judaism also upholds respect for the aged. However, the related discussions are very rare in Jewish classics.²⁴ In this sense, Jewish Filial Piety does not belong in the category of social - political ethics. The Judaic Filial Piety does not emphasize the respect for foreign people and kings, it extends to the love for God. The Talmud refers both God and parents as respectable "partner." Rabbis taught: “There are three partners in man, the Holy One, blessed be He, the father, and the mother. When a man honors his father and his mother, the Holy One, blessed be He, says: ‘I ascribe [merit] to them as though I had dwelt among them and they had honored me.’”²⁵ In other words, the objects of Filial Piety in Judaism are parents and the transcendent God. In this sense, the Filial Piety in Judaism is not only a concept of familial, but also an idea with religious scope. Its function is to keep the relationship between parents and children, God and human beings.

²⁴ For example: "Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly." *Leviticus*, 19:32.

²⁵*The Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin* 30b.

Different from Judaism, Filial Piety in Confucianism is foremost a concept of familial ethics; but it spreads to social-political ethics. Confucian Filial Piety firstly refers to “*qinqin* 亲亲”, which means supporting and respecting parents; second, it refers to “*di ti*(弟悌)”, which means respecting elder brothers; Third, it refers to “*zunzun*(尊尊)”, which means respect elderly relatives and people who have higher social class; it surely indicates the loyalty to sovereigns.

What’s more, Confucian Filial Piety itself indicates different classes and levels. *The Book of Filial Piety* divides Filial Piety into five levels: the Filial Piety of the son of heaven, of the kings in the states, of the high ministers and great officers, of the inferior officers and finally of the common people. “When the love and reverence (of the Son of Heaven) are thus carried to the utmost in the service of his parents, the lessons of his virtue affect all the people, and he becomes a pattern to (all within) the four seas--this is the Filial Piety of the Son of Heaven. When their riches and nobility do not leave their persons, then they are able to preserve the altars of their land and grain and to secure the harmony of their people and men in office--this is the Filial Piety of the princes of states. When these three things--(their robes, their words, and their conduct)--are all complete as they should be, they can then preserve their ancestral temples--this is the Filial Piety of high ministers and great officers. Not failing in this loyalty and obedience in serving those above them, they are then able to preserve their emoluments and positions and to maintain their sacrifices--this is the Filial Piety of inferior officers. They are careful of their conduct and economical in their expenditure;--in order to nourish their parents--this is the Filial Piety of the common people.”²⁶

If “*xiao ti*(孝悌)” is a concept of familial ethics, then “*zunzun*(尊尊)”, “*zhongjun*(忠君)” and hierarchical social Filial Piety is far beyond the familial ethics, and is expanded and applied to the whole society, becoming social and political ethics. Its function is not only to maintain the superior-inferior relation between father and son, young brother and elder brother, but also is to distinguish, insist and maintain relations among different classes in a harmonious society, which can thus be used to stabilize the entire social order. “They are few who, being filial and fraternal, are fond of offending against their superiors. There have been none, who, not liking to offend against their superiors, have been fond of stirring up confusion.” (*The Analects*, chapter 1) A filial and fraternal person is a submissive citizen; and usually such person does not commit in rebellion. It can help building a harmony society if we expand the thought of Filial Piety and fraternal duty to the entire society. “His teaching of Filial Piety is a tribute of reverence to all the fathers under heaven; his teaching of fraternal submission is a tribute of reverence to all the elder brothers under heaven; his teaching of the duty of a subject is a tribute of reverence to all the rulers under heaven.” (*The Book of Filial Piety*, chapter 13) .²⁷ According to Confucianism, as long as people learn to Filial Piety,

²⁶ See: *The Book of Filial Piety*, chapter 1-chapter 6.

²⁷ In *Spring and Autumn of Master Lü* 吕氏春秋•*Xiao Xing lan*, (Filial Conduct Examinations 孝行览第二), it is written: “If a monarch conducts Filial Piety, he would have distinguished honor reputation; the following

will be produced in the whole society "loving father (父慈, *fu ci*), filial son (子孝, *zixiao*), friendly elder-brother (兄友, *xiong you*), respectful younger-brother (弟恭, *di gong*), honorable monarch (君惠, *junhui*), loyal minister (臣忠, *chenzhong*)", so as to achieve a harmony society. The idea "to rule a country with Filial Piety", which was originated from the *Book of Filial Piety*, was widely accepted and used by subsequent sovereigns.

