

The Rabbinic Image of Adam and Eve

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Digest | i |
| Abbreviations | iii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Adam and Eve in the Bible | 3 |
| Gen.1:26- And God said: "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. . ." | 8 |
| Gen.1:27- And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. | 14 |
| Gen.1:27- What Was the Nature of the First Man? | 17 |
| The Chronology of Creation | 23 |
| Gen.2:3- And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done. | 27 |
| Gen.2:5- When no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth and there was not man to till the soil. | 33 |
| Gen.2:7- Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living soul. | 34 |
| Gen.2:7- Why Did God Create Man? | 41 |
| Gen.2:7- Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth. . . | 44 |
| Gen.2:9- And from the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. | 46 |

- Gen.2:16-17- And the Lord God commanded the man, saying:
 "Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as
 for the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you must not
 eat of it, you shall die." 51
- Gen.2:18- The Lord God said: "It is not good for man to be
 alone; I will make a fitting helper for him. 55
- Gen.2:21- So the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon the man;
 and, while he slept, He took one of his ribs and closed
 up the flesh at that spot. 57
- Gen.2:22- And the Lord God fashioned the rib that He had
 taken from the man into a woman; and He brought
 her to the man. 61
- Gen.2:23- Then the man said: "This one at last is bone of
 my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be
 called woman, for from man was she taken." 69
- Gen.2:25- The two of them were naked, the man and his
 wife, yet they felt no shame. 71
- Gen.3:1- Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the
 wild beasts that the Lord God had made. It said to the
 woman: "Did God really say: 'You shall not eat of any
 tree of the garden?'" 73
- Gen.3:2-3- The woman replied to the serpent: "We may
 eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden. It
 is only about fruit of the tree in the middle of the
 garden that God said: 'You shall not eat of it or touch
 it, lest you die.'" 76
- Gen.3:6- When the woman saw that the tree was good for
 eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was
 desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of its fruit
 and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate. 79
- Gen.3:7- Then the eyes of both of them were opened and
 they perceived that they were naked; and they sewed
 together fig leaves and made themselves loincloths. 82

- Gen.3:8- They heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of day; and the man and his wife hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 85
- Gen.3:9- The Lord God called out to the man and said to him: "Where are you?" 91
- Gen.3:12- The man said: "The woman You put at my side-- she gave me of the tree and I ate." 94
- Gen.3:14- Then the Lord God said to the serpent. . . 98
- Gen.3:16- And to the woman He said: "I will make most severe your pangs in childbearing, in pain shall you bear children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. 102
- Gen.3:17-19- To Adam He said: "Because you did as your wife said and ate of the tree about which I commanded you: 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed be the ground because of you; by toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you. But your food shall be the grasses of the field. By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat, until you return to the ground. . . 106
- Gen.3:20- The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 113
- Gen.3:21- And the Lord God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. 115
- Gen.3:22- And the Lord God said: "Now that the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, what if he should stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever. 118
- Gen.3:24- He drove the man out, and stationed east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life. 126

| | |
|---|-----|
| Gen.4:1- Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying: "I have gained a male child with the help of the Lord." | 127 |
| Some Other Events Following the Expulsion from Eden | 130 |
| Gen.4:8- Cain said to his brother Abel and when they were in field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him. | 134 |
| Gen.4:16- Cain left the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. | 137 |
| Gen.5:1- This is the book of the generations of Adam. | 140 |
| Gen.5:5- All the days that Adam lived came to 930 years, then he died. | 144 |
| Adam and the Psalms | 147 |
| Relevant Material from Outside of Rabbinic Literature | 150 |
| Didactic Applications of Rabbinic Interpretations of Adam and Eve | 163 |
| Conclusion | 170 |
| Bibliography | 171 |

Digest

Adam and Eve were the first humans in the Bible. Their creation, lives, sin and deaths were recorded in the first chapters of Genesis. The remainder of the Bible rarely referred to them. Rabbinic literature, on the other hand, included many passages dealing with this first human couple. As they explicated the biblical text, the rabbis elaborated on the details of the lives of Adam and Eve. The nature of creation, the role of humanity, the consequences of sin, and the possibility of repentance were themes addressed within the midrashic and talmudic material on the first chapters of Genesis. Adam was the focus of more rabbinic commentary than Eve, but the first woman was discussed by the rabbis. Adam and Eve were never central to Jewish theology or philosophy, but the rabbinic Adam and Eve material provides a rich understanding of the relevance of the Bible's first humans to Judaism and all humanity.

