

A Translation of
Genesis 2:4b–3:24

with
translator's notes

by
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1 In the time when the God, *Yahweh*, made the heavens and the earth—even before any plant of the field was on the land, and before any grass of the field had sprung up (for the God had not brought rain upon the land and there was no man to cultivate the land)—a spring came forth out of the ground and prepared the whole surface of the ground.¹ Then the God, *Yahweh*, fashioned a human being out of the dust of the ground and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the human being became a living person.² The God, *Yahweh*, had planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and he placed the human being whom he had fashioned in that place. Now the God had caused to spring up from the ground every tree that is delightful in appearance and every tree that is good for food—including “The Tree of Life” in the middle of the garden,³ the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁴

(Gen. 2:4b–9)

2 Now a river flowed out of Eden and provided water to the garden. From there it separated and became four head waters. The name of the first was *Phison*. It encircled the whole land of *Havilah*, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good. And bdellium and the onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is *Gihon*. It encircled the whole land of Cush. Now the name of the third river is Tigris. That one flows on the east of Assyria. The fourth river is Euphrates.⁵

(Gen. 2:10–14)

3 Now the God, *Yahweh*, took the human being whom he had fashioned and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate and maintain it. The God, *Yahweh*, instructed *Ahdahm* (‘The Human’)⁶, saying, “From every tree that is in the garden you shall eat what is there to eat. But, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil⁷, you shall not eat from it, because, in the day that you eat from it, you shall be doomed to die the Death⁸.”

(Gen. 2:15–17)

4 Then the God, *Yahweh*, said, “It is not good for the human being to be alone. I will make a helper that corresponds to him.”⁹ Now out of the ground the God, *Yahweh*, fashioned every living creature of the wild and every bird of the sky. And he brought them to *Ahdahm* to see what he would call them. And in every case, whatever *Ahdahm* called it—the living being—that was its name. Now

Ahdahm assigned names to all the tamable animals, and to all the birds of the sky, and to all the living creatures of the wild. But for *Ahdahm*, he did not find a helper that corresponded to him.¹⁰ Now the God, *Yahweh*, caused a deep sleep to fall upon *Ahdahm*, and he slept. And he took one of his sides and filled out the flesh where it was now missing. Then the God, *Yahweh*, formed the side which he had taken from *Ahdahm* into a woman and he brought her to *Ahdahm*. And *Ahdahm* said,

“This ‘she’, now, is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh.
And this ‘she’ shall be called ‘woman,’ for this ‘she’ was taken out
of ‘man’.

(For this reason, a husband will forsake his father and his mother and will unite inseparably to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.)¹¹ Now the two were naked—*Ahdahm* and his wife—and they were not ashamed.¹²

(Gen. 2:18–25)

- 5 Now *Nachash*¹³ was more intelligent than any of the living creatures of the wild which the God, *Yahweh*, had made.¹⁴ Now *Nachash* said to *Ahdahm*’s wife, “What is it that the God has said? That from each and every tree in the garden, you are not to eat?” *Ahdahm*’s wife said to *Nachash*, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we shall eat. But from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden,¹⁵ the God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it—nor touch it—lest you die.’” *Nachash* said to *Ahdahm*’s wife, “You shall not be doomed to die the Death.¹⁶ Indeed, the God knows that in the day that you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be ones who know good and evil as the God does.”¹⁷ Now the wife saw that the tree was good for food¹⁸ and that, seeing it with her eyes, it was desirable. Indeed, once she considered it, it was delightful.¹⁹ So, indeed, taking the fruit of it, she ate. Indeed, she also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened²⁰ and they realized that they were naked.²¹ Then they sewed together fig leaves and made loin cloths for themselves.

(Gen. 3:1–7)

- 6 They heard the voice of the God, *Yahweh*, as he was walking in the garden in the evening of the day, and *Ahdahm* and his wife hid from the presence of the God, *Yahweh*, in the midst of the trees of the garden. And the God, *Yahweh*, called out to *Ahdahm* and said to him, “*Ahdahm*, where are you?” And he said to him, “I heard your voice when you were walking in the garden and I

became afraid because I was naked²²; so I hid.” And he said to him, “Who told you that you were naked? You have not eaten from the tree about which I instructed you—and about that one alone—that you were not to eat from it, have you?”²³ *Ahdahm* said, “The wife whom you gave to be with me, that one gave to me from the tree, and I ate.” And the God, *Yahweh*, said to the wife, “Why have you done this?” And the wife said, “*Nachash* deceived me and I ate.”

