

The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON XVIII : GENESIS 2:18-25 – FOURTH PARAGRAPH: CREATION OF WOMAN

“The main point of the whole unit, then, could be stated as follows: God has prepared human beings, male and female, with the spiritual capacity and communal assistance to serve him and to keep his commands so that they might live and enjoy the bounty of his creation. People have spiritual capacity, moral responsibility, and mutual assistance – albeit flawed by sin – because God so designed life.” [Ross, 127]

“Divine initiative is center stage in this passage: ‘The LORD God said’ (v. 18), ‘the LORD God had formed’ (v. 19), ‘the LORD God caused ... a deep sleep’ (v. 21), and ‘the LORD God made a woman.’ [Mathews, 1:212]

Creation of Woman:

‘¹⁸ And the Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” ¹⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. ²¹ And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. ²² Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. ²³ And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.” ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.’ (Gen 2:18-25 NKJV)

Rabbi Cassuto’s translation:

v. 18 – Then the Lord God said,

“It is not good / that the man should be alone;

I will make him a helper / corresponding to him.”

v. 19 – So the Lord God formed / out of the ground

every beast of the field / and every flying creature of the air,

and brought [them] to the man / to see what he would call each one.

and whatever name the man would give to each one / of the living creatures / that would be its name.

v. 20 – The man gave names / to all cattle,

and to the flying creatures of the air, / and to every beast of the field;

but as for man, / he did not find a helper corresponding to him.

v. 21 – So the Lord God caused a deep sleep / to fall upon the man, / and he slept;

then He took one of his ribs, / and He closed up its place with flesh.

v. 22 – And the Lord God built up / the rib

which He had taken from the man / into a woman

and brought her to the man.

v. 23 – *Then the man said,*

*“This, at last, / is bone of my bones / and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman, / because she was taken out of Man.”*

v. 24 – *Therefore a man leaves / his father and his mother
and cleaves to his wife, / and they become one flesh.*

v. 25 – *And they were both naked, / the man and his wife,
and were not ashamed.*

v. 18 – *Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; —* For the first time since chapter one, the LORD speaks. *While Genesis 1 gives the creation story, Genesis 2 goes into greater detail (a common Hebrew way of writing). As with the entire Eden section (2:4-25) these events transpire on day six of creation (it is not known how much time, if any, transpired between Eden / the creation of woman, and the fall as recorded in chapter three). “The last act of creation, however, was that of woman; hence, prior to this final work, the creation was yet incomplete. Man, especially, was incomplete without woman; and this was ‘not good’ (this does not mean it was evil, but only that it was unfinished and therefore imperfect). God Himself, therefore, said: ‘It is not good that the man should be alone.’” [Morris, 95]*

GOD DELIBERATES AND CREATES — “Just as the creation of mankind (1:28) was preceded by divine self-deliberation, ‘*Let us make man*’ (1:26), so here the need for the creation of woman is disclosed by God, ‘*It is not good for man to be alone.*’ *Against the sevenfold refrain of ‘and God saw that it was (very) good’ in chap. 1, the divine observation that something was not right with man’s situation is startling. It alerts the reader to the importance of companionship for man.*” [Wenham, 1:68] “*In this particular case we should note that it is God who makes the judgment about the unsuitability of man’s aloneness. Man is not consulted for his thoughts on the matter. At no point does the man offer to God any grievance about his current circumstances.*” [Hamilton, 1:175]

AN EMPHATIC STATEMENT — This negative phrase ‘*not good*’ is highly emphatic according to those knowledgeable in the Hebrew language, first by its placement at the head of the sentence, then secondly by the verbiage used. The typical word that could have been used is *’ēn*, which would give the sense of ‘*That cannot be considered good but that doesn’t mean it is absolutely bad, it may be intermediate.*’ But Moses chose to use the more emphatic word *lō* which gives the sense ‘*I definitely declare that it is the opposite of good.*’ *So the Lord is making a definitive, emphatic statement about man being alone, ‘it is bad for Adam to be alone.’* [Cassuto, 126f; Mathews, 1:213; Waltke, 88] “*This is an amazing proclamation since Adam was in a perfect state and environment. There was no sin, and Adam experienced the immediate presence and nearness of God. But mankind was created with the need of a ‘corresponding’ relationship.*” [Currid, 1:107]

I will make — The Hebrew word used here is *’āsāh* which we have seen used in 1:7 (*the firmament*), 1:16 (*the greater and lesser lights and stars*), 1:25 (*animals*), 1:26 (*man*), and as discussed in lesson 6, can have human activity (as well as divine) for its subject *but always involves using existing material* (e.g., 3:21 where God ‘*made*’ tunics from skins for Adam and Eve).