This thesis is an attempt to collect and analyze the rabbinic passages regarding Adam and Eve. The first chapter deals with Adam and Eve in the Bible. This discussion provides necessary background for understanding the rabbinic material. The body of this thesis presents the rabbinic passages which discuss Adam and Eve. These interpretations are presented according to the order of biblical verses which form the basis of the rabbinic commentary. Each section presents rabbinic material linked to a specific exegetical verse. The rabbinic passages range from the Mishnah and Tosefta to the Babylonian Talmud and late midrashim. In each section, the earliest and clearest rabbinic passage is translated and discussed. The analysis

focuses upon the literary techniques used by the authors of the midrashic and talmudic passages. Rabbinic lessons and themes drawn from the aggadot have been discussed also.

The biblical narrative of Adam and Eve was interpreted by authors outside of rabbinic literature. A section is included which summarizes the relevant gnostic and pseudepigraphic Adam and Eve literature. A familiarity with these writings helps the reader understand the context in which rabbinic interpretations were composed. The rabbis formed their ideas in response to the general societal trends of their day.

The final section of this thesis suggests contemporary didactic applications for eight rabbinic passages. Adam and Eve may not be central to Jewish thought, but they are part of our textual history. The rabbinic material collected in this thesis can be used to teach valuable lessons regarding the worth of human life and proper every day behavior.

Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|--|
| ARN | Avot de Rabbi Natan |
| A.Z. | Avodah Zarah |
| b. | son of, בן |
| B.B. | Baba Batra |
| BDB | Brown, Driver and Briggs, <u>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</u> |
| Ber. | Berakot |
| B.M. | Baba Metzia |
| Bub. | Buber |
| Chap. | Chapter |
| Chron. | Chronicles |
| Dan. | Daniel |
| Deut. | Deuteronomy |
| Deut.R. | Deuteronomy Rabbah |
| EccI. | Ecclesiastes |
| EccI.R. | Ecclesiastes Rabbah |
| Eru. | Erubin |
| Est.R. | Esther Rabbah |
| Ex. | Exodus |
| Ezek. | Ezekiel |
| Gen. | Genesis |
| Ginzberg | Louis Ginzberg, <u>The Legends of the Jews</u> |
| GR | Genesis Rabbah |
| Hag. | Hagigah |
| Hal. | Halakah |
| Hos. | Hosea |
| Hul. | Hullin |
| Is. | Isaiah |
| Jastrow | Marcus Jastrow, <u>A Dictionary of the Targumim, The Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature</u> |
| Jer. | Jeremiah |

| | |
|-----------|--|
| JPS | 1917 Jewish Publication Society translation of the Bible |
| Lam. | Lamentations |
| Lam.R. | Lamentations Rabbah |
| Lev. | Leviticus |
| Lev.R. | Leviticus Rabbah |
| M. | Mishnah |
| Mid.Prov. | Midrash on Proverbs |
| Mid.Ps. | Midrash on Psalms |
| Naz. | Nazir |
| New JPS | 1985 Jewish Publication Society translation of the Bible |
| Nid. | Niddah |
| Num. | Numbers |
| Num.R. | Numbers Rabbah |
| PR | Pesikta Rabbati |
| PRE | Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar |
| PRK | Pesikta de Rab Kahana |
| Prov. | Proverbs |
| Ps. | Psalms |
| R. | Rabbi |
| San. | Sanhedrin |
| S.E.R. | Seder Eliyahu Rabbah |
| Shab. | Shabbat |
| Song. | Song of Songs |
| Song.R. | Song of Songs Rabbah |
| Sot. | Sotah |
| Suk. | Sukkah |
| Taan | Ta'anit |
| Tan. | Tanhuma |
| Tos. | Tosefta |
| vol. | volume |
| Yeb. | Yebamot |
| Y. | Jerusalem Talmud [Yerushalmi] |
| Zech. | Zechariah |

Introduction

My purpose in this study was to collect and analyze the rabbinic material on Adam and Eve. Relevant midrashic and talmudic passages were located through the following sources: CD-ROM rabbinic databases; guides, such as Hasidah's אישי התנ"ך and Heyman's חורה הכתובה והמסורה; and indices to the Soncino Talmud, Soncino Midrash Rabbah, Ginzberg's The Legends of the Jews, and other midrashic works. Genesis Rabbah provided the greatest number of passages, but related aggadic material was found throughout rabbinic literature. The earliest sources were drawn from the Mishnah and Tosefta. The latest passages were found in the Babylonian Talmud and some later midrashim.

