# Creation and the Fall –

# Analysis and Commentary on Genesis, Chs. 1 - 3

(Part III and IV)

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# Part III - Creation B

***Gen Ch. 2***

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God had created and made.” (Gen 2:1-3)

Chapter 2 of *Genesis* begins, as seen above, with an account of the seventh day, which one might expect to be in Chapter 1. But the seventh day is set apart from the others; it is not part of a whole process – the seven day ‘week’ of God’s work. That work was accomplished in six days. As we will see, Chapter 2 is different in other marked ways as well, because it does not just continue the narrative, as subsequent chapters do, but transitions into what appears to be a new account of creation, which in a number of ways contrasts with, and even contradicts the story told in Chapter 1. For that reason I have called these accounts Creation A and Creation B.

Where does the idea of a week come from? Seven is not a natural number. There is no natural way of dividing time into seven day periods, by the motion of the sun or moon or stars. Seven is an *idea* - a *symbol* of perfection. It is the divine number. It represents what is complete and perfect and as it should be. The last ‘day’ is not actually a day of creation, but a day of ‘rest.’ What does this mean? Obviously, God does not get fatigued, or bored, nor can one imagine the creator and sustainer of all ‘taking time out’ at any point. God’s ‘day of rest’ represents, I believe, the purpose or outcome of the whole of creation; it is the reason for all the ‘work’ of the six days of creation – the creation of a new human, a true human. And although God accomplishes it, it is every person’s choices which allow it to happen in her or his life.

The seventh (shebiya) day symbolizes the blessing or happy state that awaits anyone who goes through all the developmental stages of the six days, and thereby becomes fulfilled and truly ‘man’ – i.e. human. This ‘rest’ or (shabbath)[[1]](#endnote-1) is God’s gift and goal for humans; it is not for God to repose. As Jesus said, “The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” The happiness promised has nothing to do with laziness, pleasure seeking, or a life of inactivity and indulgence. That could not possibly bring happiness to anyone, let alone to a fully human person. Life - including eternal life if there is one - requires love, social interaction, and endless growth in knowledge and the ability to express ones’ special skills and interests by serving others. That’s what is really joyful; but of course rest is recreational and needed at times, even for the spiritually developed. It is a means to the end of further growth; it isn’t an end in itself.Chapter 2 continues:

“These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.” (Gen 2:4-6)

“*These* are the generations of the heavens and the earth…” What does “these” refer to? One would think it refers back, as a summary, to all that went before, as is said “in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens” – i.e. to the account in Chapter 1, which I would label Creation A. The text continues, “And every plant of the field *before* it was in the earth, and every herb of the field *before* it grew: …” What could this mean? If taken together, as a summary, these verses seem to say that God created heaven and earth and the plants before they grew, which makes no sense. But the story continues, as though to explain, “for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground.” Now we see that this is not, in fact, a summary of the six days in the previous chapter, but a preface to what follows. It is the beginning of a new and different account of creation which I will label Creation B. In this story, creation is couched in terms of agriculture, planting, harvest, and the need for cultivation. Nothing grew yet, because there was no one to cultivate the ground, and there was no rain, but instead “there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.” In this account, there is earth and water, but nothing can be cultivated or grow unless and until man enters the scene. And there is no animal life, until after plants and Adam (‘man’) come into being.

In this chapter, God is now called “The Lord God,” whereas in Chapter 1 the term is simply “God.” The Hebrew term in the previous chapter is ‘elohim,’ which, although a plural noun, is always used with a singular verb, and is thought to represent the Divine as transcendent creative power, like the ultimate reality spoken of earlier.[[2]](#endnote-2) In Chapter 2, the term used is ‘YHWH (Yahweh) Elohim’ which is associated with the ‘God of the Covenant’ - i.e. the God of Abraham - and so is associated not with the creation of everything, but with the salvation and special status of the Jews as descendants of Abraham.[[3]](#endnote-3) In the text in *Exodus* where God appears to Moses, both YHWH and Elohim are used separately, and seemingly at random. The verb “I am” is also used as a name there, which is thought to be the root origin of YHWH.[[4]](#endnote-4)

These and other apparent differences, and even inconsistencies, have suggested to many scholars that the first two chapters of *Genesis* were originally two separate stories taken from earlier sources, woven together somewhat loosely by the editor of this text. I disagree, but one needs to dig a little deeper into the meaning to explain the connections between the two accounts of creation (that I call A and B).