him a helper. — Hebrew, ‘ēzer = ‘helper, one who succours, one who helps.’ **This is not to be understood in a demeaning manner; the term refers to one’s function, not of a lesser role or status. The word in this context essentially describes one who provides what is lacking in the man, who can do what the man alone cannot do.** Elsewhere ‘helper / help’ most often refers to divine assistance (Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29; Josh 1:14; 1 Sam. 7:12; Ps. 20:2; 33:20; 46:1; 115:9-11; 121:1, 2; 124:8; 145:5) and in three prophetic passages it is used of military aid where the helper is one appealed to because of superior military strength or size (Ps. 121:1; Isa 30:5; Ezek 12:14; Hos 13:9). **What the man lacks is supplied within the woman; both sexes being mutually dependent on each other.**

corresponding to him.” — This is a compound Hebrew word, k^eneg^edô, which when broken down is literally ‘like, as’ + ‘before’ + ‘him.’ The main root word is neged = ‘before, in front of, before your face.’ Rabbi Cassuto, 127: ‘a helper as in front of him,’ therefore ‘a helper like him, suited to him, worthy of him, corresponding to him.’ The phrase occurs only here and 2:20. **It suggests that what God creates for Adam will correspond to him, equal and adequate; neither a superior nor an inferior but an equal. The man and the woman corresponded physically, socially, and spiritually. While they differ in sexuality, both are partakers of human nature; whatever man received at creation, she too would have. Both are equals as bearers of the image of God and in their standing before God. The creation of this helper will form one-half of a polarity, and will be to man as the south pole is to the north pole. “The focus is on the equality of the two in terms of their essential constitution. Man and woman share in the ‘human’ sameness that cannot be found elsewhere in creation among the beasts. In every way the woman shares in the same features of personhood as does the man.”** [Mathews, 1:213] **“Which may be like him,’ for Moses intended to note some equality.... In whose company he shall take delight; so the Hebrew phrase, ‘as before him,’ imports, being as much as answerable to him, every way fitted for him, not only in likeness of body, but of mind, disposition, and affection, which laid the foundation of perpetual familiarity and friendship.”** [Calvin, 131]

v. 19 – So the Lord God formed out of the ground every beast of the field and every flying creature of the air, and brought [them] to the man to see what he would call each one. — Despite the identification of man’s need, there is a delay in the provision; contrast the instantaneous fulfillment of the divine word in chapter one. **The reason for this delay is obvious in the context but as unbelievable as it may sound, there are those who consider these verses as the Lord making, as it were, a number of unsuccessful attempts by creating animals and having them pass before Adam, to see if the man would find any compatible to him.** For example, “Not only did man exist before the beasts, but the whole animal creation is the result of an unsuccessful experiment to find a mate for him.” [Skinner, 67; how can such a statement come from one considered a ‘scholar’?!?] Rabbi Cassuto notes this observation by some modern commentators and lists seven reasons why it is unreasonable. [Cassuto, 127f] **“It would seem that the text intends to tell us only that the Lord God wished to engender in the heart of man a desire for a helper who should correspond to him exactly. When the man would inspect all the species of animals in turn, and would find that some of them were indeed suited to serve him and help him to some extent, but yet there was not one among them that was his ‘like,’ he would become conscious of his loneliness and would yearn for one who could be his life-companion and a helper fit to be his soul-mate in the full sense of the words, and, in consequence, he would be ready to appreciate and cherish the gift that the Lord God was to give him.”** [Cassuto, 128]

So the Lord God formed — This presents a difficulty (as mentioned in lesson 14) because in chapter one the animals were formed *before man* (1:20, 21, 24, 25) whereas here it is said the creatures were created *after* and *for the sake of man* (2:19). But (as mentioned in lesson 15) there are acceptable explanations to this objection, so it once again comes down to what one chooses to believe: *does one want to find a reason to reject God's Word or does one believe this is God's Word and any supposed 'contradiction' has more to do with our understanding rather than a true error?*

In response to this supposed 'contradiction' there are a couple ways to explain the difficulty. Most of those I have read states it would be acceptable Hebrew grammar to consider the verb '*formed*' as a pluperfect, '*had formed.*' One commentator, John D. Currid, references C. J. Collins, *The Wayyiqtol as 'Pluperfect': When and Why*, Tyndale Bulletin 46 (1995): 117-40, if one wished to study further. Here is one commentator's explanation as to the reason '*had formed*' is possible along with Scriptural support:

"God brought to Adam the beasts which He '*had formed.*' ... A striking example of this style of narrative we find in 1 Kings vii. 13. First of all, the building and completion of the temple are noticed several times in chap. vi., and the last time in connection with the year and month (chap. vi. 9, 14, 37, 38); after that, the fact is stated, that the royal palace was thirteen years in building; and then the writer proceeds thus: 'And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram from Tyre and he came to king Solomon, and did all his work; and made the two pillars,' etc. Now, if we were to understand the historical preterite with consec., [consecutive?] here, as giving the order of sequence, Solomon would be made to send for the Tyrian artist, thirteen years after the temple was finished, to come and prepare the pillars for the porch, and all the vessels needed for the temple. But the writer merely expresses in Semitic style the simple thought, that 'Hiram, whom Solomon fetched from Tyre, made the vessels,' etc. Another instance we find in Judg. ii. 6." [Keil, 1:87]

Others agreeing with this explanation include Currid, 1:108; Henry Morris, 97; Ken Ham, 108f; and John Gill, 20.

But Rabbi Cassuto does not think this word should be considered as a pluperfect. Rather he understands the creation of the beasts and flying creatures in 2:19 in a similar sense to that of the growing of the trees in 2:9; i.e., that of all the species of beasts and flying creatures that had already been created and had spread over the face of the earth, the Lord God now formed particular specimens within the garden of Eden for the purpose of presenting them before man. "If we approach the text without preconceived ideas concerning the existence of two cosmogonic accounts, this exposition will appear simple and clear; and thus it seems to be the Torah intended the words to be understood." [Cassuto, 129] In Rabbi Cassuto's words, this may not satisfy some but it is an acceptable explanation that does not create a contradiction. Victor Hamilton agrees with Cassuto: "This verse does not imply that this was God's first creation of animals. Rather, it refers to the creation of a special group of animals brought before Adam for naming." [Hamilton, 1:176] ***So whichever explanation one accepts, this has more to do with our understanding of the text rather than a contradiction in the Word of God.***

out of the ground — Note the mention '*out of the ground,*' possibly to emphasize the parallelism with 2:9 where '*out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight,*' etc.

every beast of the field and every flying creature of the air, — Note the absence of the mention of water creatures and ‘*creeping things*,’ omitted probably as being inappropriate to the situation.

and brought [them] to the man — As the Lord brought the animals to the ark, so now the different species of animals are brought to Adam to be named. They came before him and passed by him, paying as it were their homage to their lord and owner.

to see what he would call each one. — This was not idle curiosity on the part of the Lord, rather the sentence must be taken as a whole: ‘*to see what man would call each one and to establish the names that man gave as their permanent designations.*’ The Lord had two reasons to bring forth the animals to man, the first being as follows (the second is given below): ***The naming of something or someone is a token of lordship (cf. Num 32:38; 2 Kings 23:34; 24:17; 2 Chron 36:4). The Lord of the universe named the parts of the universe (1:5, 8, 10) but He left it to man to determine the names of those creatures over which He had given him dominion. “[T]his does not suppose any want of knowledge in God, as if he did this to know what man would do, he knew what names man would give them before he did; but that it might appear he had made one superior to them all in wisdom and power, and for his pleasure, use, and service; and therefore brings them to him, to put them into his hands, and give him authority over them; and being his own, to call them by what names he pleased.*” [Gill, 20]**

and whatever name the man would give to each one of the living creatures that would be its name. — Adam gave names to the creatures suitable to their nature, or agreeable to some property or other attribute as observed in them. The animals were always afterwards called by those names so given, at least until the confusion of languages at Babel when every nation called them as they thought proper, each in their own language.

v. 20 – The man gave names to all cattle, and to the flying creatures of the air, and to every beast of the field; — The Hebrew word *qārā* (‘to call, to name’) occurs three times consecutively for emphasis (v. 19, ‘brought them unto Adam to see what he **would call** them, and whatsoever Adam **called** every living creature’... v. 20, ‘And Adam **gave** names to all the cattle...’).

