

The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON XIV : GENESIS 2:4 – SECTION TWO INTRODUCTORY VERSE: TRANSITION FROM PREVIOUS SECTION

SECTION TWO: THE STORY OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN (Gen 2:4-3:24)

“In this section we are told how the first man was formed of dust from the ground, how he dwelt in the garden of Eden, of the creation of woman, of the sin that they both committed, and of the punishment meted out to them. The primary purpose of the Torah in these chapters is to explain how it is that in the Lord’s world, the world of the good and beneficent God, evil should exist and man should endure pain and troubles and calamities. The answer given here to the burning question of the origin of evil in the world is this: although the world that issued from the hand of the Creator is, according to the testimony of the previous section, good – yea, very good – yet man corrupts it by his conduct and brings evil into the world as a result of his corruption.” [Cassuto, 71]

‘THAT WHICH COMES FORTH FROM HEAVEN AND EARTH’ — As discussed in lesson 2, we consider the *tôl’ dôth* (*‘[these are] the generations’*) found in 2:4 to be a superscription of what follows, the sense not being how the heavens and earth are generated, but that which is generated from heaven and earth, in particular, man whose body comes from the created earth. ***“[W]e have here the editor introducing the first block of narratives about the primeval history of mankind: the stories of Adam and his sons. Within this editorially demarcated unit of 2:5-4:26, three quite distinct narratives are apparent: the garden of Eden, 2:5-3:24; the murder of Abel, 4:1-16; Cain’s family, 4:17-26.”*** [Wenham, 1:49]

THE CONTENTS OF SECTION TWO — In the first account of creation (1:1-2:3) heaven is at center stage with God performing mighty acts that bring forth the entire cosmos. The second account of creation (2:4-3:24) focuses on the garden of Eden with man in its midst. “The garden story itself falls into two halves, 2:5-25 (the creation of man and his wife) and 3:1-24 (the temptation and fall from the garden). Both parts are introduced by episode-initial circumstantial clauses, 2:5-6 and 3:1a. Chap. 2 further subdivides into (a) the creation of man and the garden, vv. 5-17; and (b) the creation of woman, vv. 18-25. It is less easy to define sub-units within chap. 3, and commentators who attempt this task have suggested a variety of analyses.” [Wenham, 1:49f] Some have noticed a chiasmic arrangement of the ‘scenes.’

| | | | |
|----------------|---------|-----------|---|
| A | 2:5-17 | narrative | God the sole actor: man present but passive |
| B | 2:18-25 | narrative | God main actor, man minor role, woman and animals passive |
| C | 3:1-5 | dialogue | snake and woman |
| D | 3:6-8 | narrative | man and woman |
| C ₁ | 3:9-13 | dialogue | God, man and woman |
| B ₁ | 3:14-21 | narrative | God main actor, man minor role, woman and snake passive |
| A ₁ | 3:22-24 | narrative | God the sole actor: man present but passive |

The first and last scene (A and A₁) are alike in that both are narratives with God as the all-important actor; though man is present in both, he is completely passive. The vocabulary between both scenes is distinctive: the phrases ‘*on the east,*’ ‘*tree of life,*’ ‘*garden of Eden,*’ ‘*till,*’ and ‘*guard*’ are found only in these scenes. There is also an inversion: in the first man is made from ‘*the dust of the land*’ and placed in the garden; in the last man is driven from the garden, by implication back to the dust of the land from which he was taken.

The second and next-to-last scene (B and B₁) correspond in that these are the only two scenes with four actors present: God, the man, the woman, and the animals (or snake). In both, God is the principal actor and the action takes place in the garden. Both scenes are concerned with the relationship between man and the rest of creation. The second scene describes the ideal: the animals were created to be man’s companions, and woman is his perfect partner. But the next-to-last scene portrays the resultant situation: perpetual conflict between man and the serpent, and frustration in relations between the sexes. Both scenes also end with statements about woman’s role as wife and mother (2:24; 3:30) and about clothing (2:25; 3:21).

The middle scenes (C and C₁) are both dialogues about eating the fruit of the tree and its consequences. Both dialogues take place in the garden. In the third scene the serpent and the woman make three comments about the tree, whereas in the fifth God puts three questions to the man and woman.