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air” (Gen 2:7-9, 19)

Man (Adam) of this account is ‘formed’ (not ‘*created*’ absolutely, but ‘*molded*’ as pottery is molded; the two Hebrew words are different). Adam (ruddy) comes from the ground (adamah, which is also reddish). He is the *first* living being of creation (not like Chapter 1, where he is the *last*). His life is not the result or function of this earthly form however; life is breathed into this form by God. Contrast this to Chapter 1, where man is ‘created’ (bara) full blown as both ‘male and female’ (Gen 1:27)

“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet (suitable, matching) for him…And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs (his ‘side’), and closed up the flesh instead thereof, and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made (built) he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman (Ishah) because she was taken out of Man (Ish).”(Gen 3: 18, 21-23)

At the conclusion of Chapter 1 (creation A), there is a sense of satisfaction expressed by the Creator, about the whole of creation. “And God saw all that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” (Gen 1:31) Everything was blessed as it came directly from God - both non-living and living nature, and man-and-woman together as one - all in their natural condition. But in Chapter 2 (Creation B), some tensions or imperfections seem to appear. The ground, the earth, and cultivation are emphasized. Living things and man spring from or are formed (not ‘created’) out of the ground: in Adam’s case, from “the dust of the ground.” The garden is set apart from nature, which implies that nature is unsatisfactory. The artificial technology of agriculture - civilization - becomes the focus, and tensions soon arise between the hunter-gatherers and the farmers, as illustrated by Cain and Able, Esau and Jacob, and others.

But most important, man (Adam, or ‘human’) is *incomplete*. Almost as an afterthought, God says, *“It is not good that man should be alone: …* Something is imperfect: wrong, even. In the first account, man (Adam) is whole; man and woman are equal, and reflect the “image and likeness of God.” But in the second account, although man (male human) is first in time, he is not presented as the culmination, or object of creation. He is put there to do a job: to “till” and “dress” the garden.

Male and female are the essence of life, of course, not only for reproduction, but symbolically speaking, as principles of the universe. In humans male and female represent the head and the heart, which ideally work in harmony. This is true not only of couples or pairs, but also in individuals. [[5]](#endnote-5) But when a human is out of sync with the purpose of life, the masculine in that individual has to take the lead. When a person ceases to care in his or her heart for God, or what is good, and is motivated by selfishness and worldly desires, that person can nevertheless still be guided by reason (the ‘male principle’) and a conscience that is aware of moral and spiritual truth. I think this is the mental state of things with human life as described in *Genesis* Chapter 2.

Man here is formed of the dust. His origin is earthly and oriented to the world instead of to heaven; to himself instead of to God. Even the atmosphere seems less vibrant. No refreshing rain falls from God in heaven onto the earth. Instead, a mist rises from the earth to keep the ground somewhat fertile, and still capable of supporting life. Notice too that in this chapter it is said “God made the earth and the heavens …” which reverses the order of the previous chapter. It is as though we are presented with a picture of man in a different condition from the original creation. This new spiritual ‘age of man’ is a step down from the first time, or Golden Age, but still and always, God provides the vital means for human development and spirituality. As long as the male and female - Adam and Eve - i.e. the consciousness of what is right and the willingness to obey it - can collaborate, growth can occur. This is so, even if the two are no longer equal partners, and the Ishah part must obey the Ish. They two can “become one flesh,” and can live productive lives, and attain happiness.