but as for man, he did not find a helper corresponding to him. — Rabbi Cassuto goes into great detail of the Hebrew grammar here [Cassuto, 131-133] to illustrate the emphasis Moses is attempting to make is this: *in order to stress the antithesis that Scripture wished to express not only between ‘the man gave names’ and ‘he did not find,’ but also, and even more so, between ‘the man’ and ‘the other species of living creatures’ mentioned that came before him. “Thus the sense of the verse is: unto every kind of living being the man succeeded in giving a name befitting the character and qualities of that kind, but as far as man was concerned, he did not find a creature worthy to be his helper and to be deemed his counterpart.” [Cassuto, 133] “The [second] reason why God brings the animals before the man is so that the man should realize his need for a partner. First, by naming the creatures man becomes aware of his solitary state. No animals look like him, or act like him. Secondly, certainly none of the beasts reasons to the man as he calls out their names; there is no verbal communication. Finally, he sees that the animals are with others of their own kind; they have mates but he has none. Man is by himself.” [Currid, 1:109]* The animals are creatures but they are not helpers, Adam could exercise lordship over them but not have fellowship with them. None among them was qualified to be a helper suitable for him, he must look elsewhere for his complement.

v. 21 – So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; — What follows is initiated and carried out exclusively by God. The Creator puts man into a ‘deep sleep;’ a very heavy divinely induced sleep (Gen 15:12; Isa 29:10; 1 Sam 26:12) so that Adam does not feel the pain of the operation which is about to take place. The Lord then returns him to health prior to his waking. *“[W]e certainly could not picture to ourselves, in a beautiful and exalted narrative, an account of the removal of the rib from the body of a conscious person; his reaction to this operation would have destroyed the charm of the story, and would have introduced into it elements unsuited to its purpose. The act could not have been performed unless the man was unconscious, and to this end a deep sleep was cast upon him.”* [Cassuto, 133f]

then He took one of his ribs, — So the Lord God took the rib, probably along with the surrounding tissue, of which Adam later would exclaim, ‘*this is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh*’ (2:23). The Hebrew word used here is translated ‘side’ in every other of its thirty-nine occurrences, nineteen times of which describe the tabernacle’s construction and furniture (Exod 25-38); it also appears frequently in the construction of Solomon’s temple and Ezekiel’s vision of the new temple. **Gen 2:21 is the only place in the OT where the modern versions render this word as ‘rib.’** More than likely the translation ‘rib’ is traceable to an Arabic root meaning ‘to curve, deviate;’ hence the Hebrew word used here tsēlā‘ is a curved bone. But Carl Keil defends the use of the word ‘rib’ because it says literally ‘one’ + ‘part of’ + ‘rib, side,’ indicating the man had several of them. [Keil, 1:89]

GOOD PREACHING IS NOT NECESSARILY GOOD EXPOSITION — This is a good time to point out that a proper and theologically correct sermon is not necessarily based upon good exposition of the Scripture. By that I mean *we all have heard the following comments about the Lord taking the ‘rib’ from Adam, but there is nothing in this present text which demands such comments.* Some commonly heard comments:

“Almost without exception all of the commentators relates the oft-heard implication of the taking of the rib: ‘Just as the rib is found at the side of the man and is attached to him, even so the good wife stands at his side to be his helper-counterpart.’” [Cassuto, 134]

“There is doubtless a deeper significance in the representation: it suggests the moral and social relation of the sexes to each other, the dependence of woman upon man, her close relationship to him, and the foundation existing in nature for ... the feelings with which each should naturally regard the other.” [Skinner, 68]

Perhaps the best known explication is Matthew Henry’s famous observation:

“Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.” [Matthew Henry’s Commentary: vol 1, Genesis to Deuteronomy (Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA) 1991; page 16]

Matthew Henry may have taken his thoughts from Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica* (Question 92; Article 3, *Whether the woman was fittingly made from the rib of a man?*), published 1274:

“It is written (Gn. 2:22): ‘God built the rib, which He took from Adam, into a woman.’ I answer that, It was right for the woman to be made from a rib of man. First, to signify the social union of man and woman, for the woman should neither ‘use authority over man,’ and so she was not made from his head; nor was it right for her to be subject to man’s contempt as his slave, and so she was not made from his feet.”

This is not to suggest I do not agree with the aforementioned comments; after all, part of a pastor's job is to make application of a passage. But we must beware; once we start allegorizing Scripture, it can become whatever we desire (*the question we must always ask is, "Does the rest of Scripture support my application?"*). For example, from *Genesis Rabbah* (18.2), a Jewish religious text written probably 300-500 AD:

“He [God] thought to himself: ‘We should not create her beginning with the head, so that she not be frivolous, nor from the eye, that she not be a starrer [at men], nor from the ear, that she not be an eavesdropper, nor from the mouth, that she not talk too much [a gossip], nor from the heart, that she not be jealous, nor from the hand, that she not be light-fingered, nor from the foot, that she not be a gadabout, but from a covered up place on man. For even when a man is standing naked, that spot is covered up.’”