(Gen. 3:8–13)

- 7 The God, *Yahweh*, said to *Nachash*, “Because you have done this you are cursed above and beyond all the tamable animals and all the living creatures of the wild.²⁴ You will approach on your stomach and you will eat dust all the days of your life.²⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.²⁶ It will crush your head, yet you will crush its heel.”²⁷

(Gen. 3:14–15)

- 8 To the wife he said, “Increasing your offspring, I will increase your sorrow and groaning. In sorrow you will bring forth children.²⁸ And your desire shall be for your husband,²⁹ but he will dominate you.”³⁰

(Gen. 3:16)

- 9 Then to *Ahdahm* he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten from the tree about which I instructed you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it,’ cursed will be the ground by reason of your deeds. In toil you shall eat from it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles will spring up for you and you will eat the plants of the wild.³¹ By the sweat of your own brow you will eat your food until you return to the earth out of which you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”³²

(Gen. 3:17–19)

- 10 Now *Ahdahm* named his wife “*Chawah*” (“Life”), because she was the mother of all who would have life.³³

(Gen. 3:20)

- 11 Then the God, *Yahweh*, made clothing out of animal hide for *Ahdahm* and his wife and clothed them. And the God, *Yahweh*, said, “Behold, the human creature is like one who knows good and evil apart from us.³⁴ Even now, might he perhaps reach out his hand and take from the Tree of Life? And shall

he have life into the eternal Age?³⁵” Indeed, the God, *Yahweh*, banished him from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.³⁶ Indeed, he cast *Ahdahm* out and, from the east, toward the garden of Eden³⁷, he stationed the *Cherubim* with a flaming sword flashing to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

(Gen. 3:21–24)

NOTES

1. The author appears to be describing the condition of the earth before the cataclysm that caused or was connected with the flood in the time of Noah. There are several clues in this account. This is the first of those clues. The author notes that "God had not yet caused rain to fall on the land." The land was prepared to grow vegetation, not by rain, but by spring water that emerged from below the surface of the ground.
2. In paragraph 4 the author says that "out of the ground" God created every living creature. We see here that the human creature is like the animals in that he is made out of the ground. But, unlike the animals, God gave him personhood by breathing into him the breath of life in a way that made him a living *nephesh*, a living person. The human being, therefore, is a being that reflects two distinct natures. On the one hand, he resembles and reflects an animal nature. But, on the other hand, insofar as he is a person, he resembles God and reflects the divine nature.
3. There is nothing whatsoever in this author's account to suggest that the Tree of Life was some sort of magical tree. In fact, there is nothing to suggest that it was any different from the other trees in the garden. It was an ordinary fruit-bearing tree like all the other trees planted in the garden. Whenever the author wants to denote this tree in particular, he always distinguishes it by indicating its unique location—it is the tree in the "middle of the garden." He never resorts to phrases like "the magical tree in the middle of the garden," or "the tree with special powers," or "the tree with the power to impart life," nor anything remotely like any of these. So far as the reader knows, there are only two things that distinguish this tree from the other trees in the garden—(a) its location (it was in the middle of the garden), and (b) the man and woman were forbidden to eat of its fruit. I will suggest later that the fact that the Tree of Life was an ordinary tree of a kind with which Eve was familiar was an important element to the temptation that Eve faced. She knew, from experience, that its fruit was good to eat. So, why should it be forbidden by God?
4. In my judgment, there were not two notable, named trees in the garden of Eden—"The Tree of Life" and "The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." Rather, there was but one notable, named tree. It was titled "The Tree of Life." The phrase, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" is not a *title* for the tree, it is a *description* of the tree. It is a description that is put into apposition to the mention of the tree by its title ("The Tree of Life"). Hence, the phrase "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" is being used by the author to describe the role that this titled tree was going to play in the story, and in God's purposes. Namely, this tree was placed in the middle of the garden and was uniquely proscribed by God in order to test this brand new human creature to see what he would do. Would he honor God's proscription? Or would he disregard it and eat from it against the very command of God? If he honored it, he would show himself to be a morally and spiritually good creature. If he did not honor it, he would show himself to be a morally and spiritually evil creature.
5. It is difficult to know why this paragraph is included here. It supplies no information that provides any significant background to the story. It is, however, another clue that the earth (or, at least, the region) was a significantly different place before the flood as compared to after the flood and today. It was not uncommon in the ancient world for place names to be reassigned to other geographical features from those they had designated in earlier times. It would be a mistake, therefore, to judge, with any confidence, that we know which geographical features are being designated by the names in this paragraph. We simply do not know what geography is being described here and whether that geography even exists now, in modern times. This is most certainly a description of the geography of the world, and the region, at the