# Part IV - The Fall

***Genesis Ch. 3***

“Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.” (Gen 3:1-4)

The story of ‘The Fall’ is so straight forward! There is no ‘lead-in’ here. The serpent is identified, and its first words go directly to the heart of the matter: ‘Did God *really* say you can’t eat from every tree?’ So the serpent is introduced as the questioner - the skeptic. But there are two points about this text that should clarified first, since they involve two common ideas I think are unfounded. First, it has long been said in Christian history that the serpent of the garden is Satan - the fallen Lucifer. The second point involves the nature of the so-called ‘forbidden fruit.’ Almost always people say it is an apple. I believe it is important to show these ideas are mistaken, because they get in the way of understanding the deeper truths involved here.

***Satan***

Nowhere in the Bible is there evidence that the serpent in the garden of Eden is Satan, least of all in the story itself. It is only in the last book of the Bible - *Revelation*, written perhaps around 100 CE - that one sees Satan called “that old serpent,” (Rev 12:9) but the connection with the *Genesis* story is only implied at best. Indeed, the serpent cannot be evil, because, as said above, it is one of God’s creatures, and all that God creates must be good. [[6]](#endnote-6)

What is Satan then? I believe that all evil is *human* - i.e. it is a creation of human minds, and it exists in human minds only. Certainly evil is real - we experience that all too easily - but it isn’t a thing, and it doesn’t exist independently of human minds. Spiritually speaking, humans end up being either good or evil beings, and if life continues beyond the natural realm, they end up as angelic or satanic beings, in heaven or hell respectively. There is no Super Devil however, who started all evil. There may be evil people in hell who are leaders or kings, but it is doubtful they would be able to maintain control for long, given the nature of their ‘subjects.’ So Satan (or the Devil) is a generic name, I think, which summarizes and represents all the forces of evil, in the world of men here, and in the ‘spiritual realm’ beyond nature. But all the devils in hell, and all the angels in heaven were originally humans in the natural world, like you and me. No superior being or angel started as an angel created in heaven; and none of these alleged angels fell from heaven to become the ruler of hell.

***The Forbidden Fruit***

Although the story in Chapter 3 only mentions “the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden,” the previous chapter makes clear what this fruit refers to. “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” (Gen 2:17) This tree was one of two special trees that God made to grow out of the ground - “the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” (Gen 2:9) The tree of life becomes the focus of the end of Chapter 3, after the Fall and the subsequent curse. I will speak of that below.

In the history of commentary about the fruit, many Jews and Christians have connected it to sexual desire, but that makes no sense, since Adam and Eve are told by God to “be fruitful and multiply.” Some Jewish communities living around the time of Christ and early Christians rejected a life of worldly pleasure, and others (e.g. Paul) emphasized asceticism and celibacy. This may have led to the thought that sex is evil. Further, the story says that Adam and Eve were ashamed of their nakedness after eating the fruit, and tried to cover themselves with fig leaves sewed together. Subsequent writers have proposed a variety of fruits, including figs (from the leaves being used as a cover-up) or grapes (since wine became a problem for Noah) or pomegranates (which occurred in some Greek myths about Persephone and the underworld). But the apple seems to have taken the lead after the Renaissance. It is used in other stories (including the Song of Solomon) as a symbol of pleasure, a woman’s breast, etc.) But perhaps the most convincing ‘reason’ is the fact that the Latin word for apple is the same as the word for evil - i.e. *malum*. [[7]](#endnote-7)

The fact remains, however, that what kind of fruit is meant completely misses the point. There is no actual fruit on an actual tree. The story is symbolic, and the symbolism goes far beyond mere disobedience. Understanding the story depends on understanding what is meant by the serpent and the fruit. They are closely connected. And it matters that Satan is not there; and that there is no apple. It matters first that the serpent is not Satan. The serpent is good and Satan is evil - indeed, the symbol of evil. But Satan has been used to explain the Fall, by saying that he ‘beguiled’ or seduced Eve into doing what she would not otherwise have done. Satan is used to explain how evil came into being in this otherwise perfect Garden of Eden. But that only compounds the difficulty, because Satan is said to be a ‘fallen angel.’ How did this angel (Lucifer he is named elsewhere) - the ‘bearer of light - come to fall? Was he also beguiled or seduced? The question has only been put off, not answered, when one brings Satan into the garden.