and He closed up its place with flesh. — This detail is also given for the sake of the beauty of the narrative, so the reader need not picture Adam in a state of mutilation with a bleeding wound as he welcomes his new mate. After the Creator had taken the rib, the flesh was immediately restored to health and Adam's body was whole again.

v. 22 – And the Lord God built up the rib which He had taken from the man — Adam may have witnessed or at least knew of the woman being formed from his side since he says, ‘*This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh*’ (2:23). “But we ought not to doubt that God would make the whole course of the affair manifest to him, either by secret revelation or by his word; for it was not from any necessity on God's part that He borrowed from man the rib out of which he might form the woman; but he designed that they should be more closely joined together by this bond, which could not have been effected unless he had informed them of the fact.” [Calvin, 134f]

And the Lord God built up into a woman — The first creation narrative simply informed us that when God created two earth creatures who would be His image bearers, He created one earthling that was male and another earthling that was female; the verse said nothing about how He created them or when He created them (simultaneously or sequentially; Gen 1:27). But detail is now added in this second creation narrative as to how the Lord actually accomplished this act. In the hands of the Lord God, the raw material taken from the man's body received the lovely form of the woman. The Hebrew word is *bānāh*, ‘*to build, to fashion,*’ a term principally used in architecture for the building of edifices. ***The verb by its very definition implies beauty, stability and durability. Here it reflects God as the master-builder or master-craftsman; He is a skillful artisan who molds and crafts a fine piece of art out of bone.*** “Owing to the normal signification of the verb in Hebrew, it arouses associations suited to the theme; just as a builder builds, with the raw materials of stones and dust, an edifice of grace and perfection, so from an ordinary piece of bone and flesh the Lord God fashioned the most comely of his creatures.” [Cassuto, 135] “*She is the first of creation to come from a living being. God creates the man first and derives the woman from the man to insure that she is his equal in substance and to maintain the unity of the human family. Thus they enjoy a unity despite their sexual difference, and this interdependence is explicit in the expression ‘one flesh’ (v. 24).*” [Mathews, 1:215]

THIS IS UNIQUE IN ANCIENT COSMOLOGIES — “*This full description of the woman's creation is unique to the cosmogonies of the ancient Near East. The Hebrews' lofty estimation of womanhood and its place in creation was not widely held by ancient civilizations, and Israel itself failed at times to give proper recognition and honor to women. The law of Israel, however, was designed to protect those who were commonly subject to abuse by society: the orphan,*

widow, and alien. Genesis's account of the woman's creation demonstrates that **God intended women to be equally important in the purposes of Providence. This was already found in chap. 1, where both 'male and female' are said to be image bearers of God and both are commanded to rule the world (1:26-28).**" [Mathews, 1:212f] **"This emphasis on the meaning of woman is unique in ancient Near Eastern texts."** [Ross, 127]

THE CREATION OF WOMAN DESTROYS THEISTIC EVOLUTION — "The account of the creation and formation of Eve is the despair of theistic evolutionists. Even if one can bring himself to believe that man evolved from an apelike ancestor and that this is what Scripture means when it says Adam was formed from the dust of the ground, there seems to be no way at all in which the account of Eve's unique mode of origin can be interpreted in an evolutionary context. To make matters worse for the evolutionist, the New Testament explicitly confirms the historicity of this record. *'For Adam was first formed, then Eve'* (1 Timothy 2:13). *'For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man'* (1 Corinthians 11:8). All other men have been born of woman, but the first woman was made from man." [Morris, 98]

ADAM WAS THE SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF HUMANITY — B. H. Carroll makes an interesting observation here, one of which will be important as we study the fall of man in chapter three. **"So that Eve was as much a descendant of Adam as you are. In other words *the man, when created, was the whole race in potentiality, and every other human being, including Eve, was derived from him.* A very important doctrine will be seen to be dependent upon this when we come to the next chapter, when we come to the fall of man. If Eve was a descendant of Adam, race responsibility did not rest upon her. Her sin might bring death to her, but only to herself, but Adam's sin would bring it to all to be derived from him."** [Carroll, 84] More about this in our lesson about the fall of man.

and brought her to the man. — After the woman's creation, God brings her to the man. Earlier he had 'brought' the animals to the man, but here God brings the woman to the man in a different way – the pronominal suffix 'her' emphasizes the object. **"God was like a father who presents his son with a valuable gift that is bound to please him and be cherished by him. 'See [he says] what I have prepared for you!'"** [Cassuto, 135] **"So the woman is presented wholly as his partner and counterpart; nothing is yet said of her as childbearer. She is valued for herself alone."** [Kidner, 65]

THE FIRST MARRIAGE — The entire scene conveys the message that God is the one who is establishing the institution of marriage. **"This first marriage, set in the sacred temple-garden and designed by God, signifies the holy and ideal state of marriage."** [Waltke, 89]

v. 23 – Then the man said,

"This, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." —

This is the first recorded speech of Adam / man (when Adam named the animals, there is no recorded speech) and the only recorded words of Adam prior to the fall. It is a poem, making it the second poem in the Scriptures (per Rabbi Cassuto, the first poem is found in 1:27). Adam's declaration is divisible into two parts in the Hebrew, as shown here.

