

Gaining and Losing Ourselves

Thomas Robinson, *Beginning God's Great Unfolding 3*, July 7, 2019

Genesis 3:1-24 (Translation TR)

The Snake and the Conversation about God and God's Intentions

¹ Now the snake (*nahash*) was more clever (*aruhm*) than all other living animals of the field that YAHWEH God made. He asked the woman, "Did God really say, 'You both shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

² The woman responded to the snake, "We are eating fruit of trees of the garden; ³ but from fruit of **the tree that's in the middle of the garden**, God said, 'You shall **not eat from it**, and you shall **not touch it**, or else **you'll die!**'"

⁴ The snake said to the woman, "**You won't certainly die**, ⁵ for God knows that when you two eat from it **your eyes will be opened** and you will be like gods who know good and evil."

The Humans See the Dangerous Fruit's Benefits and Share it for all the Best Reasons.

⁶ Then the woman **saw** that the tree was **good for food**, was a **delight to the eyes**, and was **desirable to gain understanding**. And she **took some of its fruit** and **ate**. She also gave to her husband/man with her, and **he ate**.

⁷ Then the **eyes** of both of them were **opened**, and **they knew they were naked** (*arohm*). And they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

God Seeks Out and Questions the Humans. They now See Themselves Differently.

⁸ Then they heard the sound of YAHWEH God as he walked about in the garden in the breeze of the day. And they – the human and the woman from him – hid from YAHWEH God's presence among trees of the garden. ⁹ But YAHWEH God was calling to the human and said to him, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ And he replied, "I heard your voice in the garden, and **I was afraid** because I'm **naked**, and so I **hid myself**."

God Seeks Out and Questions the Humans, who now See Themselves Differently.

¹¹ And he asked, "Who let you know that you're naked? Is it that you've now eaten from the tree from which I strictly instructed you not to eat?"

¹² The human said, "**The woman that you gave** to be with me, she gave me from the tree and I ate."

¹³ So YAHWEH God said to the woman, "What is it that you did?"

And the woman replied, "**The snake deceived me**, and I ate."

God's describes a Life of Mixed Pain, Suffering, Dominance for both Humans and Nature

¹⁴ YAHWEH God said to **the snake**, "Because you've done this, you're more **cursed** (*aruhr*) than any other livestock or animals of the field! On your belly you'll go and you'll eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I'll place hostility between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed; he'll bruise you on the head, and you'll bruise him on the heel."

¹⁶ To **the woman** he said, "I'll greatly increase your **travail** and your **pregnancy**; in **pain** you'll give birth to children. **Your desire** is contrary to your husband/man, and he'll gain authority over you." (Cf. Gen 4:6)

¹⁷ And to **Human** (*adham, Adam*) he said, "Because you listened to the voice of your wife/woman and you ate from the tree of which I explicitly commanded you, 'You shall not eat

from it, **the ground itself is cursed** on account of you. In **pain** you'll eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will sprout **thorns and thistles** for you, but you'll eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ With your face sweating, you'll eat bread till your return to **the ground** (*adhamah*), since you were taken from it. For **you are dust, and to dust you'll return.**"

Life Goes On

²⁰ **Human** called his wife's name "**Life**" (*Chavvah*, Eve), because she was **mother of all living**.
²¹ YAHWEH God made tunics of skin for Human and his wife, and he clothed them.

Humans Excluded from the Garden and the Tree of Life

²² And YAHWEH God said, "Look, **the Human has become like one of us**, with knowledge of good and evil. Now, he mustn't stretch out his hand and take also from **the tree of life** and eat, and live for an age." ²³ So YAHWEH God sent him out of the **garden of delight** (Eden) to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ When he **expelled the Human**, he placed on the eastern side of the garden of Eden winged creatures (*cherubim*) and a flame like a sword turning every way to guard **the way to the tree of life**.

Let's Talk About God ...

Jesus tells his disciples about saving their life or losing it (Mk 8:35). The issue goes back to the beginning. We've heard the story. Strange, amazing. No mention in Gn 3 of a "Fall," of sin, Satan. The Snake: clever: Different reality. The woman & man seem still united: Before they eat, they act as one. Yahweh, creator, is absent as creatures discuss him. Snake asks an innocent, knowing, probing question. Woman defends God. Only one tree. "God said not to eat or touch it." Warned us of death. Woman shows humans have reflected on God's command. Good intent, cautious. They've expanded the forbidden sphere. They attribute that to God. They've learned good & evil, and control how to obey. Snake shows he knows more: Responds to lie. Suggests alternate reason for God's command, not so benevolent, blocking something wonderful God has: insight, wisdom. The woman sees, eyes open! They don't seek to be God. She sees food, beauty, wisdom, all good things. God may not intend warning but hindrance. They've already chosen to control their obedience. They take and eat. The snake was right. They see more: that they are naked and vulnerable. They cover themselves – from each other, from God? Now they both know and experience good & evil. Fear, hiding, avoiding God. Lost self.

Brokenness Begins: Life that Mixes the Worst with the Best.

The fruit doesn't poison. God doesn't kill. But human life becomes mixed – our present. Snake: mystery symbol. Woman, bearer of life, in pain. In conflict with Human, oppressed. Human, producer of food, with thorns, pain. Clarity about their limit, made of dust: death. But life continues. "Human" (Adam) and "Life" (Eve) wear skins (?). She'll begin all life.

Exile Begins: The Real Death and Finding the Way to Life.

Humans have fallen and risen – "like us," God says. They share fully in moral choice. Also in vulnerability, fear, deception. God exiles them from the garden of delight into our world. How much will fear and delusion grip them? How can humans learn the way to true life?