The fourth scene (D) stands apart from the rest of the narrative. Here the focus is on the man and woman alone. It is here the woman decides to follow the snake’s advice and ignore the divine command. Likewise the man accepts the fruit offered by his wife in defiance of the divine will. The words ‘*and he ate*’ are sandwiched between a twofold mention of the desired effects of the fruit: its ability to open eyes and give knowledge. [Wenham, 1:50]

THERE WERE PROBABLY EPIC (ORAL?) TRADITIONS OF WHICH THE ANCIENT HEBREWS WERE FAMILIAR — This is not to deny verbal inspiration but simply to confirm what we stated in lesson one, that Moses was probably the actual author of the final four books of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) but acted more as a compiler of the book of Genesis (see lesson one for more details). *If Moses did have access to ancient material, it does not minimize his work on Genesis but actually exalts it since Moses could have had written materials in his hand as he compiled / wrote the book of Genesis.* Some of the evidence for this is as follows:

- In 3:24 ‘*the cherubim and the sword-flame which turned every way*’ are mentioned with the definite article (*‘the’*) although there is no previous reference to them in our section. The implication is that this was not new to the children of Israel to whom Moses was writing, the possibility being the story was recorded in some ancient literary work of which Israel was generally familiar.
- Since the phrase ‘*the sword-flame which turned every way*’ is certainly poetic, the ancient text in question was probably a poem and not a prose composition. But it is not conceivable that the Torah would allude to a pagan epic of gentile origin so this ancient poem must be a text from the ancient Hebrews.
- There are also other indications of a poetic tradition to be found in our section: the poetic rhythm of the number of the utterances that it contains (2:18, 23; 3:14-19); the examples of parallelism scattered apart from the utterances (e.g., 2:5; 3:3, 6, etc.); poetic words like the

noun 'mist' (2:6) which also occurs in Job 36:27; the verb, literally, 'to build' is used in the sense of 'create, form' in 2:22 when speaking of the woman, is likewise used in other ancient poetry; and other such references (see Cassuto, 73f for more detail).

- In 2:9 'THE TREE OF LIFE also in the midst of the garden' with the definite article but stated without previous mention is again indicative that there was no explanation necessary to the first readers since they were already familiar because of other ancient literature. As will be discussed in later lessons, the fact that the expression 'the tree of life' is used elsewhere in Scripture as a common metaphor for things from which life-giving power emanates (Prov 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4) also suggests Israel was familiar with this metaphor from other sources than Genesis. The same applies to 'THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL' in 2:9.
- There are similarities as well as differences when we compare Eden in the book of Genesis with the prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel makes repeated references to Eden, but note when mention is made of the 'cherub' in connection with the garden of Eden (28:14f), the 'cherub' there is not *outside* of Paradise as depicted in Gen 2,3 but actually *inside* it. That and other details that are absent here would indicate the Ezekiel passage is not based upon our present section. See Cassuto, 74-82 for more detail.

ARE THERE TWO CREATION STORIES OR ONE? — Those promoting the documentary hypothesis are quick to point out the differences between Gen 1:1-2:3 and Gen 2:4-3:24, stating these are two different stories of creation. That these two sections differ is obvious from the first glance, most notably is the use of the Divine appellations. In the first section only the name 'God' ('*elôhîm*') occurs, and *YHWH* (God's personal name, usually translated 'LORD') does not appear once, whereas in the second section we almost always find the compound name *YHWH 'Elôhîm* and only in the conversation between the serpent and the woman (3:1-5) does '*elôhîm*' occur by itself. It was this distinction which long ago aroused the suspicions of Bible students and has served as the starting point of protracted discussions through the years. But are the two sections different creation stories or one? ***"The text of Matthew 19:4 would seem to indicate that Christ saw a unity in what some have claimed were two creation accounts."*** [Kelly, 62]

"The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' [quoting from Gen 1:27] and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? [quoting from Gen 2:24] So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."'" (Matt 19:3-6)

"The fact that the two sections differ from each other not only in the use of the Divine names but also in other respects is not in doubt. In the first section we have before us a sublime picture of the totality of creation, depicted with great synthetic power and absolute simplicity of expression; the Godhead is revealed therein as a wholly transcendental Being, who abides in His own high sphere without contact with the creatures. The second section, on the other hand, gives us a graphic and dramatic story embellished with the marvels of the colourful oriental imagination, which is addressed to the feelings rather than the intellect of the reader; and there we see God in definite communion with man and the other creatures of His world. But these divergences still do not prove the theory referred to." [Cassuto, 85f]