The first part is composed of three segments, each containing two words, both accented, the first having 4 syllables, the second having 6 syllables, and the third having 7 syllables.

The second part is composed of two segments, each comprising three words, all accented, both having 7 syllables. Thus each part has six accented words.

In these five short lines are many of the standard techniques of Hebrew poetry: parallelism, assonance and word play (woman / man), chiasmus (A B C / C₁ B₁ A₁), and verbal repetition. The emphasis points all eyes to the woman. [Wenham, 1:70] The Hebrew word zōt (rendered once 'this' and twice 'she') which refers to the woman occurs three times in the man's utterance: he begins and ends with this word, and uses it also in the middle of his speech. This reiteration is for emphasis (***this***, at last ... ***she*** shall be called ... [literally] out of man was taken ***she***).

Then the man said, "This, at last, — Literally, 'this, the time,' or, 'this, this time.' This does not mean, 'this time,' as if there were previous attempts. Rather, as Rabbi Cassuto points out, it is common in Hebrew for the definite article prefix 'h' to serve as a demonstrative pronoun (a pronoun referring to specific person(s) or thing(s); in English, the following are demonstrative pronouns: 'this, that, these, those. '); for example, the Hebrew hayyôm would mean 'this day, today;' the Hebrew hallaylâh would mean 'this night, tonight.' Thus one Hebrew scholar interprets this (with Rabbi Cassuto's approval) as 'this – this female.' ***"The sense is: 'This creature, this time [that is, at last], is in truth a helper corresponding to me!' Thus the man exclaims in his enthusiasm and heart's joy."*** [Cassuto, 135] ***"The two words of the original are both intended to be emphatic. 'This living creature which at the present time passes before me, is the companion which I need, for it is bone of my bones, and flesh and my flesh.'"*** [Calvin, 135] Several paraphrases capture the meaning well: 'At last, here is one of my own kind.' (Good News Translation); 'At last, a suitable companion, a perfect partner.' (The Voice Bible).

is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; — Whereas our culture speaks of 'blood relationships,' the Hebrews spoke of relatives as one's 'flesh and bone.' ***This can be used of close familial proximity;*** e.g., 'Surely you are my bone and my flesh' (29:14, Laban to Jacob); 'I am your bone and your flesh' (Judg 9:2, Abimelech to his mother's relations); 'Behold, we are your bone and your flesh' (2 Sam 5:1, the tribes of Israel to David); 'you are my kinsmen, you are my bone and my flesh ... are you not my bone and my flesh?' (2 Sam 19:12, David to the elders of Judah; and 19:13, David to Amasa); 'Behold, we are your bone and your flesh' (1 Chron 11:1, Israel to David). The meaning in each of these cases would be the union of the same parents or the same family; the source of the bones and the flesh is the same. ***In this verse however, seeing there were no parentage to be considered, the first man could employ this phrase in the full sense of the words, in their literal connotation: the woman was indeed 'bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh!'*** ***"This formula sets man and woman on an equal footing as regards their humanity, yet sets them apart from the animals (vv 19-20; cf. 1:26-28)."*** [Wenham, 1:70] ***"With poetry, he celebrates the bond and equality of man and woman.... The image of shared flesh illustrates the complete bond of marriage. All that affects one, affects the other. To hurt one is to hurt the other (Eph. 5:28-29)."*** [Waltke, 89]

she shall be called Woman, — ***'She is worthy of being called by the same name as myself;'*** that is to say, 'I have given names to all living beings, but I have not succeeded in finding one among them fit to be called by a name resembling mine, thus indicating its kinship with me. She, at last, deserves to be given a name corresponding to my own.' Though they are equal in nature, that man names woman indicates there is order and that she is subordinate to him *in that order*, an important presupposition of the ensuing narrative (cf. 3:20). [Wenham, 1:70] This has nothing to do with worth; she is not 'less equal' nor 'less a partaker in the image of God' but there is order (cp. the Trinity).