very origins of history.

6. The Hebrew noun that is typically translated "Adam" in this passage is used as the name of the individual human being named Adam, but it is also the Hebrew noun used to denote a human being (a "man" in the sense of a "human being"). I have sought to determine how it is being used each time it occurs. I have transliterated it (using an atypical transliteration) as *Ahdahm* when I judge it to be denoting the particular individual whom God created first and placed in the garden. I have translated it as "human" or as "man" or in some other way when I have judged it to be used as a common noun that denotes a human being.

7. See note 4 above. The phrase, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," is not intended by the author to serve as a title. It serves as a description of its role. It is the tree that has been titled "The Tree of Life" that is playing this distinctive role. Hence, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is nothing other than a description of the role that "The Tree of Life" will play in the story, and in God's purposes.

8. The syntax in both the Hebrew and the Greek suggests to me a very different intention than how most translators and interpreters take it. The Greek LXX translation says that in the day you eat from it, *θανάτω ἀποθανεῖσθε*. There are various ways we could construe this: "you shall die by the death," "you shall die the death," or, "you shall die in the death" are some of them. The Greek does not render it "you shall surely die" as our English translations do. I am too much of a novice in Hebrew to know how much flexibility there is in the Hebrew text, *מֵוַת תָּמוּת*. Very woodenly translated, it would read, "to die you will die." The translators of the LXX did not seem to render it "you will surely die." In my judgment, the author's phrasing reflects a background assumption that there is some "Death penalty" that awaits those who are not pleasing to the creator. That is the death that God is saying Adam and Eve will undergo if they disobey him and eat from the fruit of the Tree of Life. Or, it could be that the author assumes an eventual death that every one of God's creatures eventually undergoes. The question is, will Adam and Eve have their existence nullified by the same death that nullifies the existence of every other individual creature? If they eat from the Tree of Life after God had forbidden them to do so, then, "yes," they will undergo that very death. (They will die "the Dying.") But, by implication, if they honor God's command not to eat from the Tree of Life then, ironically, God will grant them Life and they will not have their existences nullified by the same death that nullifies the existence of every other individual creature. Note a clear implication of what I am saying here. A traditional reading of this story suggests that all death was a consequence of the disobedient choice of Adam and Eve. On my reading, this interpretation would not be correct. Death was built into the very nature of God's initial creation. But, from the very beginning, there was the hope of Life beyond death for mankind. The Tree of Life is a test. Are you, Adam and Eve, creatures who should be granted Life beyond the grave? Or, are you sinful creatures who ought to be allowed to go to destruction with all the rest of creation? What they do in response to God's prohibition will answer that question.

9. God is suggesting that Adam needs a fellow human being to be his partner and to share his life with him. Eve "corresponds to" Adam in the sense that she, no less than Adam, is a person who reflects the personhood of God himself. Eve is a "helper" in the sense that Adam already exists and has already been charged with responsibilities and tasks. God is creating Eve in order that she might "help" Adam in his carrying out his responsibilities and in performing his tasks. To be a "helper" (*ezer*) does not imply the inferiority of the woman's being in any way. (Yahweh is quite often described as the helper (the *ezer*) of Israel.) She is a "helper" (*ezer*) in the sense that her role and, in a sense, the meaning of her existence (her *raison d'être*) will be found in doing things that help her husband discharge his responsibilities before God and perform his God-given role.

