

# Two origin accounts: a synthesis

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## Where to start?

The Creation and Garden narratives are each concerned with origins. They are adjacent to each other without any transitional notes. The seeming discrepancies between the two has been a source of enduring tension. Consider:

The scope of the Creation narrative is universal. God establishes the distinctions of light and dark, above and below, land and sea, and then populates the resulting domains with appropriate creatures. The Garden scene is particular: it describes an elevated parcel of land where God rests humanity to tend a garden.

At Creation, man is created complete. Humanity exists by divine deliberation and fiat, 'Let us make man in our image...' The description is ideal and Platonic, God's word is irresistible. Humanity is God's final work: a projection of the divine creator, imbued with authority to subdue and have dominion over the previously created creatures and any residual chaos that might emerge from the confined but still present sea. Humanity is charged to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.

In the garden, man is drawn and shaped from the ruddy dirt. He is not complete. Rather, he is diffident, naked, and needy. In the garden, humanity is formed wanting, but uniquely provisioned. Humanity falls from their privileged position after yielding to temptation. Tensions abound: one mysterious fruit is off-limits, man has no corresponding female. The woman is not suddenly materialized by God invoking his effective word, rather the man is split and the woman is built from one part. A walking and talking snake with unclear motives and a hint of ambition appears, stirring doubt over God's motives and his provision. Childbirth seems to be a consequence of disobedience.

Scholarly consensus resolves these tensions by arguing that these are two independent accounts clumsily redacted by an ancient editor/s. Undeniably a seam exists. However, a number of clues suggest that both were composed with the other in mind. The differences are not discrediting, but form a dialectic tension. The tensions contribute to the text's lesson, not detract from its credibility. The task of the student is not to discern separate messages and the motives of disparate authors, but to understand the message of a single coherent story and ask why it employs its curious style. This work attempts to synthesize the two origin accounts.

## Humanity as a hunger

The two human origin stories are separate narratives, each describing the provision of humanity's basic hungers. Both narratives detail the provision of the same fundamental hungers. The description of the provisions is presented in a chiasmic form, see Figure 1, that straddles the two accounts. This structure implies, or points, to a center event. At the center we find the account of God forming the *adam* (אָדָם) from the *adamah* (אֲדָמָה) or ground as a *nephesh hayah* (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה). I believe that this term is best translated as a 'living hunger.'

The hungers resemble those found in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs<sup>1</sup>. Maslow was an educational psychologist who observed that human’s have foundational needs that lead to progressively more elevated needs as each lower need is satisfied. Genesis anticipates Maslow’s observations. Each member of Maslow’s hierarchy is easily mapped into a need provisioned in both Creation and Garden accounts.

The garden narrative’s description of the man as a living-hunger more closely identifies him with the teeming beast, than the single creator God. This same descriptor characterizes the creatures that swarm the waters and skies on day five, and all the animal who receive the provision of the green plants on day six. The actions performed by a *nephesh* in scripture include hungering for food<sup>2</sup>, water<sup>3</sup>, lusting<sup>4</sup>, and losing heart<sup>5</sup>.

The traditional rendering of this term as *soul* seems to get it exactly wrong. A soul is disembodied and immaterial. The soul is the seat of emotion, untainted by biological needs like respirating or metabolizing. Translating the term as *creature* or *being* (*ESV, Schocken*) doesn’t say enough. A *nephesh* is not a stable and contented creature. The birds and fish swarm because they are driven by a hunger for food and safety. A *nephesh* is always reaching to satisfy its many hungers. The context of the term in the garden suggests earthy and substantial, this creature is connected to the dirt, not only by name, but through his belly. The *adam* is umbilically tethered to the ground by his *nephesh*.