The first chapter dealt with Adam and Eve in the Bible. This review provided the basis for examining the rabbinic interpretation and application of the first pair of humans. The body of the thesis examined the rabbinic image of Adam and Eve. These passages were sorted according to exegetical verse. In each section, the earliest and clearest versions of rabbinic passages were presented and analyzed. Parallel passages and related material were cited in the notes.

I provided a short survey of the Adam and Eve material found in pseudepigraphic and gnostic sources. Also, I included several examples of possible contemporary applications of rabbinic material.

Translations of rabbinic passages are my adaptations of the English editions cited in the bibliography. The exegetical verses for each section were taken from the 1962 Jewish Publication Society Torah translation, except as cited. Most other biblical quotations were drawn from the 1917 Jewish Publication Society version, except as cited. Occasionally, these

transiations were altered to allow for changes in speech or style. Biblical references were located in parenthesis (), following each quotation. Also, biblical verses were rendered in **bold face**. Brackets [] were used to include necessary additional words in a passage and to indicate the translation of words in Hebrew or English.

Adam and Eve in the Bible

**ויברא אלהים את-האדם בצלמו בצלם אלהים ברא אהו זכר
ונקבה ברא אחם:**

And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Gen.1:27).

Genesis 1 presented the creation of humanity in this seemingly straight-forward manner. The entire first biblical creation account was presented directly as Divine fiat. God simply said and created. In Genesis 1:26, God considered creating a human. Genesis 1:27 stated the accomplishment of this feat. This account of creation would have been straight-forward if it was singular. However, the Bible included a second story of the creation of the world and humanity: Genesis 2.

**וייצר יהוה אלהים את-האדם עפר מן-האדמה ויפח נשמת חיים ויהי
האדם לנפש חיה:**

The Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth. He blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being (Gen.2:7).

and

**ויבן יהוה אלהים את-הצלע אשר-לקח מן-האדם לאשה ויבאה
אל-האדם:**

And the Lord God fashioned the rib that He had taken from the man into a woman; and He brought her to the man (Gen.2:22).

This second Creation narrative presented events differently than the first one. These two verses are only part of the detailed explanation presented in the second chapter. Sages and scholars have attempted to

explain the existence of two creation narratives. Rashi explained that the second story fits into the middle of Genesis 1:27.¹ According to this understanding, there is really only one creation narrative. Modern source criticism sees the hands of more than one author in this pair of creation narratives. Source critics identified Genesis 1 as belonging to P, the Priestly document. Genesis 2 and 3, the Eden story, were identified as belonging to J, the Yahwist document.²

Different explanations do not do not change the textual reality. The Bible included two different creation narratives. Only Genesis 1 mentioned the idea of creation in God's image. Similarly, the commands to: **Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth** (Gen.1:26) occurred only in the first chapter. The remaining details of human creation were located in Genesis 2.

Humanity was initially located in the garden of Eden. The man was to care for the garden. God explained that all the fruit in the garden was available to eaten, except for one tree. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was off-limits. Only the man heard this command (Gen.2:17), but later the woman indicated her awareness of this limitation (Gen.3:2). Genesis 2:18 explained that God wanted to create a help-mate for the man. The result of this intention was the woman. Chapter 2 ended with the man and the woman in the garden. They were naked and felt no shame.

¹ Rashi based his explanation on earlier midrashim. Relevant material is discussed in the section on Gen. 1:27.

² E.A. Speiser presented a clear explanation of source criticism in his introduction to The Anchor Bible: Genesis. Its application to the creation narratives can be found on pages 8-9 of that volume.

The serpent was introduced in Genesis 3. He tempted the woman into eating of the tree of good and evil. This fruit was not identified as any specific, known fruit. The woman ate of the fruit, and offered it to the man. Thus both humans broke God's command. They became aware of their nakedness and used fig-leaves to create simple clothing. At this point, the sound of God appeared in the garden. God investigated the activities of the first human couple. God punished the serpent, the man and the woman for breaking the Divine command not to eat from that one tree.