As was said before, the whole purpose of creation is that there should be humans - i.e. beings who are distinct and separate from the Creator - who can receive his love and his offer of happiness. All creation aims at that goal. We have already seen that life in the natural world is the way of allowing humans a genuine opportunity to choose or reject God. If God wants humans to be close to him - i.e. to love him and return his love - why does he not put humans in heaven at creation, and forget the natural world and all that goes with it? Because being created in heaven would make it impossible for humans to have the necessary freedom to deny God. There must be a ‘veil’ between God and humans, so that they cannot know absolutely his existence and his intention.

Angels, as they have been conceived of in later Christian theology, make no sense, because they are said to be created such. That there should be angels is God’s intention; but they need to become angels, by a life on earth, and their choice to accept God. The idea of angels being created in heaven means they don’t have any choice. They don’t fit into the scheme. And using one of the angels to explain the existence of evil fails as well. It also fails to explain the text as it occurs in Genesis 3. Heaven was created as the final dwelling place of angelic humans; it wasn’t created already populated with a cadre of robotic angel assistants to do God’s bidding in the interest of humans. That would be unjust and unloving. Furthermore, their rebellious choice would have to explained in human terms, even more than in the case of Adam and Eve. And it isn’t necessary to posit their existence in that role. In fact, it gets in the way of understanding evil in the human condition of the garden.

***The serpent***

Let’s look again at the serpent. It is said to speak to Eve. The only other case in the Pentateuch of an animal speaking is Balaam’s ass, in *Numbers*. I believe the serpent’s voice is really Eve’s voice - her inner voice.[[8]](#endnote-8) It is the idea that comes to Eve from her own created nature. What was she asking herself? ‘Did God really say I can’t eat everything I want?’ The serpent is a creature of God. It is good and useful, when it is used as it should be, but it is the most subtle or cunning (and therefore the most dangerous) of creatures. It symbolizes a human’s awareness that she or he can make choices, and the choices are her or his own. The serpent is our sense of *self*, without which we would like a robot. We would not take responsibility, and our freedom would disappear. But will we use that sense of self - that ability to make our own choices - to advance our natural selfish tendencies, or to do what we realize we should? That’s the issue here.

The question that arises in Eve’s mind is whether or not to eat the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. What does that mean? ‘Eating’ is also symbolic; it means appropriating to oneself, or making something one’s own. This is *much* more complex than just disobedience. We all disobey God. That wouldn’t cause the fall of anyone, let alone the fall of all humanity, as is (falsely) claimed. What Eve was forbidden to do was to think that *she* was the one to *decide* what is good and evil. Why was it said that this would lead to death? Because she would be replacing God’s truth about good and evil with her own judgment. She would be saying, ‘I don’t need God to guide me; I’ll follow my own natural lights.’ But her own natural judgment would be warped by her limited knowledge and worldly desires. She would think that she was doing well, but she would lead herself astray.

God knows better than we what is good for us, and what will make us happy; and God cares more about us than we care about ourselves. The ‘expulsion from the garden’ would not be God’s punishment; God doesn’t punish. It would be our own self-punishment. We would separate ourselves from God, and so separate ourselves from true happiness. That is what is meant by God’s saying “for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Keep in mind that there could not be anything *actually* evil at creation, nor at the time of Eve’s choice since it all came from a good Creator. There was the *possibility* of evil, which was necessary in creation to make freedom real, and to make real happiness possible too. Evil became real at the moment Eve made the wrong choice. *What* she chose was not evil in itself. The evil lay in the *choice*, because she chose the lesser good over the higher; she chose to replace God as her guide, and to follow her own judgment controlled by natural desires. This left her with no means of escaping the prison and suffering of a selfish and worldly attitude. The serpent of Eve’s self-will contradicted God’s word and frustrated God’s purpose.