10. The significance of Adam's naming all the animals is nothing more than a way that God demonstrated

to Adam that the “helper” and companion he longed for did not yet exist. None of the creatures that God had already made were suitable companions for Adam. God was going to have to create that creature especially for Adam and give her to him as a gift.

11. This parenthetical comment here is a commentary on the significance of the story. The story is not simply a chronicling of how man and woman came into existence. Rather, because Adam and Eve are the prototypical human beings and because their marriage is the prototypical marriage relationship, the story of its origin has implications for every human marriage. The statement here is intended to explain and to clarify the nature of the relationship between every man and his wife in light of God’s original purposes for the marriage of Adam and Eve.

12. Why were Adam and Eve not ashamed? Because, as of yet, they had nothing to be ashamed of. While they were intrinsically evil creatures—as the Tree of Life would eventually demonstrate—they did not yet know that about themselves. They had never explicitly acted in a manner antagonistic to their creator. They did not know of the disobedience and rebellion to which they were prone. They would come to know it. And when they did, they felt shame. The notion of nakedness here is interesting. The author is not representing shame at nakedness in sexual terms. It is not a matter of them not being ashamed of their sexuality, only to later become ashamed of their sexuality. It is their very being, their very existence—and not their sexuality—of which they are not yet ashamed. This only makes sense if we assume, in the background, an understanding of nakedness as a kind of self-exposure. When I am naked, I am not merely exposing and making visible my genitals and my sexuality. Rather, when I am naked, I am exposing and making visible *my very self*. Or, at least, so it “feels” to me. Therefore, the one who does not want his very self to be seen, will naturally not want to be seen naked. (This seems to be a ubiquitous human psychological reality. It is an impulse that can be overcome, certainly. But a human being who has not trained himself otherwise seems to want to hide by covering WHO HE IS [his nakedness] with clothing.) So, before Adam and Eve had any sort of self-knowledge that would induce them to want to hide who they are, nakedness was not psychologically problematic to them at all. (“They were not ashamed.”)

13. I have left *nachash* untranslated in order not to prejudice the reading of this story. Clearly, the author is introducing a creature that we have not seen before. He is referred to as “Nachash.” The Hebrew word *nachash* means a snake or serpent. I have, in the past, wondered whether *nachash* had, at some point, undergone a change of meaning in the history of the Hebrew language. However, coming across 2 *Corinthians* 11:3 persuaded me that reading *nachash* as meaning “snake” seems to be accepted by the writers of the N.T. So, my current view is that *nachash* was a very ancient title for the being who later comes, more typically, to be known as *satan* (Satan), or—in Greek—as *diabolos* (Devil). See *Revelation* 12:9. Apart from certain *a priori* assumptions and tendencies on the part of the modern reader, there is nothing in the text to suggest that the tempter is literally a snake. (Indeed, there is nothing in the text to suggest that the tempter had come in the form of a snake.) In whatever form he appeared, the *nachash* is nothing other than Satan himself, being described under the very appropriate title, “The Snake.”

14. As should be obvious from note 12, the author is not suggesting that “The Snake” (*nachash*) is an animal who is being compared to other animals. Rather, he is a created being being introduced into the narrative for the first time and is being compared with beings who have already been mentioned as creatures created by God. Up until now, in the narrative, no creature created by God (other than Adam) is of such a kind that it could carry on a conversation with Eve. To provide an explanation for the conversation that was about to unfold in the narrative, the author tells us that “The Snake” (*nachash*) was not one of the dumb animals or living creatures spoken of earlier. He was a different sort of creature altogether. He was one that had the mental wherewithal to carry on a conversation.

15. Note that the tree that Eve is claiming she is not to eat from is the “tree that is in the middle of the

garden.” Earlier, in paragraph 1, it was the Tree of Life that was described as the tree in the middle of the garden. This suggest to me that we are to understand it to be the Tree of Life that Eve is describing to *nachash* as the tree she is forbidden to eat from. But—as we saw above (see notes 4 and 6 above)—the Tree of Life is, at the same time, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

16. This is an *explicit and direct contradiction* of what God himself had told Adam and Eve. (For an interpretation of “die in the Dying”, see note 7.)