The serpent was told that he would be cursed, would walk on his belly, and would have enmity with the woman and her offspring. The woman was told of the pains of childbirth which would come and that she would desire her husband. Finally, God told the man that he would need to work hard to produce food. Also, someday he would return to the dust, meaning, he would die. Following the punishments, the man named the woman: חווה [Eve]. The man was not specifically named, but will be called Adam now.³ God then made garments for the couple. The passage ended with God banishing the couple from Eden, for fear that they would also eat of the tree of life. This was the first mention of this tree of life. The garden was sealed and guarded by cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword.

Gen. 4 began with Adam and Eve giving birth to Cain and Abel. The first couple were bystanders to the stories of their children's lives and deaths. The Bible then told of a third, younger brother: Seth. Genesis 5 began with the words: **This is the book [record] of Adam's line.** Genesis 5:5 informed the reader that Adam died at the age of 930 years. We were not told how old Eve was at her death.

³ In Genesis, Adam was referred to as אָדָם [the man]. There were only two locations where "the" was dropped: 4:25 and 5:1-5. Encyclopedia Judaica Vol. I, p. 235.

Adam and Eve are not mentioned again in the Torah. Only one additional reference can be found in the remainder of the Bible. Adam's name was mentioned at the beginning of a list starting Chronicles 1:1. Over the centuries, some have tried to locate Adam in other biblical verses.⁴ General opinion is that no other verse refers to Adam. Certainly, the rabbis did not approach any other biblical material as literally related to these first humans. Except for that one word in Chronicles, Adam and Eve appeared only at the beginning of Scripture.

Good reasons existed for the absence of Adam and Eve from the rest of the Bible. They were not the focus of the biblical narrative. The Bible was concerned with the story of the the history and the religion of the Israelites. Adam and Eve formed part of the prologue to this Israelite story. Regarding the role of a such a prologue, E.A. Spieser observed:

Genesis i-xi in general, and the first section in particular, are a broad introduction to the history which commences with Abraham. The practice of tracing history back to antediluvian times is at least as old as the Sumerian king list. Biblical tradition had ample reason to be familiar with Mesopotamian cultural norms....Thus biblical authors were indebted to Mesopotamian models for these early chapters not only in matters of arrangement but also in some of the subject matter.⁵

Mesopotamian roots can be found in the flood and other images. Linguistic connections linked the biblical and Mesopotamian antediluvian myths. However, the biblical authors made a sharp break in the theology underpinning their creation narratives. The Bible rose out of the Ancient Near East, but it is an independent narrative.

⁴ Examples of such verses include: Hosea 6:7, Isaiah 43:27, Psalms 82:7, Job 15:7 and 31:33.

⁵ E.A. Speiser, The Anchor Bible: Genesis (New York, Doubleday, 1962), p.9.

The biblical prologue laid the general groundwork necessary before dealing with the specifics of the Israelites. The first eleven chapters of Genesis offered an explanation of the human condition, the earth and the Divine relationship with humanity and the earth. Adam and Eve played a special role as the necessary first part of that prologue. Samuel S. Cohon explained:

It represents an etiological myth, accounting for the origin of human labor, for man's natural abhorrence of the serpent, for the consciousness of sex, for the pains of parturition, for the subjection of woman to her husband, and for human mortality.⁶

The story of Adam and Eve raises as many questions as it answers. These questions arise out of the very nature of the text itself. The existence of two narratives is not the only issue raised by these passages. Some of these questions are: How should we understand the use of singular and plural pronouns in Genesis 1:27? What was the role of humanity from the beginning? Did Eve hear the command not to eat from that one tree? What kind of fruit was eaten? What is the meaning of the punishments? Each generation of readers has dealt with these questions. Individuals may focus on different points, but a plethora of issues remains. The Bible's language is always sparse. The story of Adam and Eve, due to its role, is short, disconnected from the whole, and open to symbolic interpretation. We can not recapture the original intention. We can explore the answers others have given to the questions raised by the biblical narrative.

⁶ Samuel S. Cohon, "Original Sin," Hebrew Union College Annual, (Cincinnati, Vol. 21, 1948) p.276.