because she was taken out of Man.” — We have seen that the narrator named Adam by his relation to creation, to the ground (‘adāmāh, 1:25; 2:5-7, 9, 19) but here Adam names himself in relation to his wife. [Waltke, 89] There is a play on words used here: ‘*she shall be called WOMAN [‘ishshāh], because she was taken out of MAN [‘ishh].*’ All the commentators note that while the Hebrew words resemble each other phonetically, their etymology is uncertain and they probably come from different roots. But since they have similar sounds, this aptly marks the affinity between the man and his spouse. “*And he gives to his wife a name taken from that of man, that by this testimony and this mark he might transmit a perpetual memorial of the wisdom of God.*” [Calvin, 135]

v. 24 – Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother — This is not a continuation of Adam’s words but a comment made by the Torah, whether by Moses or a statement from the Lord Himself, concerning marriage which was now instituted. “*The author now inserts an editorial comment on the scene that has unfolded. Moses understands that the marriage of man and woman is to serve as a paradigm, a pattern that God has set in time and history prior to the fall of mankind. Marriage is a creation ordinance and institution. The verse is a description of divine intention.*” [Currid, 1:111]

leaves — This denotes constant and continued action according to Rabbi Cassuto. The meaning is simply this: while a man is single, he forms part of his father’s family but when he takes a wife, he founds a new family and in so doing ‘leaves’ his former family. ***This is not necessarily a physical move;*** in the Jewish culture it was very common for the son to build a new room / section of the house which was to be his own and the wife would come and stay after the marriage. In our present Western culture, this most often does involve a physical relocation; but whether it is a relocation or not, the son’s affections are now directed towards his new wife and family.

BALANCE IS REQUIRED — ***While the husband’s obligations to his wife are to take precedence over other priorities, that is not to imply the total dissolution of old ties.*** Upon marriage a man is not to drop his affections to his parents, or be remiss in his obedience to them, his honor and esteem for them, or neglect the care of them if they stand in need of his assistance. “On marriage a man’s priorities change. Beforehand his first obligations are to his parents: afterwards they are to his wife. In modern Western societies where filial duties are often ignored, this may seem a minor point to make, but in traditional societies like Israel where honoring parents is the highest obligation next to honoring God, this remark about forsaking them is very striking.” [Wenham, 1:70f]

and cleaves to his wife, — “This phrase suggests both passion and permanence should characterize marriage. Shechem’s love of Dinah is described as ‘*his soul stuck to Dinah*’ (Gen 34:3). The tribes of Israel are assured that they will stick to their own inheritance; i.e., it will be theirs permanently (Num 36:7, 9). Israel is repeatedly urged to stick to the Lord (Deut 10:20; 11:22; 13:5; etc.).” [Wenham, 1:71] “***[T]he union between them is so close, as if they were but one person, one soul, one body; and which is to be observed against polygamy, unlawful divorces, and all uncleanness, fornication, and adultery: only one man and one woman, being joined in lawful wedlock, have a right of copulation with each other, in order to produce a legitimate offspring.***” [Gill, 21]

MARRIAGE IS A COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP — The verb ‘leaves, forsakes’ frequently describes Israel’s rejection of her covenant relationship with Yahweh (Jer 1:16; 2:13, 17, 19; 5:7; 16:11; 17:13; 19:4; 22:9; etc.). By the contrast the verb ‘cleave,

covenantal – adj., relating to a formal agreement or promise made by two or more parties
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cling’ often designates the maintenance of the covenant relationship (Deut 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20). **“Thus, to leave father and mother and cling to one’s wife means to sever one loyalty and commence another. Already Scripture has sounded the note that marriage is a covenant rather than an ad-hoc, makeshift arrangement.”** [Hamilton, 1:181] **“This is the language of covenant commitment. Marriage depicts God’s relationship to his people** (Hos. 2:14-23; Eph. 5:22-32).” [Waltke, 90]

and they become one flesh. — ***This does not denote merely the sexual union that follows marriage or the children conceived in marriage. Rather – and more specifically – the union of both parties morally, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, though all is involved in becoming one flesh. They become one complete unit; the two may now serve and obey God in a bonded, total relationship.*** [Currid, 1:111; Wenham, 1:71] ***“A man and woman are never more like God than on their wedding day when they commit themselves unconditionally to one another.... Christ, the model, will go even further and die for the other. In marriage we imitate the gospel, giving up our rights and even our life for the other.”*** [Waltke, 89] ***Note the order: ‘leaving’ and ‘cleaving’ before becoming ‘one flesh;’ nothing less, before intercourse. “So this question, as well as divorce, was settled ‘from the beginning’ (Mk. 10:6ff).”*** [Kidner, 66]