Now, let's look at the status of Filial Piety in Judaism and Confucianism. In Confucianism, Filial Piety is the first virtue. *The Analects* tells us: "The superior man bends his attention to what is radical. That being established, all practical courses naturally grow up. Filial Piety and fraternal submission!-- are they not the root of all benevolent actions?" (*The Analects*, chapter 1)²⁸ In Confucian view, "*ren* 仁 (benevolence)" is the essence of a human being. Being a human is to embody the essence of benevolence in daily life, that is "*jianren*(践仁) (practice benevolence)" or "*weiren*(为仁 be benevolence);" the top priority of "be benevolence" is to follow the way of Filial Piety and fraternal duty. There are similar words in the *Book of Filial Piety*: "Filial Piety is the root of all virtue, and the stem out of which grows all moral teaching." (chapter 1) "Be benevolence" firstly need to carry out Filial Piety; Filial Piety is the foundation of virtue, so it is the first virtue and all the moral teachings come from it. Therefore, we can say that as a virtue, Filial Piety occupies the highest position in all virtues in Confucianism.

Differently, in Judaism, respecting parents is absolutely important, but it is not the essence of a human being, yet not the first virtue. As mentioned earlier, in Judaism, "honor thy father and thy mother" is the fifth of the "Ten commandments". The four commandments above it stipulate that Israelis should accept Yahweh as the only God, not worship idols, not make wrongful use of the divine name and remember the Sabbath day. The first four commandments are concerned with the relationship between God and man and constitute the first part of the Decalogue. The other six commandments, which form the second part of the Decalogue, are about relationships between man and man.²⁹ Keeping the order of the "Ten Commandments," in mind, we can see that Filial Piety belongs to the second part of the Decalogue and its position is secondary to the commandments about the relationship between God and man. Therefore, theologically speaking, "honoring parents" is secondary in

people would obey him and all the people would praise him. If an officer conducts Filial Piety, he would be loyal to the monarch, be honest and upright in his position and can sacrifice himself when disasters come. If scholars and common people conduct Filial Piety, they would work hard; when they attack, they would win; when they defend, the guard would be solid; they would feel no tired or run away. Filial piety is the root of Three Emperors and Five Sovereigns in ancient China; it is the social order and law for all sorts of things. To master "one principle" and all the good things will appear, all bad things are removed, the world will be obedient, probably only Filial Piety!"

²⁸ According to *Zhu Xi*, in this sentence, the letter "*wei* 为" is a verb; "*weiren* 为仁" means to practice benevolence; practicing benevolence is the extension of the essence of benevolence. See: *Zhu Xi, The Connotation of Four Books*, Beijing: Publishing House of China, Oct. 1983, p.48.

²⁹ See: *Exodus*, chapter 20.

importance while being compared with worship the God.³⁰

Rabbinic Judaism more values the Filial Piety to parents than biblical Judaism. As previously mentioned, the Talmud calls God, father and mother "three honorable partners of children."³¹ However, although parents and God are both the objects for children to respect and fear, their status is different. God is always in a position of priority, because both children and their parents should worship God. Yet, Jewish people "honor" and "fear" parents, but not worship parents. They only worship God. "Worship" is above "honor" and "fear." "Worship" contains "honor" and "fear" and the degree of piety of a worshiper is much higher. As a typical monotheism, Judaism worship only God. When some Rabbi claimed honor parents or views both God and parents as honorable "partners," it does not mean to worship parents like God.

In this section, through the comparison, we found that Judaism and Confucianism differ in the content, range and dimension of Filial Piety. Some filial conducts can be found in Confucianism but are lack in Judaism; the status of Filial Piety in Judaism and Confucianism is also different. The difference in degree here mainly refers that Confucianism is better than Judaism on the comprehensive Filial Piety for parents; besides, Confucianism is rich in filial conducts with the significance of socio-ethics and politics, but in Judaism they are quite few. However, in terms of the dimension of the religious theology, Judaism is obviously better than Confucianism.