17. It is important to note the ambiguity in Satan’s statement, “God knows that in the day that you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be ones who know good and evil as the God does.” Is Satan saying that God knows that eating this fruit will cause you to know good and evil as God does? Or, is he saying that God knows that knowing good and evil as God does (one day) will cause you—in that day—to eat from the tree? In other words, which is the cause of which? Does eating of the tree cause one to know good and evil as God does? Or, does knowing good and evil as God does cause one to eat of the tree? The statement itself is ambiguous. It could be expressing either of these causal relationships. I believe that the typical reading given to this deception by *nachash* is mistaken. *Nachash* is not suggesting to Eve that the causal relationship at play is that eating from the Tree will cause her to have her eyes opened and know good and evil as God does. He is not claiming that there is some magical power in the fruit of the Tree of Life that will cause a change in the way Eve sees things. That is not his claim. Rather, his claim is that the causal relationship at play is that Eve’s deciding that she is experienced enough, mature enough, perceptive enough, and knowledgable enough to decide for herself what is good and what is evil will cause her to decide to eat from the fruit of the Tree. So long as she thinks of herself as a child who lacks knowledge, experience, and insight, of course she will and must do whatever the God tells her to do. But the day will come, *nachash* predicts, when things will change. She will no longer be a dependent child who cannot reasonably make such a decision for herself, on the basis of her own knowledge and experience. On that day, she will see that she is wise enough to decide for herself. And on that day, she will eat of the fruit of that tree. This statement is the key to the whole story. The appeal the *nachash* makes is to her pride. She doesn’t want to simply be a dependent child does she? Doesn’t she want to be a mature, independent, wise, and fully capable woman—who doesn’t need God or anyone else to tell her what is and is not good for her? This much we can infer from the text itself. But one can imagine how *nachash* might have spun this point to Eve to make it all the more seductive. *Nachash* could quite easily have painted a picture where Eve’s making the decision on her own to go ahead and eat the fruit—in direct disobedience to what God had commanded—was going to be a good and wonderful thing. It was going to be something that God would welcome, something that was pleasing to him: “Sure, God has told you not to eat from this tree. But he is just testing you. It is a test to see when and if you are wise and experienced enough to recognize that such a prohibition is arbitrary and unnecessary. In the day that you decide it is an arbitrary and unnecessary prohibition, you will demonstrate to God that you have arrived, that you have grown up, that you are the wise and wonderful creature he was wanting you to become. In that day, he will be very happy with you. Certainly he would never punish you with death for being the magnificent creature he wants you to be.”

18. Presumably, she “saw” that it was good for food because she “saw” that it was exactly the same sort of fruit that she had eaten from the other trees in the garden. In other words, she knew from personal experience that it was “good for food.”

19. The author is suggesting here that Eve had never noticed, one way or the other, whether the fruit from the Tree of Life was tasty and good for food. She had never bothered to look at it. In her innocence, it never occurred to her to take notice of whether it would be good to eat, for God had forbidden her from eating it. But, now, *nachash* has piqued her interest. Perhaps it would be a good thing to eat its fruit. Maybe God is wanting her to eat its fruit. Maybe she is supposed to decide for herself whether it is a good

thing to eat its fruit. So now she takes notice; she looks. And now that she has taken the time to look, she can see with her own eyes that, indeed, it would be good for food and desirable to eat.

20. Having done precisely what God had commanded them NOT to do, they now come to see and understand who they actually are. They are evil creatures. They are not good creatures. This is what the author means by “their eyes were opened.” He is suggesting that their act of disobedience had brought it about that they could now “see” the sinful, rebellious creatures that they are. They had always been such creatures—from the moment that they were created. (Nothing in this account describes any change in their moral and spiritual condition.) But now, the circumstances had opened their eyes and they could now see their moral and spiritual condition. Until now, they had been blind to the reality of who they were.

21. The author’s point is not that they were formerly unaware of their nakedness but now they became aware of it. Surely they had known that they were naked all along. But until now, their nakedness posed no problems for them. Because they were not themselves aware of their own shameful sinfulness, they did not know and understand that they had something to hide from others. Previously, therefore, they did not mind being known—and, hence, they did not mind being naked. (See note 11.) But now, they do mind being known. They are shameful creatures. It is uncomfortable and unpleasant to have one’s shamefulness exposed to others. Hence, it is uncomfortable and unpleasant to be naked before others.