<u>scope</u>		<u>ref</u>	<u>The appetite</u>
Universal	Platonic	1:26-27a	<b>Significance:</b> created in the image and <u>likeness of God</u>
		1:27b	<b>Intimacy:</b> man( <u>memory</u> ) and woman( <u>namer</u> )
		1:28	<b>Vocation:</b> subdue and rule the <u>earth</u>
		1:29	<b>Food:</b> seed and fruit
		2:1-3	<b>Rest:</b> rest/ <i>shabat</i> as sacred time
		2:4-7	<b>Crux:</b> man is a living hunger
		2:8,15	<b>Rest:</b> rested/ <i>nuach</i> in sacred space
Particular	Aristotelian	2:9,16	<b>Food:</b> trees of the garden
		2:15	<b>Vocation:</b> guard and serve the <u>garden</u>
		2:18-23	<b>Intimacy:</b> woman/ <i>isha</i> is built from man/ <i>ish</i>
		3:5	<b>Significance:</b> <i>ha-adam</i> and his woman seek to be <u>like God</u>

Figure 1: Hungers of humanity as presented in Creation and Garden accounts

<sup>1</sup> Maslow’s five needs: food (physiological), safety, intimacy, vocation, legacy

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 19:4-8

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 23, 42:1-2

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 2:24

<sup>5</sup> Jonah 4:3, 1 Kings 19:4

Each account describes the same set of hungers and orders them identically but in reverse. A useful exercise is to compare the two accounts describes the provision of each appetite.

- **rest**

After God evaluates the cosmos he has spoken into existence, he rests. The word here for rest is *shabbat* (שבת) it focuses on the cessation of activity. *Shabbat* is a discontinuity of mundane time for elevated or holy time.

After man's formation, he is rested in a garden. A garden suggests a protected space, free from predators. This image is emphasized by a verb that suggests that God 'rested' the man in the garden<sup>6</sup> rather than merely *put* him in the garden ( the name of Noah, another gardener, is based on this root). Here the man is rested in an elevated land discontinuous from normal land.

- **food**

In the Creation account, God gives to humanity all the plants yielding seed and all the trees with fruit.

The Garden is populated with every desirable tree. The garden's provision appeals aesthetically and satisfies the need for food. As in the Creation narrative, humanity is given free range to eat from any of these fruit bearing tree. However, one limitation is added, they are not to eat from tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

- **vocation**

In the Creation narrative the scope of humanity's charge is universal. They are to populate creation. They words describe how they are to exercise their stewardship. They are to subdue (כבש), which implies putting the subdued under foot; stomping<sup>7</sup>. They are to rule (רדה), which also has sense of treading<sup>8</sup>. Their subjects are all the creatures inhabiting the sky, land, and sea.

In the Garden account, man is given a vocation; to guard and serve the garden rather than subdue and rule. These two verbs don't typically describe gardening<sup>9</sup>.

- Guarding is the duty of a sentinel. This description assumes threats from outside.
- Serving seems to reverse the relationship between the ground and the gardener. One imagines working a garden, not serving a garden.

Others have argued that these duties recall the functions of a priest in a temple. A temple is the earthly abode of a god. Temples are furnished with objects that are expressed more concretely in another realm, where the true form of the object exists. When we read temple building specification like that of the tabernacle in Exodus 25-27, the specification are exact.

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<sup>6</sup> Genesis 2:15

<sup>7</sup> 2 Chronicles 9:18 uses this term to refer to the footstool that supports Solomon's feet. Akkadian and Arabic cognates have meanings of to tread down and stamp.

<sup>8</sup> see Joel 3:13 'Go in *tread*, for the winepress is full.'

<sup>9</sup> G.K. Beale teaches that when these two words occur together elsewhere in the OT they refer to Israel serving God, obeying his word, or service in the temple. (see Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14)

Details are not left to the craftsman, because the furnishings must capture the essence of a heavenly form.

Note that the man's destiny after the fall in the Garden is to bruise the head of the serpent even as his heel is bruised, stomping and treading imagery. In other words, a son of *adam* will stomp the serpent as charged by God in the Creation account.

• *intimacy*

In the Creation narrative the term *adam* appears to represent both masculine and feminine aspects of humanity. The two aspects are subsequently described using the terms *zekar*(זכר) and *nqbah*(נקבה). While the notion of male and female is communicated by these words, and they do serve that function in this local context, this is not the primary meaning this narrative is communicating.

ref	Day 3 (Genesis 1:11,12)	Day 6 (Genesis 1:26, 27)
A	Let the earth sprout vegetation	Let us make man
B $\sigma$	plants yielding seed,	in our image and likeness,
B $\varphi$	and fruit trees	and let them have dominion
C	bearing fruit each according to its kind	So God created man
D	on the earth. And it was so.	in his image
$\bar{D}$	The earth	in the image of God
$\bar{C}$	brought forth vegetation	he created him
$\bar{B}\sigma$	plants <b>yielding seed</b> according to their own kinds,	<b>male</b> and
$\bar{B}\varphi$	and trees bearing <b>fruit in which is their seed</b>	<b>female</b>
$\bar{A}$		he created them.