III. Why Similarities and Differences

Now we cannot help asking the following questions. Why do Judaism and Confucianism, these two seemed totally unrelated religions or cultures, both advocates the ethic of Filial Piety? Why did ancient Judaism not emphasize Filial Piety to the extent as the Confucianism did; why does Filial Piety occupy the place of the first virtue in Confucianism while in Judaism it is secondary? Why ancient Judaism did not develop Filial Piety into a social and political ethic system as early Confucianism did?

Both ancient Judaism and early Confucianism share similar or common virtue of Filial Piety in the main aspects mainly because the idea of filial piety in both cultures is the embodiment of familial affection and children's gratitude to parents, which are based on blood lineage of the family members. No doubt that familial affection and the gratitude as inborn elements of humanity are of great importance in the establishment of human morality. It was discussed repeatedly in many philosophers' theories, such as Plato's theory of appetite, spirit and reason as a structure of the soul; Aristotle's discussions on sad and happy feelings

³⁰Several scholars view the first five commandments as a part, and the other five as another part; which therefore, makes the commandment "honor your father and mother" included in the first part. See: Louis E. Newman, *An Introduction to Jewish Ethics*, Pearson, New Jersey, 2005, p.107. This idea does not change the point that "honor parents" is second to "worship God".

³¹*The Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 30b.*

which generate from human senses and David Hume's discussions on passion and morality. The connotation of Confucian filial piety can be easily seen in the structure of the Chinese character Xiao (孝, composed by two radicals son 子 and old 老) as we discussed before.

Now let us illustrate how Filial Piety to connect with the inner human affection and blood lineage in early Confucianism.

Confucius himself made great efforts to make sure that the blood lineage results in familial affection and the feeling of gratitude to parents for their giving life and taking care from childhood. One passage in the Analects of Confucius among others is worthy of citing to demonstrate the sage's attitude to Filial Piety. He had a conversation with one of his disciple Zai Wo (宰我) about how long one should follow the rules of mourning for one's parents. Zai Wo thought that the period of three year for mourning was too long and cost too much. Further, it neither benefits the Rite System, nor is it harmonious with the four seasons. So he proposed to reduce it to one year. Confucius then asked whether Zai Wo would feel ease if the duration is just one year. Zai Wo replied "Yes". As soon as Zai Wo left, Confucius blamed him for "want of virtue". He states, it is not till a child is three years old that it is allowed to leave the arms of its parents. And the three years' mourning is universally observed throughout the empire. (see *Analects*, Yan Huo 21)³² Here, Confucius gave us the reason why one had to observe the three years mourning rules: all children were carried in arms by their parents for three years after they were born, so three years mourning was only an equal repayment for parents' caring; we owed our parents other favors, like all mothers spent ten months for their pregnancy; and parents put up with countless hardships during parenting. Zai Wo did not understand the deep meanings of such regulation and tried to reduce the time of mourning and take the easy way, which of course would be objected by Confucius.

Beside this story, there are many other examples for the emphasis that Confucianism put on the grateful feelings people felt for their parents. Let us look at one more example, the poem Liao E (蓼莪)³³ from the Book of Poetry (诗经). In this poem, it reads:

"O my father, who begot me! O my mother, who nourished me! Ye indulged me, ye fed me, Ye held me up, ye supported me, Ye looked after me, ye never left me, Out and in ye bore me in your arms. If I would return your kindness, It is like great Heaven, illimitable."

These verses indicate that people should remember what kind of favors that their parents given to them: they gave them life, spent days and nights with them, pouring them with matchless love and caring; so later they should repay this kindness to their parents with love and respect, and knows the importance of filial piety, for "it is the constant (method) of Heaven, the righteousness of Earth" (*Xiao Jing*, San Cai- Filial Piety in Relation to the Three

³² English translation: James Legge Source: "The Chinese Classics, volume 1", James Legge, 1861
<http://ctext.org/analects/yang-huo> 2nd, Oct. 2013

³³ English translation: James Legge Source: "The Chinese Classics, volume 4", James Legge, 1898
<http://ctext.org/book-of-poetry/liao-e> 2nd, Oct. 2013

Powers 1)³⁴ This is the Confucian Filial Piety, which based upon the inborn closeness and gratitude that human beings felt towards their parents.