SECTION TWO ADDS DETAIL TO THE GENERAL ACCOUNT OF SECTION ONE —

So why are there two different sections? It was a common literary device among the ancient Hebrews to give a brief general account of something and then follow this with a second, more lengthy and detailed account. Rabbi Cassuto states such repeated accounts may seem strange to those accustomed to our modern ways of writing but are not incongruous to the Hebrew way of thinking. Such writing is commonly found not only in Biblical literature but also in the literary works of the rest of the ancient East. [Cassuto, 90f] ***“The second chapter of Genesis describes in greater detail certain of the events of the sixth day of creation, especially of the formation of the first man and woman. It does not in any respect contradict the account in the first chapter, but instead is complementary to it.”*** [Morris, 83] One commentator described the two sections as the second picking up on and building upon the ‘*skeletal telling*’ of the former section. [Mathews, 188]

DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE TWO SECTIONS — Commentators differ as to the number of supposed discrepancies; e.g., the Skeptic’s Annotated Bible lists two, the Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary lists three, and Rabbi Cassuto lists five (some of the differences in number depends upon how each defines the discrepancies). For our purposes we will divide the items listed to justify their theory into four points. Replies to these supposed discrepancies will be addressed in future lessons as we comment on the individual verses.

- The first section speaks of six days, whereas the second section speaks of the creation in one day: *‘in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens’* (2:4). Our response to this objection may be found in this lesson, below.
- In the first section the plants came into being on the third day (1:11-13), i.e., before man was created on day six; but the second section says that *‘any plant of the field’* and *any herb of the field* (2:5) was not present because *‘the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground’* (2:5); but after the creation of man (2:7) then *‘the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food’* (2:9). Our response to this objection may be found in lessons 15 and 16.
- In the first section the living creatures were created before man (1:20, 21, 24, 25) but the second section says the living creatures were created *after* and *for the sake* of man (2:19). Our response to this objection may be found in lesson 18.
- The first section states the two sexes were created simultaneously (1:27) but the second section states man was first formed (2:7) and afterwards the woman (2:21, 22). Our response to this objection may be found in lesson 18.

INDICATIONS OF THE UNITY OF THE TWO SECTIONS — Rabbi Cassuto notes the numerical symmetry based on the number seven (as we found in the first section) as a clear indication these are not separate stories. The words that express the fundamental concepts of the passage recur either seven times or a multiple of seven:

- the name *‘Eden’* occurs, together with *‘east’* 7x
- the names for *‘man’* (both *’ādām* and *’îsh*) appear together 28x (4x7)
- the words *’ishshāh* (*‘woman, female’*), *tsēlā’* (*‘side, rib’*), and *‘ēzer* (*‘helper’*) are used 21x (3x7)

- the words derived from the root 'ākal ('to eat') is used 21x (3x7) in the second section; indeed, 7x in the very paragraph describing sin, 3:1-7
- the verb lāqach ('take') which is given special emphasis in a number of verses (2:23; 3:19, 23) occurs all-in-all 7x in this section
- lastly, when Rabbi Cassuto sought to break up the section into paragraphs according to the logical division of the contents, there emerged 7 paragraphs



Introductory Verse:

'⁴ This is the history [tōl^edōth , or generations, records, account] of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,' (Gen 2:4 NKJV)

Rabbi Cassuto's translation:

v. 4 – This is the history of the heavens and the earth / when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made / the earth and the heavens.

Verse 4 is an independent sentence (as in 1:1), and vv. 5, 6 presents a series of circumstantial clauses, describing the condition of the land when God formed the first man (2:7).

THE VERSE IS AN ORGANIC WHOLE AND BELONGS TO THE SECTION OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN — Note those promoting their 'documentary hypothesis' divided this verse in half, the first half belonging to the previous section (which they designate as belonging to 'P') while the second half being the start of a new section (which they designate as belonging to 'J'). But that presents several difficulties:

- This is the first 'tōl^edōth' (as discussed in lesson 2) which most accept as the start of a new section, but the word 'tōl^edōth' occurs in the first half of the verse. How can that then belong to the previous section?
- According to Rabbi Cassuto, **this verse cannot be split because that would cause syntactical problems with the following verses. The last half of this verse would not even be a complete sentence.**