Figure 2: Parallel chiasms describing plant life and humanity in Creation narrative

Genesis 1:26-27 forms a chiasm that parallels a similar chiasm describing plant life. Figure 2 shows the corresponding chiastic structures for days 3 and 6. The plant life, described in Genesis 1:11-12, comes in two forms, that which scatters its seed and that which contains fruit with seed. This is congruent with humanity, males that scatter their seed and females which contain their seed.

This parallel between plant and human life is found in the  $\bar{B}$  lines of Day 3 and 6 in Figure 2. But the more important parallel is with the local B and  $\bar{B}$  lines on the sixth day only. *zekar* has to do with memory, projecting or re-remembering an image or word. *nqbah* concerns the exercise of dominion. These are the capacities of the male and female although in the Garden there is a focus on the negligence of bringing forth words on the man's part and a focus of misuse of the hands on the woman's part.

The garden account differs. The *adam* refers to the man alone. The man needs a helper. This is an unsatisfactory condition. The first unsatisfactory condition in Genesis is presented at the books outset, when the world was formless and void. God forms and populates the earth primarily through the act of drawing forth and elevating one portion from a whole. The

undesirable state of formless and void is addressed in stages and called good, when the project finishes, God calls it very good.

Here, God identifies another situation as not good; man has no helper. He addresses the lack. God again forms a being, but not like he formed the *adam* in Genesis 2:7, from the *adamah*. The woman is drawn and built from the divided man. Next, the man, not God, evaluates the result, he declares the situation as good, but in so many more words: 'bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.'

- **significance**

With man's needs for his belly, vocation, and helper/intimate addressed, his attention turns toward his loftiest hunger; that of significance. Both texts describe this longing in terms of being 'like God'.

In the Creation narrative humanity is formed in the image and the likeness of God. The lure that occupied the serpent's line in the garden is already obtained in the Creation narrative. Humanity is not be tempted to be like God, they are like God. They can bring forth God's effective word(*zakar*) to subdue and name chaos (*nqbah*).

In the Garden, a serpent directs the man's attention to the forbidden fruit hanging on the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The serpent baits his line with the promise that its consumption will make humanity 'like God.'

### **Summary of hungers:**

When we read the Garden narrative, God is not resting as described at the end of the earlier Creation narrative. He is active: forming, clothing, judging. In the Creation narrative, everything is complete. The Creation narrative describes something similar to Plato's forms. This is the ideal towards which God's creation irresistibly moves. The Garden narrative is the first steps, the prime move towards that end. It doesn't contradict, it describes from a different vantage.

The human created from the dirt and then described using the same term as the hungry teeming animals (*nephesh hayah*) bears little likeness to God. Humanity here, is shown as weak and needy. Their failure is rudimentary; they had to remember just one thing. They are a far cry from being the vice-regents of the universe shown in Creation.

The provisions of food, vocation, and significance described in the Garden amount are each a subset of those provisions at Creation.

- The menu in the garden is missing the fruit from one tree and the seed scattering plants.
- The vocation of humanity in the garden involves stewarding a plot of land within the cosmos, while humanity rules the entire cosmos in the Creation narrative.
- The provision of the intimate is the same, but it is temporarily withheld in the garden.
- The appetite for significance, to be like God, is not realized in the Garden. The first couple is tempted to reach and provide this quality themselves. While humanity in the Creation narrative is already the image and likeness of Elohim.

With the provision for man's intimate we find that the garden describes a provision for humanity not yet initially realized. A number of the tensions in the two accounts can be resolved if we see this relationship between them. For example:

- God put the tree of knowledge in the garden not to tempt humanity, but because in time, humanity was to gain this knowledge.
- Humanity was to initially oversee the garden, but as they matured, their rule would extend over the cosmos.
- We see humanity subjugating creatures under its feet in the Creation narrative, while in the garden a distant son of *adam* bruises his heel while subjugating the serpent.

The two accounts are synthesized if we consider the Creation account to describe the total arc of history. Although it is fashioned as an account of origins, the Creation narrative also describes the end or telos. The formless and void chaos was structured and populated over six days. God established habitats which were then populated with creatures. Elements of the chaos remained, they were consigned to the sea. God rests while his image bearers reign over the creatures, including any that might emerge from the chaos.