v. 25 – And they were both naked, the man and his wife, — This verse has an important narrative function and prepares us for what we shall be told later, *‘and they knew they were naked’* (3:7). After the fall, the couple notice their nakedness, make fig-leaf aprons, cover themselves, and hide in the bushes when they hear God approaching (3:7-11). This verse (2:25) points out that originally men did not react this way. ***Of course ‘naked’ refers primarily to physical nudity but one may also think that no barrier of any kind drove a wedge between Adam and Eve.*** “The verb for ‘naked’ in Hebrew is ‘arûmmîm, and it is a word-play on Genesis 3:1, in which the serpent is described as ‘ârûm (that is, ‘sly / crafty’). An antithesis of the two natures is certainly being accentuated by the play on words.” [Currid, 1:112]

and were not ashamed. — This has nothing to do with whether they felt any sexual arousal or not; rather at this point of innocence they had not yet learned that sexual desire could also be directed towards selfish or evil ends, thus they had no cause to be ashamed at their nakedness. A feeling of shame only comes from the consciousness of evil or wrongdoing. They were not sensible that there was any necessity or occasion to cover themselves. They were like young children unashamed at their nakedness. One commentator stated they looked upon the sexual organs in the same way as we regard the mouth, face or hands. “The second verb ... bears the idea of reciprocal action – that is, *‘They felt no shame before one another.’* The verb for *‘to be ashamed’* in Hebrew expresses the sense of confusion, embarrassment and dismay that occur when matters turn out differently than expected. ***It is the antonym of the verb ‘to trust’, and thus it indicates that the humans had complete faith and trust in one another. And, indeed, they had nothing to be ashamed of! No imprudent or immoral act lay in their past. No guilt or remorse existed.*** [Currid, 1:112] ***“In this ideal state, man and woman view their person and sexuality with wholeness and thus feel no shame in their nakedness. Here their nakedness is an image of openness and trust.”*** [Waltke, 90]

NT COMMENTS ON THIS PASSAGE — All of the commentaries mentioned these verses in relation to the NT’s teachings on men, women and marriage – and properly so. Some items to note in particular:

The sexes are complementary: the true partnership is expounded by the terms that are used: a helper fit for him (2:18, 20); by the fruitless search elsewhere as man discerns the natures of other creatures; and by the fact that Eve is of the very stuff of Adam and yet a wholly new being.

The union of the two in marriage is to be an **exclusive** (*'a man leaves...'*, 2:24), **permanent** (*'... and cleaves'*), **God-sealed bond** (*'one flesh'*). For God himself, like the father of the bride, leads the woman to the man. **"Monogamous heterosexual marriage** was always viewed as the divine norm from the outset of creation." [Mathews, 1:224] **"[T]he ultimate purpose for marriage** is stated: it is to serve and obey God by submitting to his Word and, thus, worshiping him." [Currid, 1:112f] "Some people claim that as long as people love each other, it doesn't matter whether it's two men or two women. However, it is not love that determines how to define marriage, **it's God who defines marriage**, and He defines it very clearly as between one man and one woman. God's Word – not feelings or ever-changing cultural standards – defines truth." [Ham, 111]

Jesus appeals to Gen 2:23, 24 as the basis for His teaching on marriage and divorce: *'And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 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'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.'"* (Matt 19:4-6; cp. Mark 10:2-12) Note Jesus obviously regarded **the creation account as historical and not allegorical.** [Morris, 103] As did Paul who also referred to the same passage when speaking of Christ and His churches: *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*' (Eph 5:31, 32)

"God has created human life to have fellowship with him but also to be a social entity, building relationships with other human beings.... **Isolation is not the divine norm for human beings;** community is the creation of God." [Mathews, 1:213] **"Relationship is modeled after God who does not exist in isolation** but is a triunity, surrounded by a heavenly court.... In the OT, even those set apart for holy duties marry (high priest, Lev. 21:13; Nazarite rules do not include celibacy, Num. 6:1-4).... That it is not good for man to be alone must be qualified by the NT teaching. **Marriage is good, but it is even better to be married to Christ (1 Cor. 7:29-40).**" [Waltke, 88]

There was perfect ease between them, in God's true pattern (2:25). "But it is the fruit of perfect love, which has no alloy of greed, distrust or dishonour; it was understandably an immediate casualty of the Fall, and the chapter ends with a pointed reminder of our vanished concord." [Kidner, 66]

In relation to their natures they are equal but there is order — *'For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.'* (1 Cor 11:8, 9); *'And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.'* (1 Tim 2:12, 13) **This is to be no more mis-used than we would understand the relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**