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.” (Gen 3:4-6)

‘Good for food’ means benefits our bodies; ‘pleasant to the eyes’ means it causes us pleasure; ‘to be desired to make one wise’ means it supports our ego. The serpent of our inner voice is subtle; it isn’t crude in its insistence, like the voice which tells us to disobey the law, or morality or conscience: ‘Do it! Do it!’ It uses reasons that seems valid. It doesn’t lie. “You shall not surely die.” That was true, depending whether you define death in natural or spiritual terms. “God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.” That was true also, and in that ‘knowledge,’ or rather in the thought that she could find that knowledge without God’s help, lay the unhappy outcome. Evil is not in the world; it is in mind. As Shakespeare put it, “For there is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” (Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 2, scene 2)

A good willed person cannot ‘be evil,’ no matter how harmful his or her actions may be. We call certain actions evil, but it would be better to call them ‘wrong,’ because evil attaches properly only to a mind - specifically to a will – not to a behavior, and much less, to an object. We realize this intuitively, when we say it is silly to call a shark or even a deadly virus ‘bad.’ Better to call them harmful. Child psychologists recognize this who advise parents and teachers to separate the child from her actions: ‘That was a really sweet (mean) thing you did,’ rather than ‘You’re such a good (bad) girl!’ This encourages the child to learn objectivity about right and wrong, and leaves character judgments to a more suitable time or authority.[[9]](#endnote-9)

***Sex rears its lovely head***

It’s clear that Chapter 2 of Genesis emphasizes gender differences, and often in ways that seem to disparage the female. Of course the whole Bible - Jewish and Christian scriptures alike – as well as the Qur‘an (i.e. the three ‘Abrahamic’ religions) are written in *language* that is sexist throughout. Modern liberal societies try to bring these facts to light, and to lessen their onerous effects on women and men. [[10]](#endnote-10)

As said before, I believe that woman and man represent complementary principles, in the universe and in individual human minds. More specifically, they symbolize the heat and light of the spiritual sun, which are respectively the Divine Love and Wisdom[[11]](#endnote-11) of the Creator. In human minds, they correspond to the human will and intellect (and in some sense to the ‘right’ and ‘left’ halves of the brain as popularly conceived). In the story of the Fall, Eve symbolizes the human will - i.e. the things we care about and love, which motivate our choices. Adam represents the intellect - i.e. what we know, from reason, experience or belief - that informs and guides our choices. The Eve part of this early human (or humans), overwhelmed the Adam.part That is, the *will* part, motivated by self-consciousness and pride, initiated the wrong choice, and overruled the *intellect* part, which knew what was right. Eve knew what she was doing. She reported God’s command correctly, with some alteration,[[12]](#endnote-12) but chose to substitute her self-will for God’s will, and carried Adam along.

***‘The Curse’***

“And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou has done this, thou are cursed above all cattle and above all cattle and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life” (Gen 3:14)

It is commonly said that God cursed the serpent, Eve and Adam as a result of their actions. I don’t believe God, who is Love, is capable of cursing anyone. The ideal violates God’s essence, which is Love. The text does not say that God cursed, e.g. the serpent, but that the serpent is cursed. There is a difference. God does say what are the inevitable results of these actions; he says this before it happens, and reminds them afterwards. The serpent has a lower status after the fall. That is, the God-given sense of self and the feeling of acting on one’s own becomes a snare to humans following their abuse of this gift. One could say that ‘ancient man’ or ‘golden age humanity’ acted more out of innocent belief in God and acceptance of God’s will than later societies did. Subsequent to this ‘Fall,’ whenever it may have occurred, if it actually represents a historic event, represents a fundamental change in human society. I also believe that the Fall continues to occur today on an individual basis, as people continue to abuse their freedom of choice.

“Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow (‘pangs’) and thy conception (‘pregnancy’); in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” (Gen 3:16)

For Eve, the result is that it will be more difficult and painful in the future to bear children, but her pregnancies will be greatly multiplied. For one who wants children, this seems like a mixed blessing. And indeed God had earlier told Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply.” I think that bearing children means, symbolically, producing what is useful and good. It seems that Eve’s productivity will not be so easy and spontaneous as it was before. Spiritually speaking, it is going to be more difficult than before to develop as a full human, with the potential for happiness. This interpretation is supported, I believe, by saying that Eve’s desire (‘stretching out,’ ‘longing’) will be to her husband and he will rule over her. In other words, the will of an heir to the Fall no longer is spontaneously and naturally oriented to God, or what is good, but must be forced, so-to-speak, into compliance with what the intellect knows to be required. The age of innocent obedience is ended by the Fall. From now on, rebirth, renewal and spiritual growth will be a life-long struggle (but of course, will be aided always by God’s spirit). This idea exists also in much wisdom literature, not only in Biblical cultures.[[13]](#endnote-13)

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field.” (Gen 3:17)

Here again, attaining a spiritual life promises to be hard work. However, the beginning of Chapter 2 had already said that Adam’s purpose was to till the garden; it wasn’t going to bring forth good food naturally without him, so, as in the case of Eve, their regular tasks - bearing children, raising food - were no different after the Fall than before, but in regard to their natural inclinations or affections, it would take more conscious effort, and be less spontaneous than before. Bringing forth thorns and thistles is echoed in Jesus’ parable of the sower. (Mt 13:3) They seem to symbolize the cares of worldly life, which can get in the way of serious human growth, and have to be weeded out. The ground is “cursed” for Adam’s sake. Remember that Adam’s name means ‘of the ground (adamah)’ In Biblical scripture, ground symbolizes the human mind in a general sense; and various kinds of ground (garden, field, desert, wasteland, forest, mountains, etc.) represent different conditions of the mind - some conducive to spiritual development, and others detrimental and distracting to it.

***The Expulsion***

“And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” (Gen 3:22-24)

These last verses of Chapter 3 which conclude the story of the Fall, contain some ideas that seem strange, about which I am very uncertain. First, we notice that God speaks, as it were, to other gods. I believe the only other similar text is in the Tower of Babel story, where God says, “Let us go down, and there confound there language.” (Gen 11:7) In both these cases, it is as though we know what is in God’s mind, although he is not speaking to humans. And in both cases, he is concerned about human welfare, and has to intervene to prevent them from harming themselves, against their will.

A second strange idea is that God says he must prevent man from eating from the tree of life. Yet in Chapter 2, the tree of life was placed in the midst of the garden together with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but only the latter was forbidden to Adam and Eve. So what seemed to be permitted earlier was now, not forbidden, but made inaccessible by armed Cherubim. Many fundamentalist believers think that man originally was intended to live forever, in the garden of Eden, but the Fall made that impossible. Again, that makes no sense. Humanity will surely multiply indefinitely - indeed they were instructed to do so - and eternal life on this earth would quickly become hellish. If ‘living forever’ means *spiritual* eternity, was that not in fact God’s hope for everyone, so why would he here symbolically seem to oppose the idea?

Again, this seems parallel to the Tower of Babel story. There, humans had set about building a “city and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name.” (Gen 11:4) And they used slime and brick for building materials. And they started their work in a valley. Clearly this represented a ridiculous project; and the motivation was entirely wrong. We can’t ‘get to heaven’ in that way, so God made their project impossible by confusing their ability to communicate. Perhaps, then, the expulsion from the garden, and setting a guard “to keep the way of the tree of life” represents that after the Fall, humans must approach their heavenly destiny in a very different way from earlier humans. I have already indicated this, in suggesting that the role of the will and the intellect were changed. In the original creation account of Chapter 1, the will and intellect (Adam and Eve) functioned together as a unified whole. Male and female were created equally, at the same time, in the “image and likeness of God.” But in the context of the Fall, Adam came first, and Eve came last. She initiated the wrong choice, and as a result, both would suffer a difficult life, and Eve would have to long for Adam, and do his bidding.