The Garden account is the incipient form of Creation. God creates humanity from the dirt. He has a God-like capacity but a beast-like hunger. To transform the *adam* to a *zekar*, a projection of God's image, the *adam* must remember God's word and subdue, *nqbah*, or tread the serpent.

## Serpent

We are given little details about the serpent. We are told that it exceeds the land animals in the quality of *arum* (ערמ). This term, or perhaps two similar terms, are used twice in a five word window. The term is first used in the plural to describes the state of undress of the man and the woman, they are *naked*. Then in the second instance, it is singular, and is the singular descriptor of the serpent. Here it is often translated as shrewd or crafty.

The text declares that the snake exceeds all the land animals in this quality, suggesting that the snake is not from the land. If it is not a land animal, where is it from? Genesis 3:1 is the second time we've encountered a snake in Genesis. The first time is in the Creation narrative. On day five<sup>10</sup> God creates a *tananim* (תנינמ). The term is plural and it is synonymous with *nachash* (נחש), the word used for the snake in the garden<sup>11</sup>.

Other classes of sky, land, and sea creatures<sup>12</sup> are described in the Creation account using singular collective nouns<sup>13</sup>. Three instances of plural beings are found in Genesis. The text reference God using the plural Elohim. The stars of day four are referenced in the plural. The ancients viewed the stars as an angelic host or army. The third is the *tananim*, the plural noun

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<sup>10</sup> Genesis 1:21

<sup>11</sup> In Exodus 7, the serpent that appears when Moses throws down his staff is referred to both as a *tannin* (תננ) in verse 9 and as a *nachash* (נחש) in verse 15.

<sup>12</sup> The words usually translated as birds, fish, and living things that move in verse 1:28 could be the winged of the air, the multipliers of the sea and the living creepers of the earth. Each class is really a particle or a gerund. These are extremely general classes. The particular plural noun term *tananim* stands out from this collection of creatures.

<sup>13</sup> The single exception is the stars on day four. The plural noun is used to describe them. In the ANE mind, the stars or the host were divine.

for snake. This snake is special, it is referenced using the hebraic plural of majesty<sup>14</sup> like God and his host. What exactly the nature of the majesty that is possessed by the snake, or the significance of its abode is not stated, but these are deduced when the snake appears in the Garden.

In the Creation account *Elohim* confines the great serpent to the sea. A snake, more crafty than the land animals, then appears in the garden, arrogantly opposing God's voice with its own. The snake has ambitions to use its voice and draw the *adam*(אדם) back towards the *adamah* (אדמה).

## Walking Voices

Two walking voices inhabit the garden, each startlingly described. The first belongs to the walking snake. A walking, talking snake is at odds with expectations of a snake. Animals don't talk and snakes do not have limbs.

The second voice walking in the garden is that of God. Translations obscure this. Most translations smooth the translation of *qol* (קול) in Genesis 3:8 to the 'sound' of YHWH-God in the garden. This is a unique translation for a common word that means 'voice.' The text says that the couple heard the 'voice' of God walking in the garden<sup>15</sup>. Just like a walking and talking snake, our brains do not know how to process this imagery.

Just as there are two singular beings with the plural designation in the Creation account, the *Elohim* and *tananim*, there are two voices in the Garden account. Both beings are in both accounts. In the first account the snake is a parody of God's majesty, in the second the snake offers a parody of God's guiding voice. Each voice walks with the first couple in the garden and seeks to guide their hands and hungers.

## Hands and hungers in the Garden

The Creation account describes the *telos*, the goal or design of the cosmos. There, God creates humanity to be his vice-regent. Humanity is to be God's hands which are to be animated by God's word which is recalled and brought into the moment by the *zekar* (זכר -to remember) who then names(נקבר) or curses the forces of chaos.

In the Garden account, because there was not yet a man to work the garden, God uses his hands to fashion the man and then build the woman from part of him. God then gives the man his word, which the man is commanded to exercise.

The man(*adam*) is given a helper, the woman(*isha*). The voice of a snake invades the garden. It, like God's voice, is walking in the garden. There, it calls into question the word of God.