22. See notes 20 and 21 above.

23. God’s response to Adam confirms the reading I have given to this account. The only explanation for Adam’s newfound concern over his nakedness is that he now has something of which he is ashamed. So, God asks him if he has not committed the shameful act of directly contravening his prohibition.

24. This statement does not have to be understood in a way that implies that the *nachash* is one of the animals. To be cursed above and beyond the animals does not have to mean that, of all the animals, he is the most cursed among them. Another plausible reading would be that *nachash* is “more cursed” even than any animal is cursed. To say that X is slyer than a fox does not require that X be an animal like a fox. A being who is “above” the animals can still be compared to the animals. That is what is happening here. The “cursedness” of *nachash* seems to be his defeat, humiliation, and abject subjugation. *Nachash* (Satan) was seeking some sort of victory over God’s human creation—and, therefore, over God. But, instead, his fate will be humiliating defeat. God had created the animals to be lower than and therefore subject to the human being. But it will now be the fate of *nachash* to experience even more abject subjugation than any animal does.

25. This is an image of abject humiliation and defeat. In the ancient world, enemies of a king would be forced to lie flat on their stomachs before the king who had been victorious over them, their faces in the ground, as the king rested his feet on them as his footstool. (Compare: “sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool under your feet.”) This seems to be the image that God is employing here. To “go on your stomach” and “eat dust all the days of your life” seems to be a way to describe continuing, ongoing humiliation and defeat throughout his entire existence.

26. God informs *nachash* that, because of what has happened, the woman will be his enemy throughout the rest of history. This enmity between them will manifest itself in an ongoing animosity between the offspring of the woman and the offspring of *nachash*. The “offspring of the woman” are those human beings throughout time who, like their mother Eve, are inclined to believe God and base their lives on that truth. (They are those who come to want to know God and love him.) The “offspring of *nachash*” (that is, “the children of the devil”) are those human beings throughout time who believe and base their lives on

the lies of *nachash* instead of on the truth from God. God is predicting a perpetual hatred of the children of the devil for the children of God; the hatred of the unrighteous (like Cain) for the righteous (like Abel). (Cf. 1 John 3:7–18.) This statement is more a prediction than it is a punishment imposed on *nachash*. God is not pronouncing sentence. Rather, he is stating the natural and necessary consequence of what *nachash* has done. (Note the positive light in which Eve is placed by this statement. Eve is clearly assumed to be a righteous woman—a woman who seeks to honor and obey God. That is the most reasonable explanation for why subsequent humans who are righteous and who seek to honor and obey God are described as her “offspring.” To be a righteous individual is to belong to the “children of Eve.” Note therefore that to be a “child of Eve” is synonymous with being a “child of God.”)

27. God predicts the ultimate outcome of the enmity between *nachash* and the woman. The “offspring of the woman” will ultimately “crush the head of *nachash*.” This is most likely a picture of their victory over *nachash*. *Nachash* will not succeed in deceiving them. They will overcome and defeat him. They will “crush his head.” (Cf. Romans 16:20.) However, this victory of the woman (through her children) will not be without cost. While the woman will defeat *nachash*, *nachash* will inflict damage on her by inflicting damage on the offspring of the woman: “he (*nachash*) will crush its (her seed’s) heel.” (In all likelihood, the damage to the seed of the woman that is primarily in view here is the torture and death of God’s own righteous Messiah, when Jesus was crucified.)

28. This is not, as many take it to be, the proclamation of a sentence on the woman wherein God declares that he will make childbirth particularly painful. That is a misreading of this statement. This is more a prediction than a punishment, a judicial sentence. God is going to increase the woman’s offspring. But to increase the woman’s offspring—as the recent events should have made clear to everyone—is to increase the number of evil creatures in the world. As sinful, rebellious creatures, the woman’s children will bring grief, sorrow, and great unhappiness into her life. Her children will break her heart.