Finally, in this Chapter at the beginning of the Bible, and in *Revelation* at the end, and many texts in between, we read of angels (Cherubim) carrying two-edged swords, guarding what is holy. A sword that can cut both ways symbolizes truth, which destroys evil, and protects good. Truth is our means to know what is real and valuable, and despite our natural tendencies to ignore, pervert or contradict it, truth is what Biblical scripture contains, albeit often deeply hidden, by which every human can be guided to happiness.

1. The word Sabbath is not used to name the seventh day until *Exodus*, (Ex 16:23 and Ex 20:8), where Moses refers back to God’s blessing the seventh day: “Therefore God blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Elohim has multiple meanings throughout the Bible, including ‘angelic beings,’ false gods of the pagans, and even great or powerful humans. But in Chapter 1, it consistently refers to God the creator. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. I have summarized what I could learn from many websites dealing with the ‘names of God.’ I can only make an educated guess at how they fit into the overall sense of the topic of this essay. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. “And the angel of YHWH appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush … (Ex 3:2) And when YHWH saw that he turned aside to see, Elohim called to him out of the bush …(3:4) Moreover he said, I am the Elohim of thy father …(3:6) And Moses said to Elohim, Behold, when I come to the children of Israel … what shall I say to them? (3:13). And Elohim said unto Moses, I am that I am: ...” (3:14). Taken from “Hebrew OT -Transliteration - Holy Name KJV”, at [www.qbible.com/hebrew-old-testament/exodus/3.html](http://www.qbible.com/hebrew-old-testament/exodus/3.html) [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. I’m reminded of Carl Jung, who suggests each of us has an *anima* and an *animus* – a female and a male soul. And his idea is very close to what Swedenborg says, i.e. that inwardly, men have feminine qualities that complement their masculinity, while women have masculine qualities that complement their femininity. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. I recommend Elaine Pagels’ *The Origin of Satan* and *Adam, Eve and the Serpent* on this topic. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Among all the discussions on this topic, I got the most from “The Straight Dope,” by Cecil Adams, of *The Chicago Reader* fame! Look for key words “forbidden fruit in the garden” at [www.straightdope.com](http://www.straightdope.com). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. One of the root meanings of Eve’s name is Chava, which can be interpreted as ‘life,’ and as ‘declaration.’ [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. When I was very young, I recall my mother saying about Hitler, who was ravaging Europe, “If he is inwardly what he seems to be outwardly, he is an evil man.” What an amazing commitment to this principle! Of course that is not to say that we didn’t realize the ‘evil’ of the actions. But killing and cruelty are on both sides of every war. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. God is referred to as He. Pronouns are in the masculine form by default, if the referent is of mixed or unspecified gender. Adam is ‘of the earth’ and ‘ruddy’ (color of earth, flesh-colored, while Eve (chavvah) is the ‘life giver’ and mother (em, or ‘bond’). Adam is the man (ish – the ‘extant one’), while female (ishah) is derived from man. Adam is the male (zakar – ‘remembered one’) while Eve is female (neqebah – ‘sexual form’). Finally, the two are to become “one flesh” (basar – male pudenda, genitals). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. For a development of Swedenborg’s metaphysical theology, see Emanuel Swedenborg *The Divine Love and Wisdom* (Amsterdam: self-published in Latin, 1763). [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Eve said “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden,” but left out “every tree” and “freely eat,” as God had said. Also, she added the phrase, “neither shall ye touch it” to what God had commanded. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. I think Confucius says this beautifully in the *Analects*. “The Master said, at fifteen I set my heart upon learning. At thirty, I had planted my feet firm upon the ground. At forty, I no longer suffered from perplexities. At fifty, I knew what were the biddings of Heaven. At sixty, I heard them with docile ear. At seventy, I could follow the dictates of my own heart; for what I desired no longer overstepped the boundaries of right.” (Bk II #4, in the Arthur Waley translation) [↑](#endnote-ref-13)