Gen.1:26- **And God said: "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. . ."**

The rabbis examined Genesis 1:26 phrase by phrase. Each part of the verse spawned a number of ideas. Many of these understandings are found in Genesis Rabbah, the fifth century Midrash. Genesis Rabbah included a number of interpretations, whose starting point is **"Let us make man."**

R. Berekiah said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, came to create the first man, He saw righteous and wicked arising from him. He said: 'If I create him, wicked men will spring from him; if I do not create him, how are the righteous to spring from him?' What did the Lord do? He removed the way of the wicked from his sight and associated with the quality of mercy [מדת רחמים] and created him, as it is written: **For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked, shall perish [תאבד] (Ps. 1:6).** He destroyed it [איבדה] from before His sight and associated the quality of mercy with Himself and created him.¹

According to R. Berekiah, God viewed the future of human history. God was aware of the human potential for good and evil. Specifically, God knew of this dual potential even prior to the creation of humanity. Psalm 1:6 was utilized to show God's awareness and the choice God made at creation. God ignored the inevitably evil people, because God was interested in the good individuals. The Creator was portrayed as destroying, that is, ignoring, the evil. The root א.ב.ד. was taken from the Psalms verse and used to show God's ignoring of evil. The quality of mercy was personified. As the passage continued, other qualities were treated as angels, also:

¹ GR 8:4. PR 40:2 included a rough parallel of the passage. There God approached the quality of Justice and the quality of Mercy as allies. Adam and other humans would be judged with both justice and mercy.

R. Hanina did not say thus, rather: When He came to create the first man He took counsel with the ministering angels, saying to them, **'Let us make man.'** 'What shall his character be?' they asked. 'Righteous men shall spring from him', as it is written **'For the Lord knows [יודע] the way of the righteous,'** which means that the Lord made known [הודיע] the way of the righteous to the ministering angels; **'but the way of the wicked shall perish':** He destroyed it [חאבד] [meaning: hid it] from them. He revealed to them that the righteous would arise from him, but He did not reveal to them that the wicked would spring from him, for had He revealed to them that the wicked would spring from him; the quality of justice would not have permitted him to be created.²

Here, God was not alone in considering the value of human creation. The rabbis responded to the use of the plural "us" when God was considering creating man. God consulted the angels. The same Psalms verse was used by R. Hanina for a different effect. God showed part of human nature to the angels, but hid another aspect from them. The root ע.ד.נ. appeared in the simple pa'al form in the Psalms verse. The midrash switched it to the causative hifil form. God displayed human goodness. A similar switch, to the pe'al form, occurred with the root נ.ב.א. God concealed human wickedness from the angels. Information was withheld, so that the quality of justice would not prevent human creation. The quality of justice, presented as an angel, was able to interfere with Divine actions.

Other qualities were presented as angels, when R. Simon described this Divine conference's descent into fierce argument:

... the ministering angels formed themselves into groups and parties, some of them saying, 'Let him be created,' while others urged, 'Don't create him.' Thus it is written, **Love and Truth fought each other, Righteousness and Peace combated**

² GR 8:4

each other (Ps. 85:11)³: Love said, 'Let him be created, because he will dispense acts of love and kindness'; Truth said, 'Let him not be created, because he is composed of falsehood'; Righteousness said, 'Let him be created, because he will perform righteous deeds'; Peace said, 'Let him not be created, because he is full of strife.' What did the the Holy One do? He took Truth and thrust it to the ground.⁴

Psalms 85:11 was twisted midrashically to produce an argument of angels regarding human creation. Despite God's hiding of human wickedness, the angels discovered humanity's weaknesses. Four different values were personified as angels. Humanity was praised for our love and righteous deeds. We were condemned for our lies and strife. God took action, removing the angel Truth from the discussion. No explanation was given for Truth's punishment, while Peace, also a dissenter, remained. Truth's removal allowed for a majority of two angels for human creation and only one angel in opposition. Also, severe, heavenly Truth would not allow for humanity. As the next Psalms verse explained, **Truth springs up from earth** (Ps.85:12). This earthly Truth was limited and less harsh. God avoided dealing with absolute Truth, because humans would fail according to

³ The verse is presented according to the midrashic reading. 'Met' in the Psalms was taken to mean 'fought' by the midrash. 'Kiss' [קִסַּם] was taken as the related word for weapon, and was used as 'combated.'