29. The phrase translated “your desire shall be for your husband” means something like “you will desire to possess and control your husband.” (Cf. Genesis 4:7, the account of Cain’s jealousy toward Abel. The same Hebrew clause occurs there: “sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” It seems apparent that “its desire is for you” in that passage means that “its desire—the desire of sin—is to possess and control you.”) This seems to be a direct consequence of the woman’s sinfulness. Human sin makes the woman selfish and, in her selfishness, she will desire to possess and control her husband and have her husband serve her desires.

30. This is a prediction rather than a judicial sentence that God is proclaiming. God is simply declaring the natural and necessary consequence of Adam and Eve being evil creatures. As an evil woman, Eve will desire to possess and control her husband (see note 29), but the actual outcome will be contrary to that—her stronger, evil husband will force her into subjugation to himself. The woman will not succeed in getting the man to serve her every desire. Rather, the roles will generally be reversed. The man will get the woman to serve his every desire.

31. This certainly sounds like a straightforward proclamation of the penalty to which God is sentencing Adam. In a sense, of course, it is. But it is also the natural consequence of Adam’s action. As a penalty, God is going to banish Adam from the garden. But to be banished from the garden, at that particular time in history, is to be banished into a land where agriculture will be extremely difficult. Adam will find great difficulty growing food on the land to which he is being banished. Consequently, he will be forced to forage what he can off the land. The garden he is being forced to leave is fertile, abundant, and verdant. The land to which he is being banished is infertile and harsh. God is not saying, however, that the land to which you are being banished has been fertile and productive but I am going to curse it so that it is no longer fertile and productive. It never has been fertile and productive. That is why God placed Adam in

the garden to begin with. He put him in a place where food was easy to come by. But God is going to kick him out of the garden, into the wild, harsh desert—a land that has always been cursed *vis à vis* the garden.

32. The account raises an important question at this point. What is it saying about Adam’s fate? When it speaks of Adam’s returning to the earth out of which he was taken—“for you are dust, and to dust you shall return”—is God announcing the fact that “dust” is Adam’s ultimate end? Is God suggesting that Adam—unlike his wife Eve (see note 25)—will not be raised up to Life after he dies? Will Adam not receive mercy? Will he indeed die in the Dying? Eve, apparently, is going to be shown mercy? Is this announcing that Adam will not be shown the same mercy? This is entirely possible. However, when we get to *Genesis* 5:3, the text states that Adam—when he became the father of Seth—became the father of a son “in his own likeness.” In the context, it would appear that the accounts that follow are intended to contrast Seth (and the line of Seth) with Cain (and the line of Cain). Seth and his line are righteous. Cain and his line are unrighteous. Hence, it is significant that Seth is described as being “in the likeness” of Adam. Is Seth in the likeness of Adam in a way that Cain is not? Therefore, is this suggesting that Adam is righteous, like his son Seth, and unlike his son Cain? If so, then it would follow that Adam, like his wife Eve, is destined for mercy and life rather than condemnation and death.

33. Adam names his wife *Chavah* [which we render in English as “Eve”]. *Chavah* means “Life.” There are two possibilities for what Adam means by this: (a) On the one hand, Adam could be registering the fact that every subsequent human being who would ever come into existence would come into existence because of Eve. (In a sense, every human being who has ever lived has had Eve for a mother.) Or, (b) Adam could be responding to what God has just announced to *nachash*, to Eve, and to himself. Perhaps Adam has understood from God’s predictions to *nachash* that every subsequent human being who, mercifully, will be granted Life after death—because of their right orientation to God—is an “offspring” of Eve. That would make Eve, in a sense, the “mother” of every human being who was destined to receive life beyond the grave, eternal Life. Perhaps this is what Adam has in mind when he names her Eve, because—as per God’s prediction—she is “the mother of all living.” I am inclined to read the account in keeping with this latter option. It could very well be that here Adam is rightly contrasting Eve’s fate with his own. Perhaps he is not the “father of all who will have Life,” for it is not Life, but dust, that is his destiny. But Eve is the “mother of all who will have Life,” for Life is indeed her destiny. (However, the account does not absolutely require the conclusion that Adam will remain dust after he dies. So this may not lie in the background to what Adam is saying here about Eve. See note 32 above with regard to *Genesis* 5:3 ff.)