“[A] careful and unbiased examination of the verse will convince us that not only is there no justification for resolving it into two separate parts but that, on the contrary, there are definite indications that it is a unity, and also that the first half belongs to the story of the garden of Eden.” [Cassuto, 97]

v. 4 IS COMPOSED OF TWO PARALLEL HALF-SENTENCES IN A CHIASTIC ORDER — According to Rabbi Cassuto, **the structure of this verse “follows the precise rules of sentence-building and parallelism that normally govern exalted prose as well as poetry.”** It consists of two parallel half-sentences in chiasmic order:

| | |
|----------------|--|
| A ₁ | <i>the heavens and the earth</i> |
| B ₁ | <i>when they were created (bārā')</i> |
| B ₂ | <i>in the day that the Lord God made ('āsāh)</i> |
| A ₂ | <i>the earth and the heavens</i> |

This verse, *‘when they were created’* with its parallel phrase *‘in the day ... made’* also resembles the expressions in the passage in Ezekiel dealing with the garden of Eden, *‘on the day you were created’* (Ezek 28:13) and *‘from the day you were created’* (Ezek 28:15). Thus these phrases “are rooted in the ancient poetic tradition concerning Paradise.” “Our verse is, therefore, an organic whole and belongs entirely to the section of the garden of Eden. It serves to connect the narrative of the first section to that of the second; and its meaning is: *‘These – the events described in the previous portion – constituted the history of the heavens and the earth,’* when they were created, that is, when the Lord God made them; and now I shall tell you in detail what happened at the conclusion of this Divine work.” [Cassuto, 99]

‘the LORD God’ – YHWH ’Elôhîm — This particular divine title occurs only once in the Pentateuch outside of Gen 2, 3 in Exod 9:30. It is only used 16x outside of the Pentateuch, but within these two chapters it is used consistently (20x). It is not used in the dialogue between the snake and the woman in 3:1-5 (where the ordinary word for divinity ’elôhîm is used). ***“It is because ‘Yahweh Elohim’ expresses so strongly the basic OT convictions about God’s being both creator and Israel’s covenant partner that the serpent and the woman avoid the term in their discussion. The god they are talking about is malevolent, secretive, and concerned to restrict man: his character is so different from that of Yahweh Elohim that the narrative pointedly avoids the name in the dialogue of 3:1-5.”*** [Wenham, 1:57]

‘RULES’ GOVERNING THE USE OF THE DIVINE NAMES — These ‘rules’ are based upon Professor / Rabbi Umberto Cassuto’s extensive study in Genesis and his writings against the documentary hypothesis. Professor Cassuto was an Italian historian, a rabbi, and a scholar of the Hebrew Bible and Ugaritic literature.

“These rules are based on the difference in the nature of the two names, for they are not of the same type; the name *YHWH* is a proper noun that denotes specifically the God of Israel, whereas *’Elôhîm* was originally a generic term and became a proper noun among the Israelites through the realisation that there is only One God and that *YHWH* alone is *’Elôhîm* [*‘God’*].” [Cassuto, 87]

Here are a couple of Rabbi Cassuto’s ‘rules’ governing the use of the two names:

- *YHWH* reflects the concept of God, especially His ethical aspect, that belongs specifically to the people of Israel. *’Elôhîm* appears when the Bible refers to the abstract concept of God that was current internationally. *’Elôhîm* is the idea of God as Creator of the material world, Ruler of nature, and the Source of life.
- *YHWH* presents the Deity to us in His personal character, in direct relationship to human beings or to nature. *’Elôhîm* speaks of God as a Transcendental Being who stands entirely outside of nature, and above it.

Those being true, *’Elôhîm* had necessarily to be used in the story of creation where God appears as the Creator of the material universe, the Master of the world with ultimate dominion over everything. In the garden of Eden, however, He commands man and demands an account for his actions; manifesting His direct relationship with man and the other creatures. [Cassuto]

THE DIVINE TETRAGRAMMATON — *‘YHWH,’* often translated *‘LORD’* or *‘Jehovah,’* is “that most sacred and incommunicable name of Deity, called *tetragrammaton*, because it consisted of four letters, which the Jews, through reverence or superstition, refuse to pronounce. The

principal meaning of the term is *self-existence*; which is, in truth, *necessary existence*, as opposed to that which is derived from, or is dependent upon, another.” [Calvin, 109]

Hebrew reads from right to left

Transliterated into English:
YHWH
or
JHVH

Consonantal text for Adonai with vowel pointing in red

YHWH combined with the vowels from Adonai forming Yehovah or Yehowah

Shewa replaces the compound shewa, mandated by rules of Hebrew grammar

The Hebrew consonantal text for Yahweh YHWH (The Tetragrammaton)

The combination of the consonants from YHWH written with the vowels from Adonai. This was never meant to be vocalized but was a scribal reminder to the readers to say Adonai when they came to the Tetragrammaton in the text.