⁴ GR 85. As this section continued, the other angels protested Truth's punishment. Truth would now be an earthly, less severe Truth. This continuation was related to the next Psalms verse: **Truth springs up from the earth** (Ps.85:12). The passage also continues with the following explanation: 'The rabbis say the following in the name of R. Hanina, while R. Phinehas and R. Hilkiah say it in the name of R. Simon: תִּנְיָ [very] is אָדָם [Adam]. As is it written: **And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very [תִּנְיָ] good** (Gen.1:31). Therefore, Adam is good.' This interpretation hinged on rearranging the letters in תִּנְיָ to read אָדָם. Probably, this interpretation was placed here because of the attribution to R. Hanina or R. Simon, both mentioned here. The tone of this teaching did not fit the tone of the larger passage. Gen.1:31 was used to show that Adam was good. The overall passage indicated that humans were capable of good and evil.

that standard. God continued to be less than straight-forward with the angels. This passage concluded:

R. Huna the Elder of Sephoris, said: While the ministering angels were arguing with each other and disputing with each other, the Holy One, blessed be He, created [the first man]. Said He to them: 'What are you debating? Man has already been made.'⁵

God ignored the opinions of the angels. Humanity was created while the debate raged. Genesis 1:26, the exegetical root of this debate, was utilized to end the debate. **נַעֲשֶׂה**, originally meaning **Let us make** [kal, active], was read as man 'is made' [nifal, passive]. The discussion regarding human creation ended with Divine action. None of the angels won this debate. Similarly, the rabbis did not dispute the flawed nature of humanity. This collection of interpretations allowed for a nuanced understanding of human strengths and weaknesses.

Other variations of this debate exist. The sixth century Pesikta de Rab Kahana included this angelic response to God's consultation:

They spoke right up to Him: Master of the universes, **What is man that Thou are mindful of him?, etc.** (Ps.8:5). The Holy One replied: 'This being whom I desire to create in My world-- his wisdom will be greater than yours.' Then what did the Holy One do? He assembled all domestic animals, all wild beasts, and fowl, and had them pass before the angels. He asked: 'What are the names of these creatures?' The angels did not know.

When He created the first man, again He assembled all domestic animals, all wild beasts and fowl, and had them pass before him. He asked Adam: 'What are the names of these creatures?' Adam replied: 'This one-- the name ox fits him. This one-- the name horse fits him. And this one-- camel. And this one-- eagle. And this one-- lion. Thus it is written **And the man gave names to all cattle, etc.** (Gen.2:20).

God asked him: 'And you, what is your name?' he replied: 'Adam [אדם]. God asked: 'Why?' Because I was fashioned out of the earth [ראדמה]. God asked: 'And I, what is My name?' Adam replied: 'Lord [אדני]. God asked: 'Why?' Adam replied: 'Because You are lord [אדון] over all Your works.'⁶

This version of the discussion between God and angels proceeded differently. Psalm 8:5 was utilized to argue against God's desire to create humanity. The full verse and following verses included many ways God is mindful of humanity. The true nature of the angelic jealousy was found in Psalm 8:6: **You have made him little less than Divine [מאלהים]**. מאלהים can be understood to include the angels. The angels did not want to lose their position in the hierarchy of creation. God understood their underlying motive. It was on that level that God responded. God answered the angels with immediate, strong proof of humanity's worth. Humanity is wiser than the angels. The angels could not name the animals, but the first man named the animals, himself and God. The midrash named the first man, a detail missing from Genesis. Adam [אדם] said that his name came from the earth [ראדמה] used to form him. Here, Pesikta de Rab Kahana referred to the second creation story, specifically Genesis 2:7.

There are other midrashim which described God looking for advice before creation. Earlier in Genesis Rabbah 8, R. Joshua b. Levi taught that God consulted the works of heaven and earth. R. Samuel b. Nahman then

⁶ PRK 4:3. In the next paragraph, R. Aha connected Adam's name with God's name. The **א** was switched for the **י**: [אדם to ידון]. Thus Lord [ידון] was God's name, because Adam was wise enough to name God. Human wisdom was the focus of this passage, whose exegetical verse was **He was wiser than he who contained within himself all mankind** (I Kings 5:11). Solomon's wisdom was compared to the wisdom of Adam. Mid.Prov. 1.1 also used this verse to compare Solomon's and Adam's wisdom.

PR 14 and Num R 19:3 are parallel passages. Mid.Ps 8:2 included a brief summary of this midrashic narrative. Other rabbinic interpretations used Ps 8:5 and this debate for different purposes. Some examples include: GR 8:6, Tos.San. 8:9, and Tos.Sot. 6:5.

explained that God deliberated with the works of each day of creation.⁷ Later in the chapter, R. Joshua of Siknin taught in R. Levi's name that the souls of the righteous were consulted prior to creation.⁸ These discussions, and those of the angels, were a literary conceit which allow for the discussion of the nature of humanity. The rabbis presented a varied set of arguments and observations. The interpretations agreed that humanity, with its flaws, was worthy enough to merit creation.