34. The phrase “one of us” (אִישׁ מִמֶּנּוּ / εἷς ἐξ ἡμῶν) is typically misunderstood and mistranslated. God is not saying “the human has become like *one of us* in knowing good and evil.” Rather, God is saying, “the human is one who knows good and evil *apart from us*.” The preposition, מִן (ἐξ), is not being used in the partitive sense, it is being used to express the notion of being outside of or apart from. In this case, it is being used to express independence from. The human has shown himself to be one who is ready and willing to decide what is good and what is evil independently of us. (I have no clear understanding of *why* the first person plural is used for God here. But it is.) Clearly, then, the idea here is not that the fruit that the man and woman ate had a power that caused them, magically, to see as God sees, to think as God thinks, and to judge as God judges. (Would that be a bad thing?) The tree had no magical power whatsoever. Rather, this ordinary tree—being proscribed—tested them. And it discovered and revealed something about the human being that had been true of him from the very beginning of his creation—namely, that he was a creature who was inherently willing to disregard the instruction and command of God and to decide for himself—independently of God’s explicit instruction—what he thinks is right and good and what he thinks is evil.

35. The text here has typically been misunderstood and mistranslated. God is not to be understood as

stating the reason for his banishing Adam—namely, “lest he eat of the Tree of Life and obtain eternal Life thereby.” (Such a reading would, in fact, lead one to conclude that the Tree of Life has some sort of magical power to impart eternal Life. But, this is not the right reading.) Rather, we should understand God here to be deliberating his next course of action—“Do I want to allow Adam to eat of the Tree of Life again? Do I want to grant eternal Life to Adam?” In the next sentence, when it states that God banished Adam from the garden, we are given to understand the outcome of God’s deliberation. “No, he did not want to allow him to eat of the Tree of Life again? And no, he did not want to grant eternal Life to him.” (Note: does this fact help answer the question of Adam’s ultimate destiny? See notes 31, 32, and 33 above.) Rightly understood, we have here an important clue with regard to what the Tree of Life is. The Tree of Life was not some kind of supernatural, magical tree. It was an ordinary tree like all the others. However, it had been arbitrarily designated by God to symbolize something to Adam and Eve. The symbolism was apparently this: *a person was allowed to eat from the Tree of Life if and only if it was God’s intention to grant him Life after the grave.* Initially, Adam and Eve were proscribed from eating from it. Why? Because their moral condition—and, hence, their fate—had not yet been made known. Before anyone could eat from the Tree of Life (note that in *Revelation* 22:2,14,19, God’s mercy has made eating of the Tree of Life possible once again), God wanted to employ the Tree as a test. To create this test, he forbade them from eating from it. The test would reveal whether they were good or evil. (Presumably, if Adam and Eve had passed the test and proven themselves good rather than evil, God would have ultimately lifted his ban on eating from the Tree of Life.) Adam and Eve would come to self-knowledge through this test. They would come to see that they were not deserving of Life after the grave. Once the fact that they were unworthy to be granted Life was made manifest, it would be inappropriate to allow them to eat of the Tree of Life. To eat of that tree would symbolize that they were worthy to inherit Life when, in truth, they were not. (Rather, without God showing grace and mercy, no Life would ever be possible.) To keep his message clear, God must banish Adam from the garden and force him away from the Tree of Life. For evil, rebellious creatures are not appropriate recipients of the Life after death that eating from the tree symbolizes.

36. Note that *Genesis* 2:7–8 seems to imply that the ground out of which Adam was fashioned was in a different location than the garden into which he was placed after God created him. The garden appears to have been to the east of where Adam was first created. Here, then, to “work that ground from which he had been taken” could mean to work an unproductive and infertile ground in the desert. (See note 31.)

37. What is being described here seems to be this: Adam, who was created west of the garden of Eden, had been taken to the garden of Eden and given a home there. But because of what he had done, Adam was being banished from the garden. He was being returned to the land to the west of the garden of Eden, to the barren land from which he had come. Having banished him into the western wilderness, God posted Cherubim on the western boundary of the garden of Eden—opposite where Adam now lived—to keep Adam from returning from the western wilderness where he now was to the garden of Eden. The text describes the location of the Cherubim as “from the east, toward the garden of Eden,” because, from the perspective of Adam’s current location, that is where the Cherubim were posted—to the east of him, on the way to the garden of Eden.