This explanation can also be applied to the filial piety in Judaism as well. The Hebrew Bible recorded the genealogies of the Jewish ancestors and the daily scenes of their family lives, from which we could feel the warm affections between the family members. Such as the joy that Abraham and Sarah felt when they gave birth to their son, Isaac in their old age (Genesis 21:2-8)³⁵ ; Isaac gave blessings to Esau and Jacob (Genesis 27: 27-29, 39-40); the family reunion that the family celebrated, when Jacob leading the sons to join Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 43:27-45:15),etc. If we suspend the belief in God, what we got from these scenes are the warm feelings that the family members held towards each other. No doubt, these feelings also came from their kinship. It is said in the Bible that, the twelve tribes came from the same ancestor, Jacob; the kinship gave them the foundation of sharing joys and hardship and the strength to go through ups and downs together. This later also made them to reach a consensus on accepting YHWH as their God. Following this, people set up one of the criteria for Jewish identity: from the father's side in biblical times and from the mother side after the destruction of the second Temple.

A reviewing of the stories of human creation in Genesis might lend us a hand in understanding the roles that the gratitude towards one's parents played in Judaic filial piety. In Genesis 2 we learnt that God created Adam by earth and gave him life, and then he used a rib of Adam to create Eve, his wife, from which came from the other human beings. About the formation of a human being, the Talmud further says that, brain and veins formed from the white materials of male; and skins, blood and flesh from the red materials from woman; while the life, spirit and soul came from God.³⁶ Here father, mother and God as co-laborers, contributed sperms, blood and soul respectively. Therefore people should remember what parents have done for them and think of how to repay their love and care. Just as Louis E. Newman, a Jewish scholar once said that "some people from the commandment of honoring one's father and mother get the principle of be grateful for one's parents and treated as another commandment."³⁷

In brief, it is natural for all people in the world to feel grateful for what their parents did for them, so they would have the inclination and spontaneity to do good things for the parents as a return. Both the moral obligations that Judaism and Confucianism have towards one's parents, like supporting and respecting them, carrying out their wills, remonstrating them when necessary, and mourning their death came from the above inclination that we discussed. Because of these shared kinship and family affections, Judaism and Confucianism

³⁴ English translation: James Legge, Source: "Sacred Books of the East, volume 3", James Legge, 1861 <http://ctext.org/xiao-jing/filial-piety-in-relation-to-the>2nd, Oct. 2013

³⁵Jewish Publication Society, JPS Hebrew- English TANAKH: the Traditional Hebrew Text and the New JPS Translation- Second Edition. Philadelphia 2003•5764

³⁶Babylonian Talmud, Niddah 31a

³⁷Louis E. Newman, An Introduction to Jewish Ethics, Pearson, New Jersey, 2005, p.106.

as two different and geographically unconnected “trees”, could produce the same kind of fruits: Filial Piety.

Now let us go on to answer why there exist differences on Filial Piety in ancient Judaism and early Confucianism. As we already know, the Confucian filial piety has a hierarchical and wave-like structure. It begins with the love of parents and is extended to brothers, close relatives, strangers. Therefore we assert that it is not only a virtue of family ethics, but also a social and political concept. Why does the ancient Jewish Filial Piety not advocate or at least not emphasize the extended Filial Piety like obedience to elder brother (孝悌), respect all of the aged(尊尊), absolute loyalty to the rulers? The questions could be discussed and answered below.

Now let us analyze it from a perspective of the cultural typology.

Judaism is the oldest and the most typical monotheistic religion. It has the following major distinct features. First, it accepts YHWH as the only God, whom the Jewish people would worship. Second, it is a revealed religion, believing that prophets received and transmitted God’s messages; Torah is the record of the words that God talked to Moses. Third, it believes that Jewish people are the “chosen people” of God and they as the chosen people could communicate with God through sacrifices and prayers. Fourth, it believes that the purpose of Jewish life is to be a righteous person by doing good deeds in accordance with the Law. Fifth, it believes that human beings were created in God’s image, so everybody is born equal in dignity and personality. Sixth, it believes that the Law covers all aspects of human life and therefore the life guided by the Law would be sanctified. All these points show that Judaism is a theocentric religion.

Those features of Judaism are related to the concept of filial piety and differ it from that in Confucianism.

Above all, now that God is the core of Judaism and the only worshiped by Jewish people, parents are not viewed as the centrality and therefore expelled from the objects of worship. That is to say, in ancient Judaism, the people could at most honor and fear their parents but not worship them as they do with God. In Confucianism, however, people could worship their living parents and deceased ancestors who had been transformed into spirits.

