

Torah Series - Book of Genesis

B. The Garden of Eden and the Fall (2:4–3:24)

Formation of man and woman, the temptation, sin, and expulsion from Eden.

Genesis 2:4 as a structural marker:

- "This is the book of the generations/genealogy of the heavens and the earth." This is a recurring *toledot* formula in Genesis that organizes the book like chapter introductions (Genesis 1:1–2:3 functions as a prologue/introduction).
- "In the day" uses *yom* flexibly ('period of time', 24 hours/Representative vs. Literal), emphasizing no precise timetable is intended.

Genesis 2:5–6 Setup:

- Frames a new focus on humanity.
- Before plants/herbs, no rain and no man to till the ground → earth is still "**void**."
- God solves this: a **fountain** springs up to water the earth (addressing no rain). Humanity's role includes working the ground to bring forth life in cooperation with God.

Genesis 2:7 – Creation of humanity:

- God forms *adam* (man) from dust of the *adama* (ground/earth) – a Hebrew pun ("his name is mud"). Breathes the breath/spirit (*ruah*) into him; man becomes a **living soul** (*nefesh*).
- This is physical body + animating spirit = living being.

Theological implications (soul/body):

- Contrasts with Platonic/Cartesian dualism ("ghost in the machine," body as prison). A "living soul" is the unified **physical body indwelt by spirit**. All living things have souls; death separates spirit from body. Supports bodily resurrection (without body, no full living human). To this end pagans cremated the dead, Jews/Christians did not.

Image of God and ancient context:

- Parallels (but inverts) pagan temple idol rituals where spirit enters an image/idol. **God creates His own image** (humanity) and animates it – not for manipulation, but for humans to represent and reflect God in creation through their way of life.
- This ties into later Torah commandments.

Genesis 2:8 – Garden of Eden (Paradise):

- God plants a specific walled garden eastward in Eden (a particular locale, not the whole world).
- "*Paradise*" is a Persian loanword for a walled garden (ex: Taj Mahal). Eden is on the mountain of God, a place where God dwells with humanity—common Ancient Near Eastern imagery for divine dwelling (cool mountain gardens - very nice if you live in hot deserts!).

- Adam is formed **outside the garden** and placed inside; humanity's ultimate calling is not to stay forever but to learn, then go out and extend the garden/order/life to the whole world in cooperation with God.

Genesis 2:9 – Trees and Provision:

- God grows beautiful, fruitful trees (sustenance without killing the source).
- Central are the **Tree of Life** and the **Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil**. Fruit trees symbolize cooperative abundance.

Genesis 2:10-14 – Rivers from Eden:

- A river flows out of Eden, dividing into four heads:
 - Pishon/Havilah with gold/precious stones - Danube
 - Gihon - Ethiopia
 - Tigris, Euphrates - Nile
 - Geographically impossible on current earth map—emphasizes symbolic/theological point (not GPS coordinates).
- **Origin on a mountain** (water flows downhill in four directions). These rivers water and sustain **early civilizations**, showing God's life-giving provision flowing from paradise to the world. Links to NT imagery (living water, rivers from believers, paradise within via God's indwelling).

Genesis 2:15-17 – Man's Role in the Garden:

- Adam is put in the garden "to tend and keep it" as initial training/preparation before going out.
- Command: Eat from any tree except the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil—"in the day you eat of it, you shall surely die (Hebrew: *die by death*)" (consequence/warning, not punitive threat of death).
- "Knowledge of good and evil" idiomatically means maturity/age of accountability (cf. Solomon's ask for wisdom, Isaiah 7:16 "before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good,").
- Adam (newly created is "child-like") is warned not to seize maturity **prematurely**; the tree itself is not evil.

Genesis 2:18-24 – Creation of Woman and Naming Animals:

- "Not good for man to be alone"—needs a counterpart for reproduction and **filling** the earth (he's with God, so not "lonely" in a romantic sense).
- Adam **names animals** as exercise in **ordering/subduing** (royal imagery of authority and taxonomy). No suitable helper among them.
- God puts Adam into a deep sleep/trance, takes one "side" (not literally a 'rib'—word means 'side/half'), builds both halves into man and woman (reunion in marriage becomes "one flesh").
- This foreshadows marriage, Christ/Church typology, and why divorce is like tearing apart what God joined.

Genesis 2:25 – Innocence:

- Adam and Eve naked and unashamed—like children before maturity.
- Sets up the Fall narrative in chapter 3.

- Salvation is not merely returning to Eden's innocence but fulfilling humanity's original vocation to extend God's order and life.

Genesis 3:1 – The Serpent:

- Introduces the *nachash* (serpent), a word with multiple meanings via its trilateral (3 letter) root: serpent (noun), cunning/clever (adjective), or shining/brazen one (participle).
- Not a literal talking snake or the Rudyard Kipling story about snakes losing legs. This is a shining, serpentine angelic being (throne guardian Cherub type, like Babylonian *Lamassu* or Egyptian Seraphim/winged serpent).
- Parallels in Ezekiel (28:11-19) and Isaiah (14:12-15) describe a divine figure cast from Eden/God's mountain. Not part of the named animals; a distinct spiritual being.
- Church Fathers place the fall after creation through envy. Rejected: a pre-creation angelic rebellion.