The serpent begins its deception by catechizing the woman, testing her on the prevailing theological dispensation, and the consequences of transgression in force. The woman recalls

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<sup>14</sup>for plural of majesty see <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Elohim>

<sup>15</sup> The traditional translations all uniquely render the term *qol* in the two locations here as 'sound.' *Qol* is otherwise rendered as 'voice.'

God's proscription accurately, even intensifying the single prohibition given in 2:14. The form of the intensification is important.

The woman unnecessarily intensifies the command, she adds that they were not to even touch the forbidden fruit, lest they die. Two further unnecessary references to handling are included in the text. After the woman sees that the fruit is a delight to the eyes and desirable to make wise, the normally laconic text does not simply say that 'she ate and her man who was with her also ate.' Rather it says that '**she took** from its fruit, and she ate and **she gave** some to her man who was with her and he ate.' These extraneous verbs describe handling.

The text is focusing our attention on the importance of the hands of the woman. She is the man's helper. The man is to use his voice to remember God's word and guide her hands. However, we see the voice of the snake animating the hands of the woman. Only then do we see that the man is present and silent. The man, the *zekar*, is failing to re-member God's word. Rather, the word from God's voice that walks in the garden with them is forgotten and the voice of the walking snake prevails. The woman is directed by the snake to reach out and satisfy her hungers of food and significance and she hands the fruit to the man as well.

Note that a walking and talking snake has the capacity to speak but not the capacity to handle.

### **Knowledge and Image**

The lure to taking the forbidden fruit was to be like God, to possess his knowledge. The immediate effect of taking the forbidden fruit is the acquisition of the knowledge that they were naked. Recall that the term for naked is the single adjective used to describe the snake in 3:1, *arum* (ארם). The text is craftily communicating that in humanity's quest to be like God, they have unintentionally become like the snake. They now reflect the snake's image.

Not only do they reflect the snake's appearance, they take on its character. Rather than use their tongues to bring God's word into the present moment, their tongues become the source for evasion. The man directs blame on the hands of the woman: 'she gave me the fruit and I ate.' The woman directs blame onto the words of the snake: 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.' They enter the scene bare and unashamed they leave the scene uttering slippery words.

### **Fruit, Life and Death**

The text draws our attention to two special trees. Each has a name that suggests that they deliver more than seed bearing fruit. The consumption of them leads to fundamental changes in reality. One fruit brings death, the other brings eternal life. This eternal life is presumably different from the death-less life humanity was then enjoying. The special tree that brought death also brought of knowledge of good and evil.

Although the name of the proscribed fruit suggests magical transformative properties, the transformation in practice is, in most ways, anti-climactic. The scene that is described of the sudden acquisition of knowledge and the entrance of death lacks cinematic appeal. Humanity isn't suddenly cognizant of moral philosophy, rather their minds become fixated on their nakedness and they are driven to cover it. The man and the woman actually live, they live long lives, seeing the births of eight generations. They aren't struck dead, rather they are left to decay.

The fruit is a furnishing of the garden. God walks in the garden. A temple is the earthly abode of a god. The garden is the temple of God. This is why the humans are to guard and serve it, these two words are frequently used to describe the work of priests in the garden.<sup>16</sup>

ref	description	scripture
2:7	A God forms man	the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.
2:15	B rested in garden	'And the LORD God took the man and rested him in the garden'
2:16-17	C don't take fruit	'for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.'
2:18-22	D God equips man	'I will make him a helper fit for him.'
2:23	E man names woman	'for she was taken from man.'
2:24	F positive procreation	'they shall be one flesh'
2:25-3:1	G positive <i>arum</i>	of humanity: 'they were naked [ <i>arum-im</i> ] (ערומים) and unshamed' of snake: 'more crafty [ <i>arum</i> ] (ערום) than the field creatures'
3:1	H serpent seeks woman	'He said to the woman, "Did God actually say..'
3:4	I walking voice: snake	But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die'
3:5	J eyes opened: like God	God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,
3:6	X wrong feeding	'she took of of the fruit, and did eat, and gave also to her husband'
3:7	J eyes opened: naked	eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked
3:8	I walking voice: YHWH God	'they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden'
3:9	H God seeks man	'LORD God called to the man and said to him "Where are you?"
3:10-15	G negative <i>arum</i>	man to God: 'I was naked[ <i>arum</i> ] (ערום) ; and I hid myself.' God to snake: 'cursed [ <i>arur</i> ](ארור) are you from the livestock.'
3:16-19	F negative procreation	'in sorrow you shalt bring forth children;'
3:20	E man names woman	'for she is the mother of all living.'
3:21	D God equips man	'And the LORD God made for the <i>adam</i> and for his wife garments of skins'
3:22	C don't take fruit	Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever...'
3:23	B banished from garden	'And the LORD God' banished him from the garden'
4:1	A Humanity forms man	The <i>adam</i> knew Hava his woman, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man like Yahweh."