Secondly, if the Jews worship anything besides God, including their parents, no matter their parents are alive or dead, they violate the commandment----“you shall not make and worship idols”. Idolatry was seriously prohibited, the example of which could be easily found in the Bible. Like, in Exodus 32, we could see after Moses lead the Israelites left Egypt and wandered in the desert, how he waged a desperate campaign against idol worships.

Thirdly, all men were created by God, as it says that “And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”.(Genesis 1:27); so all people are equal before God. Of course, children and parents are also equal. The spirit of equality has considerably impacted Jewish people. Thus while serving their parents, they must not be conscious of a hierarchy and they are lower than their parents. Whereas in

Confucianism the idea of hierarchy and children's lower status is always kept in their minds. Because of the spirit of equality, the Jewish people do not have to look up to and fear their parents so much as the Confucian classic texts indicate.

Fourthly, now that God is the core of Judaism and parents are secondary to Him in status, it is natural that filial Piety to parents would certainly become secondary to worship of God. Therefore, the Jewish people, while offering parents accommodation and services, do not have to reach the degree that Confucian disciples require them to reach. As mentioned above, early Confucianism demanded a son to "manifests the utmost reverence. In his nourishing of them (parents), his endeavor is to give them the utmost pleasure." (Xiao Jing: An Orderly Description of the Acts of Filial Piety 1)³⁸

Fifthly, as God is the only worshiped, worship of Him with whole heart and soul become the primary virtue whereas the honor of parents turns to be a lesser important virtue. As depicted above, while a son was studying Torah he was right to turn down his father or mother's orders for service.

Sixth, since every person can be righteous by practicing the divine Law which covers all aspects of human life, it is not necessary to make an exquisite set of regulations about how to serve parents as we find in Confucianism. I assume that in accordance with the God-centered Judaism, if one focuses too much on serving parents, he would distract himself from observing other laws and ultimately from God.

For religious reasons, there are no entirely secular lives for Israel. So honoring one's parents, which is normally considered as something secular by us, is a part of religious life for the Jews. In Judaism, the familial affection and the sense of gratitude towards parents have already to a certain degree given way to the faith in and fear of God; Therefore Filial Piety as the basis for human relationships has become a religious duty. In other words, it is right to assert that the Confucian filial piety is wholly based on family affection and rooted in blood lineage, while the Hebrew Filial piety is partly rooted in the same affection and blood kinship and partly originated from God, specifically, from the divine Commandment and laws.

Unlike the ancient Judaism, early Confucianism is a system of religious ethics, which are both religious and philosophical in typology. Ancient Chinese tradition has strong religious and mystical overtones: in the Shang Dynasty, the people formulated a systematic and orderly genealogy for the gods and they believed in Heaven (Tian 天) and God (Di 帝) definitely. However, at the turn from the Shang to the Zhou dynasty, the link between Heaven and Earth was broken (绝地天通)³⁹and deities and humans were separate from each other. It

³⁸<http://ctext.org/xiao-jing/an-orderly-description-of-the-acts>

³⁹ The story about how this happened, please see Shang Shu- lv Xing (尚书 "The Classic of History", "The Book of Documents" 吕邢-Marquis of Lu on Punishments 2)

Source: "Sacred Books of the East, Volume III", James Legge, 1879. Note that this differs in places from the translation in Legge's 1865 "The Chinese Classics, Volume III".