Genesis 3:2-3 – The Temptation Begins:

- The serpent questions God's command ("Has God indeed said you shall not eat from every tree...?"), twisting it into a false restriction.
- This is the first theological conversation *about* God between creatures, treating Him as absent. Eve responds by restating (and slightly adding to) the command: don't eat or even touch the tree in the middle, lest you die.

Genesis 3:4-5 – The Lie:

- Serpent directly contradicts God ("You shall not 'die by death'") and offers a half-truth: "Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like **gods** [divine beings], knowing good and evil."
- "gods" (plural *elohim*) refers to spiritual/divine beings (angels, etc.), not becoming the Creator God. Temptation: **be like the angels (gods)**.
- Serpent presents premature maturity (knowledge of good and evil = coming of age/accountability, cf. Isaiah) as a shortcut God is withholding out of envy.
- This pattern of offering destructive knowledge too soon recurs in early Genesis.

Genesis 3:6 – The Fall:

- Eve sees the tree as good for food, pleasant, and desirable for contemplation; she eats and gives some to Adam (who was present the whole time!).
- Adam fails in his priestly role to tend/protect the garden/temple-space and should have intervened.
- Both eat; Adam is complicit by silence and following.

Genesis 3:7 – Immediate Consequences:

- Eyes opened; they realize they are naked and feel shame (loss of childlike innocence). They sew fig leaves for coverings.
- "Knowing good and evil" here means experiential knowledge—they **internalize evil** (eating = incorporating it, cf. *yada* as intimate knowing vs 'knowing about').
- Gaining awareness of evil alongside the good.

Genesis 3:8 – God Approaches:

- They hear the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the "spirit/wind/heat of the day" (English: 'cool' {breeze?} of the day)
- Resonates with "the day" = Day of the Lord/judgment/visitation.
- God comes to sort out the disorder (judgment as restoring order). Typologically linked to Christ (the Word/*Memra*/*Hypostasis*(Jesus), visible intermediary figure in Second Temple thought) walking and judging.
- Instead of welcoming Him, they hide.

Genesis 3:9-13 – God Questions Man:

- God isn't playing hide & seek. He gives the people an opportunity to confess/repent.
- Instead: Adam **blames** the woman. The woman **blames** the serpent.

Genesis 3:14 – God orders the consequences:

- Notice: God doesn't give the serpent the option of repenting.
- Satan is jealous of the human's ability to mature and be like God in fulfilling their God-given mandate (*Edenize the world*). Angels don't get promoted/grow/mature. So he tries to limit humanities' ability by bringing about death. He's trying to derail God's plan for humanity.
- Curse to Satan:
 - You were once beautiful & high/exalted, now 'on your belly'
 - 'Eat dust' - dust of creation: death. Hebrews (2:14) tells us he had the 'power of death'

Genesis 3:15 – Proto-Gospel:

- "I will put enmity **between you and the woman**, and between your offspring(seed) and her offspring; **he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**"
- Weird: women don't have seed/Greek: *sperma*. Allusion: Virgin Birth of Christ (**no seed**).
- John's Gospel: Mary is called "woman" throughout the Gospel until His crucifixion where He calls her "mother"
- Cross: Satan strikes Jesus with death, Jesus crushes the head of Satan by death.

Genesis 3:16 – God orders consequences for the woman:

- Childbearing/filling the world with life now has pain/difficulty/struggle (extends to child rearing)
- Radical Relationship equality is now destroyed

Genesis 3:17-19 – God orders consequences for the man:

- Eve didn't do this to you, you listened to her! It's your fault.
- Ground is cursed. Pain/difficulty/struggle with producing food (rather than the abundant food that was offered to him in the garden).
- *Edenizing* the world is replaced with survival.
- Bread - literally processed food, made by the labour of man
- Dust - of creation, now you will return to it (physical death)!

Genesis 3:20-21 – Mortality:

- Eve was originally called 'woman,' now she is Eve (Greek *Zoe*) 'mother'

- 'Garments of skins' - we think of Flintstone/caveman clothing (better than their home-made fig tree outfits). But this is actually a change in their bodies. (Compare St. Paul: 1 Corinthians 15:39-40)
- Skins: this is a body of mortality. 1 Corinthians 15:52-53: "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality."

Genesis 3:22-24 – Expulsion from the Garden:

- God expels humanity from the garden to prevent solidifying mortality for humanity
 - This is God's mercy not His punishment.
 - It also prevents Satan's plan from coming to fruition (eternal beings knowing evil - demons).
 - Death is being cut off from God. Life is knowing God and participating in His divine life.
 - Physical death is a consequence of spiritual death.
 - This is the first fall of humanity (there are more).
 - Note: 'Sin' hasn't appeared in the Bible yet.
 - **Death** is the cardinal problem that must be dealt with.
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