⁷ GR 8:3

⁸ GR 8:7

Gen.1:27- **And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.**

Genesis 1:27 confused the clarity of the Bible's portrayal of human creation. Why use the singular "him" in one phrase, followed by the plural "them" in the next phrase? The reasoning behind God's creation of one original human was intertwined with this grammatical question. The rabbis pondered the significance of one common human ancestor and the grammar of Genesis 1:27. A number of possibilities were suggested as early as the Mishnah and the Tosefta. Tosefta Sanhedrin 8 offered multiple explanations:

Man was created one and alone. And why was he created one and alone? So that the righteous should not say, 'We are the sons of the righteous one,' and so that the evil ones should not say: 'We are the sons of the evil one.' Another interpretation: Why was he created one and alone? So that families should not quarrel with one another. For if now, that man was created one and alone, they quarrel with another, had there been two created at the outset, how much the more so!¹

Another interpretation: ... To show the grandeur of the King of the kings of the kings [מֶלֶךְ מְלָכֵי הַמְּלָכִים], blessed be He. For with a single seal He created the entire world, and from a single seal many seals have come forth, as it is written: **It [the dawn] changes like clay under the seal, till [its hues] are fixed like those of a garment** (Job 38:14).²

And why aren't faces similar? On account of imposters, so no one should jump into his neighbor's field or jump in bed with his neighbor's wife, as it is written: **And from the wicked their light is withheld and the upraised arm is broken** (Job 38:15). R. Meir says: The omnipresent has varied

¹ Tos.San.8:4. Another detail was that theft and robbery would be even worse if there was not one common ancestor. M.San 4:5 included a parallel to this paragraph's material.

² Tos.San.8:5. M.San 4:5 asserted a similar point, without using the Job verse.

appearance, intelligence and voice--appearance and intelligence, because of robbers and thieves, and voice, because of the possibility of improper sexual relations.³

These interpretations shared a common aspect. They all linked the creation of one ancestor to peace, order and goodness. One ancestor was created to avoid splintering humanity and to reduce excess pride. A common ancestor removed a possible excuse for crime. Job 38:14-15 was used to illustrate the majesty of God's accomplishments. The level of evil in the world was decreased. This chapter of Job described God acting alone in the world's creation. Only God could create many individuals from one original ancestor. This Divine plan had the added effect of limiting possibilities for evil. Job 28:15 asserted that those who are evil will be punished.

The Tosefta included further explanations. One focused on creation's limiting of human pride. We should not be too proud: "For they can say to the human, 'the mosquito came before you in the works of creation.'" ⁴ The order of creation had purpose. One common ancestor was created for a number of reasons.

M.San.4:5 included material which paralleled these Tosefta passages. The Mishnah focused, similarly, on the reduction of strife in the world. A well-known statement, which summed up this set of interpretations, was included:

Therefore was only a single man created to teach you that if anyone destroys a single human soul, Scripture charges him as though he had destroyed a whole world, and whosoever rescues a single human soul, Scripture credits him as though he had saved a whole world.⁵

³ Tos.San.8:6. San.38a combined material from Tos.San.8:6-7 and M.San.4:5. The Talmud passage, also, utilized Job 38:14-15.

⁴ Tos.San.8:8. San.38a also.

⁵ M.San.4:5. ARN 31:2 included similar material.

A theological point was asserted by this same set of interpretations. The acts of creation happened in a specific order for important reasons. The lessening of human strife and pride was but one of those reasons.

Another major factor, according to the rabbis, was to limit heresy. We should not assume that the language of Genesis implied multiple creators. This point was made from the very beginning of rabbinic commentary on Genesis.⁶ Genesis 1:26-27 did not speak of multiple gods, anymore than Genesis 1:1 did. The fifth century Jerusalem Talmud explained this point:

The heretics asked R. Simlai: 'How many gods created the world?' He said to them: 'Why are you asking me? Go and ask Adam himself. As it says, **For ask now of the days that are past [which were before you since the day that God created man upon the earth]** (Deut.4:32). It is not written: 'That gods created man upon the earth,' but rather 'That God created man upon the earth.'... They returned and asked him 'What is this which is written, **Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness** (Gen.1:26)? He said to them: 'It does not say, 'The gods created man in their own images.' But it says: **So God created man in His own image** (Gen.1:27).'⁷

R. Simlai's students demanded stronger proof for a single creator. R. Simlai's proof continues in a different vein. His initial reasoning, presented to the heretics, was the relevant interpretation. The first man was created by a unique entity. Neither the first man, nor any angel, assisted God in creation. This argument clarified theological confusion, and thus limits human strife.