<http://ctext.org/shang-shu/marquis-of-lu-on-punishments>

is considered a great event in the Chinese intellectual history. Since then, the Chinese people were aware of the existence of a speechless Heaven or God, who could not command man directly and human beings could not communicate with Him. Because of the unsurpassed gap between Heaven and man, Chinese people including the rulers had to gain the Heavenly mandates by listening to the words and looking at the things of the common people. The rulers attempted to make a match with Heaven by their virtues (以德配天). In short, since the beginning of the Zhou Dynasty, the center or gravity of Chinese culture has been shifted from deities to humanity and the Heaven or God above has been regarded remote from human life.⁴⁰ Once Confucius praised Zi Chan, a reformer and statesman in the period of Spring and Autumn, saying “the Way of Heaven is far and the way of man is near” (*Zuo Zhuan* • the 18th year of Zhao Gong). Again he said, “Revere the ghosts and spirits but keep distance from them.”(*Analects* • Yong Ye) Now that the relation between Heaven and man is far and there is no direct communication between them, Confucian disciples did not need to worship Heaven (only the rulers were qualified to and occasionally worshiped Heaven in Chinese history of monarchy). In other words, unlike the ancient Judaism stipulates Jews to honor (support, respect and fear) parents and worship God, Confucianism discourage its followers to worship Heaven and call on and even demand them not only to honor (support, respect, fear) but also to worship human beings including their living and deceased parents and ancestors. It would be a serious sin for a person to worship parents and other ancestors in the ancient Judaism. However, in early Confucianism, it is a common practice. It is this difference that makes the Confucian Filial Piety distinguish itself from the same concept in Judaism.

The difference about Filial Piety is also linked with the social and political system in ancient China and Israel. When King Yu (禹) in the Xia Dynasty passed the throne to his son, rather than to another competent person outside his family, he initiated an monarch system based upon family or clan(禹传子, 家天下) which was succeeded by the subsequent dynasties. In the Zhou Dynasty, Duke Zhou established a set of rites including rules and regulations of social relation and politics by which he set up and strengthened the feudalist

This story was recorded many times in different documents. Shang Shu: Kong Shi Zhuan says that God ordered Li and Shi to be the rulers of heaven, earth and the four seasons. Since then gods and human beings coexisted peacefully. This was called Jue Di Tian Tong. In Guo Yu: Chu Yu II, it said that King Zhao asked Guan She Fu, what did Jue Di Tian Tong mean in the History of Zhou? Did it mean that without this event, human beings can climb to the heaven? From these two stories, we could see that at the latest, the people in the early period of Zhou Dynasty already accepted the idea that the heaven and earth already be divided and the gods and humans did not communicate with each other since then. This idea lies the foundation for a human centered philosophy and ethics. If one wants to know more about this event, like the debates on its time, please see Ge Zhao Guan, *The Chinese Intellectual History*, Vol. 1. Shang Hai: Fu Dan University Press, 2004, page 50.

⁴⁰ According to Yang Bo Jun’s study, the word “tian(天)” appeared 19 times in the *Analects*: most of the time, about 16 times, this word means the God or the Principle; The Mandate of Heaven appeared 3 times; Single word “Tian” appeared 81 times in Mencius, which means Nature and God, etc. See Yang Bo Jun *Commentaries on the Analects*, *Bei Jing: The Publishing House of China, 1958*; *Commentaries on the Mencius*, *Bei Jing: The Publishing House of China, 1960*.

system. According to a well-known historian Wang Guowei (王国维), the Zhou dynasty inaugurated series of innovations based on family ties. Among them, the first is the establishment of authority of a clan or a state by selecting the first bourn son from the sons begotten by the wife, not by concubines; the second is orderly arrangement of the name-tablets of the ancestors in the ancestral temple and offering sacrifices in accordance with their status in the clans.⁴¹ Those measures identified the blood lineage of the decedents and allocated powers and properties according to their roles in the social structure and therefore successfully built a “family-state system”. In fact, the Kings of the Zhou Dynasty constituted the biggest and the most honorable patriarchal clan, around which operated the social and political system. In this type of feudalist system, all people under Heaven lived lives as in a big family: Heaven being the honorary father, and king being the son of the Heaven and the eldest sons of all clans being the actual chiefs of the family-states and the kingdom. This system was inherited by the subsequent dynasties.

Originated in the Zhou Dynasty, Confucian Filial Piety is a concept of familial ethics primarily concerning the relation of children to parents. In view of the extended big family, the state or kingdom, it is natural for the people to expend the ethic of Filial Piety from the small family to the state-family. Therefore, it is socially right and acceptable to revere the clan-chiefs and politically right and acceptable to be loyal to the rulers. In other words, “loyal to the rulers” is but the extension of “filial to parents” and there is no fundamental difference between them. Later, the group of Confucian officials who advanced “Governing the State by Filial Piety” and thus formed a thought and politician school of Filial Governance, profoundly influenced the traditional Chinese political systems. To sum up, the Confucian ethic of Filial Piety is closely associated with the particular social and political structure: the family-state system.