Figure 3: Literary structure of Garden narrative

Temple furnishings are tokens of a deeper reality. Taking the fruit signaled rejection of God's sustaining provision. The consequence of eating the fruit is not their life rushing out while they fall lifeless, but rather this life holding vessel springs a small leak. We die, but not by being killed, we die because we cut ourselves off from restoration.

God's word separates, elevates and preserves. When this voice is rejected, the distinctions collapse, see Noah's flood. When humanity rejects this word, their life is transformed from reinvigorated vitality to steady erosion, they collapse back into the earth. The serpent claims that humanity will be like God; knowers of good and evil, in other words that which furthers and that which destroys life. The narrative supports the serpents's claim; humanity is immediately aware, they know their dire situation, it's unsuitability, it is not good.

They wander from God's presence and like God, they create a man. Cain is born in their image. Cain brings life and he takes life, he knows good and evil. The serpent deceived, but on this count, it did not lie.

<sup>16</sup> Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14)

	God creating heavens:	Humanity storming heavens:
hendiadys	The earth was without form and void...	All the earth had one language and one word.
blank slate	the Spirit of Elohim was hovering over the face of the waters.	As people migrated from the east, they found a plain
form	And Elohim said, 'Let there be light,'	And they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks...'
fill	And Elohim said,	They said, 'Come
in heavens	'Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens...	let us build a city and a tower with its top in the heavens,
conspicuous	let them be for signs and for seasons...	let us make a name for ourselves.
on earth	to give light upon the earth.'	lest we be dispersed over the whole earth.'
sees	And Elohim saw	And YHWH came down to see
evaluates	everything that he had made,	the city and the tower,
	and behold,	And YHWH said, Behold,
	it was good	...nothing will now be impossible for them.'
language	<b>'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.</b>	<b>'Come, let us go down and there confuse their language,</b>
	<b>And let them have dominion over the fish, birds and livestock and creeping thing..'</b>	<b>so that they may not understand one another's speech.'</b>
fill/scatter	"Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth..."	YHWH dispersed them over the earth,

## Babel

The Babel narrative in Genesis 11:1-9 deliberately echoes the Creation narrative particularly the parts of the narrative that discuss the creation of the heavens. At Babel we find humanity storming the gate of God which is in the heavens.

Each account begins by describing the initial state of the two building projects with a pair of descriptors: formless and void, and one language and words. Each account describes a blank slate upon which the building occurs. The builders in both accounts invokes only words, there is no description of hands or handling.

Notice that humanity creates their city and tower using three speeches in which the city is both formed and filled. Recall that Creation is composed of a triptych of forming, days one to three, and a triptych of filling, days four through six.

Each account treats the reader to a divine deliberation<sup>17</sup>. The divine deliberation at Babel is concerned with speech. It is speech which has allowed rebellious humanity to storm the heavens in defiance of God's charge to fill the earth. The divine deliberation at Creation involves creating humanity in the image and likeness. What part of God's image and likeness is

<sup>17</sup> 'Let us ...' Genesis 1:26 and 11:7

being referenced here? The preceding parallels have thematically corresponded, it is unlikely the this theme diverges. Humanity's speech is how we image God, it is how we are like God. The terms image and likeness are chiasmic parallels with the terms *zekar* and *nqabah* in 1:27. Each of these terms has an aspect that refers to sexuality, and an aspect that refers to cognition. Both the local chiasmic parallel in 1:27 and the parallel between the Creation and Babel accounts suggest that the author intends us to focus on the cognitive linguistic aspects of both terms rather than the sexual aspect.