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‘the earth and the heavens’ — ‘Heaven and earth’ are frequently paired together in the OT but elsewhere ‘heaven’ is mentioned first; only here and Ps 148:13 is the earth mentioned first. This order may reflect the shift in perspective from God as sole actor to humanity as reactor.

‘in the day’ — This should not be understood to mean a day of twenty-four hours, just as the idiom *‘in the hour that’* does not connote an hour of sixty minutes. In each case these mean, *‘at the time when.’* Compare, for instance, *‘IN THE DAY that the Lord spoke with Moses on Mount Sinai’* (Num 3:1, literal rendering) when Moses was actually on Mount Sinai forty days and forty nights. See also, *‘This was the dedication-offering of the altar, IN THE DAY when it was anointed, at the hands of the princes of Israel’* (Num 7:84, literal rendering) but the sacrifices of the princes lasted twelve days. Again, *‘IN THE DAY that the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies’* (2 Sam 22:1) but obviously it was not in one day that the Lord delivered David from *all* his enemies. {This is the response to one of the objections presented by those who believe there are two different creations story, as mentioned above: “The first section speaks of six days, whereas the second section speaks of the creation in one day: *‘in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens’* (2:4).”}

APPENDIX — ADDITIONAL NOTES CONCERNING THE HEBREW ‘YHWH’

The difference between "waw" and "vav" in Hebrew is primarily a pronunciation shift over time, where "waw" represents the original "w" sound of the letter in ancient Hebrew, while "vav" is the modern pronunciation as a "v" sound; essentially, the same letter evolved to be pronounced differently in modern Hebrew compared to its ancient pronunciation.

Vowels and other diacritical marks were added to the Hebrew Bible **between 600 CE and the start of the 10th century**: ⓘ

When

The Masoretes, a group of Jewish scholars and scribes, added the vowel marks to help people read the text. ⓘ

How

The Masoretes added dots and dashes above, below, and to the left of the Hebrew letters to indicate the vowels. They also added cantillation marks, called ta'amim, to indicate how the text should be sung or chanted. ⓘ

Why

The Masoretes added the vowel marks to help people pronounce the words, especially non-Jews and Jews who didn't speak Hebrew. ⓘ

Preservation

The Masoretes were meticulous in their transcriptions, which are known as the Masoretic text. The Hebrew text in the Masoretic text is so well-preserved that it's nearly identical to the text in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which date back to the first century B.C. ⓘ

Exod 3 story of Moses and the burning bush; note Ex 3:14, '*And God ['lōhîm] said to Moses, "I AM ['eh^oye] WHO (or, THAT) I AM."*' ['eh^oye] *And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM ['eh^oye] has sent me to you.'*' " Note the exact same word (even the spelling/vowel points) is used in 3:12, '*For I will be with you*'

“We are given here an explanation of the name YHWH that connects it with the stem hāyā [‘to be’].... The name YHWH, by which the God of Israel is designated, is the ‘future’ tense, third person, and it is interpreted in our text in the sense of yih^oye [literally, ‘He will be’, understood as ‘He is’]. Hence, when the explanation is given by YHWH Himself, the verb appears in the first person ’eh^oye [‘I am’]. The sense is: *It is I who am with My creatures in their hour of trouble and need – as I have already declared to you: ‘But I will be [’eh^oye] with you’ (v. 12) – to help them and save them. And I am who I am, always, and just as I am with you, so am I with all the children of Israel who are enslaved, and with everyone who is in need of My help, both now and in the future.* There is also implicit in this interpretation the thought of implementing the promises: *I am who I am always, ever alike, and consequently I am true to My word and fulfil it.* When the Israelites realized, after their exodus from Egypt and their deliverance from Pharaoh’s host, which pursued after them, that in truth the Lord was with them and kept His promises to them, they proclaimed in the Song of the Sea (15:3): '*YHWH is His name*', that is, *He and His name are worthy of each other, His deeds being in accord with His designation.*' [Cassuto, Umberto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (The Magnes Press, Hebrew University, Jerusalem) published in Hebrew, 1951; first English edition, 1967; page 37f]

Cassuto has a note that the imperfect could signify in Biblical language any tense, past, present or future.