Unlike the Confucian filial piety as a concept of social and political ethics, the ancient Jewish Filial Piety functioned mainly within the family and was limited as a concept of familial ethics. This feature of Jewish filial piety was determined by its religious nature. As a typical monotheist religion, Judaism emphasized the importance of performing the divine Law. If a person piously observed the laws all the time, he would become righteous; if all of the Jews observed the divine law well, the whole society and state would be in order. Those could be illustrated as a structure of “God—Torah—Israel”, that is, God giving the Law to his Chosen people Israel who in return can attain a harmonious relation with God by practicing the Torah. This can also be generalized as the expression “Justification by Deeds”. Of course, the Israelites acknowledged that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were their common ancestors and the twelve tribes had kinship relation. However the Israelites did not develop a family-state system as the Zhou China did and renewed afterwards. Instead, as the Hebrew Bible indicates, the Israelites established a theocracy on the basis of the following beliefs:

⁴¹ Wang Guo Wei “ On the systems of Zhou Dynasty” in *Guan Tang Ji Lin*(观堂集林)Vol. 10, Bei Jing: the Publishing House of China, 1959, pages454-455.

everybody was created by God according to His image, so all human were equal; God is the real ruler of the community and the whole country; the Kings, Elders and Judges were but to execute the divine laws. Under the relatively liberal and loose social structures and the theocratic system, neither the ordinary people expected to form a coherent clan or family-state system, nor the rulers needed to govern the citizens by the rule of Filial Piety as took place in Confucian China.

IV. Summary and Extended Conclusions

Ancient Judaism and early Confucianism have a common ethic of filial piety. By common ethic of filial piety, I mean that the two traditions share the similar fundamental connotation of filial piety: providing material support for parents, revering and fearing them, succeeding parents' will and works, remonstrating them when they are faulty or sinful, serving the dead parents and ancestors by performing rituals with serious manner. However, the common ethic of filial piety also distinguishes from each other in its degree and extensionality. Generally speaking, early Confucianism invented a more delicate and complex theory of filial piety, requiring more caring attention in feeling, more dutiful and demanding in service, more revere in manner; from a perspective of extension, a wider range of objects of filial piety than in Judaism. Unlike the Confucian filial piety, the Jewish filial piety is more spiritual than in Confucianism for a religious reason.

The commonalities of filial piety in both Judaism and Confucianism consist in the common foundation of filial piety: kinship and born affection between parents and children. This common point is clear in the Hebrew Bible and the classics of early Confucianism. The differences mainly lie in the following two aspects: the typology of cultures and social structures. As a God-centered religion, Judaism may, to a certain degree, surpass kinship and feeling between children and parents and put worship of God and practicing the divine Law in the first place while leave honoring parents as secondary. Whereas in early Confucianism, humanity was in its core and the Heaven is far away from the people, therefore, the Confucians did not take worship of Heaven so serious as the ancient Israel and they were mainly involved in human relationships, among which the parent-children relation was considered as the primary. So in Confucianism, filial piety to parents is regarded as the first virtue. The Confucian filial piety is wider-ranged mainly because of the hierarchic family-state social structure in the Zhou Dynasty and afterwards, which needed an extended ethic of filial piety to keep the society in order and to rule the people. In ancient Israel, however, there existed no such a family-state social structure; therefore, the extended social filial piety and loyalty to the ruler was not necessary.

In today's China, the family-state social structure is gone and kinship relationship has been diluted as modernizations, market economy and urbanization in particular, is proceeding fast. While reviving and rebuilding the traditional culture, the Chinese people maybe reconsider the classic ethic of filial piety by taking references to the same concept in ancient Judaism. Obviously, the traditional ethic of Confucian filial piety has some defects such as giving too much fear of parents, which as a matter of fact did harm to the normal relation between children and parents, and taking filial piety to parents as a child's duty

without condition and lacking reciprocal responsibility from the parents, paying homage to the rulers, etc. All of those have been out of date in modern China and should be eliminated. In addition to appealing to the universal theory of human equality, mutual responsibility, and basic human rights, the Chinese people can also assimilate some positive elements from ancient Judaism to formulate a new set of ethic of filial piety in order to keep the spirit of filial piety and in the mean time to limit their filial piety to a more rational and practical extent and as a result, more effectively practice the ethic of filial piety in the changed and changing modern China.