Notice that God is referenced in the Babel narrative using Yahweh, whereas at Creation God is referenced with Elohim. One would expect that the Babel account would reference God with the same term, since it is drawing direct parallels in content. The Creation narrative uses the reference Elohim to contrast with the great serpent *tananim* (תנינא) in the sea, just as the Garden narrative uses startling images of walking voices each directing the hands of the humans. This contrast isn't present in the Babel account. Besides a single reference in the book of Jonah, the composite Yahweh-Elohim reference is only found in Genesis 2-3. The author of Genesis usually prefers to use the name Yahweh to reference God. The composite term in Genesis 2-3 is almost certainly there to tie the Creation and Garden stories together, not as an indicator that drives them apart.

## Synthesis

Many interpretive tensions exist between the Creation and Garden accounts. Rather than being conflicting accounts, this paper describes a single unified story that employs two vantages. The Garden narrative relies upon the Creation account to provide the origin and motives of the snake and the means by which humanity was to deal with it.

The snake is a creature from the sea. The sea is chaos. It is the untouched substance from which God structured and elevated the cosmos. The Creation narrative references the snake using a plural of majesty, the Garden account confirms that the snake has arrogated for itself a position equal to God: it seeks to govern the human's hunger and destiny with words carried by its voice.

The Garden describes incipient humanity. Humanity at the beginning in the garden is a mostly hairless mammal. Their hungers are well-provisioned. The couple has the capacity to remember and exercise God's effective word. These two qualities are the constitution of completed humanity captured by the terms *zekar* and *nqabah* in 1:27. This capacity was to be drawn upon when confronting the snake.

The snake appears and, like God, it has a voice. Humanity is easily manipulated by a simple parlor trick or words. The snake misdirects the hunger and affections of the woman from the ample provision of God to a single proscription. Taking this fruit represents a deeper reality as the furnishings in a temple are known to do. The fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil seems to represent humanity autonomously determining the cycles of life.

All events in the account that proceeds from the taking of the fruit involves the cycle of life and death.

- The man and woman's sexual members are covered.
- The woman's name is changed to mean 'the mother of all living.'
- The man is cursed to return to the ground.
- The woman is cursed with pain in childbirth.
- The man and the woman conceive a child.

- The woman exclaims at birth 'I possess a man *like*<sup>18</sup> YHWH.'
- The first son's vocation involves regulating plant life.
- The second son's vocation involves regulating animal life.

Humanity is cast from the presence of God let they take from the tree of eternal life. Perhaps this indicates that humanity's autonomous decisions have temporal effectiveness. Cain kills Abel but his blood still cries from the ground.

Faith is not presented in these scenes as an assent of the mind to the truth of a proposition for which there is not complete evidence. Rather, faith is trusting the provision of your hungers to a voice which directs your appetites. The couple's faith should be placed in the voice that ordered the cosmos, however, another voice walks in the garden and seeks authority. It entices humanity with the fruit of a tree that represents humanity promoting itself from **vice**-regent of the cosmos to **co**-regent.

The great irony is that when humanity took the fruit, they became less like God and became more like the snake. This is signaled in the text by their awareness. It is transferred from the fruit which represented being 'like God' to their awareness of being naked: *arum*, the single term used to describe the snake.

Great tensions exist between these two accounts, but only if we view them as alternatives. The Creation account describes God's deliberation and completion in six stages of building the cosmos. The Creation account establishes the trajectory, the Garden account is the first part of that trajectory. Each account allows a fuller understanding of the other.

The synthesis rests upon three chiasmic literary structures and the parallel structure of Creation and Babel. Literary structures are recognitions of design and intention. The closer one's explanation tracks with a literary structure, the less latitude one's argument is given to wander from the author's intent.

- Figure 1 straddles both accounts and directs the course of scripture from humanity starting at ground from the ground and after maturation incarnating and exercising God's irresistible creative word, being 'like-God.'
- Figure 2 draws out the added understanding that is given to the male and female sexual terms, it draws attention to the type of fault in the Garden; the failure to remember and exercise the words from the voice of God.
- Figure 3 charts the consequences of the disobedience in the Garden; humanity regulates life outside of God's province, which results in them being cast from the garden, and taking on the image of the serpent.
- The Creation-Babel clarifies our understanding of what it means to be made in the image and likeness of God. It is our ability to use words, to bring forth words and marshal resources to overcome chaos. While there is much continuity between these two accounts, there is a major discontinuity in how God is referenced. The author references God as Yahweh not Elohim, because God is not contrasted with the *tananim*(תנינא) at Babel.

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<sup>18</sup> I translate the hebrew particle *תא* with 'like.'