⁶ GR 1:7 for example.

⁷ Y.Ber. Chap. 9, Hal. 1 (12d), M.San.4:5, Tos.San 8:7, and San.38a included related material. In a related passage, ARN 31:2 includes other acts which save, or destroy worlds. ARN 31:2 continued with a list of many analogies between parts of the created order and aspects of man. For example: "He created forest in the world and forests in men, that is: his hairs." This interpretation complimented the view that each human life was equivalent to an entire world.

Gen.1:27- What Was the Nature of the First Man?

Genesis Rabbah 8:1 is the petichta (proem), which begins the chapter. This petichta presented many of the early rabbinic interpretations of Gen.1:26.

And God said: Let Us make man, etc. (Gen 1:26). R. Johanan commenced: **You have formed me behind [אחור] and before [קדם], etc. (Ps.139:5).** R. Johanan said: If a man is worthy enough, he enjoys both worlds, for it says, **You have formed me for a later [world] and an earlier [world].** But if not, he will have to render a full accounting, as it is said: **And laid Your hand upon me (ibid.)** R. Jeremiah b Eleazar said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, He created him as androgynous, for it is said: **Male and female created He them and called their name Adam (Gen.5:2).** R. Samuel b. Nahman said: When the Lord created Adam, He created him double-faced, then He split him and made him of two backs, one back on this side and one back on the other side.

To this it is objected: But it is written, **And He took one of his ribs [מצלעותיו], etc. (Gen.2:21)?** [מצלעותיו] meaning one of his sides, replied he, as your read: **And for the second side [צלע] of the tabernacle, etc. (Ex.26:20).** R. Tanhuma in the name of R. Banayah and R. Berekiah in the name of R. Eleazar said: He created him as a golem [גולם] extending from one end of the world to the other; thus it is written: **Your eyes did see mine unformed substance [גלמי] (Ps.139:16).** R. Joshua b. R. Nehemiah and R. Judah b. R. Simon in R. Eleazar's name said: He created him filling the whole world. how do we know from east to west? Because it is said: **You have formed me אחור [west] and קדם [east].** From north to south? Because it says: **Since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from the one end of heaven unto the other (Deut.4:32).** And how do we know that he filled the empty spaces of the world? From the verse, **And**

laid Your hand upon me [therefore he stretched to the heavens] (Ps.139:5).¹

This passage presented variant interpretations of Ps.139:5, as related to human creation. First, R. Johanan tied this verse to individual responsibility for action. The **אחור** and **קדם** were explained as this world and the world to come. Later in the passage, Ps.139:5 was used to prove the first man's size upon creation. In a section not repeated here, the verse was used in a discussion of the chronology of human creation.

The midrash continued with the views of R. Jeremiah and R. Samuel. Their interpretations attempted to explain the existence of two creation stories. The second human creation narrative can be read as a parenthetical addition in the middle of Genesis 1:27. First a human was created androgynous, possessing all the traits of male and female. The midrash cited Genesis 5:2 to bolster this point. Alternatively, the first human was pictured as one creation with two fronts, and no back. In either case, this human was then divided into two different creatures, each human possessing one sex, one back and one front. Genesis 2:21 was presented as proof for the two back theory of human creation.²

¹ GR 8:1. The petichta continued discussing Ps.139:5 as related to the soul of Adam and the order of creation. Lev.R.14:1 duplicated GR 8:1 almost exactly. There were minor differences: Lev.R.14:1 omitted R. Jeremiah, citing R. Samuel b. Nahman instead. Where GR 8:1 cited R. Samuel b. Nahman, Lev.R. mentioned R. Levi. Lev.R.14:1 attributed the teaching regarding Adam's size to "R. Berekiah and R. Helbo and R. Samuel b. Nahman." There were different attributions in the section not quoted here. GR 14:8 followed GR 8:1. GR 21:3 was similar to Lev.R.14:1. GR 24:2 followed part of GR 8:1, citing R. Judah B.R. Simon. Different attributions indicate a relatively earlier ambiguity regarding the teaching of each sage. Ber. 18a attributes a teaching of creation with two faces, as presented in Lev.R. 14:1.

² PR 20:2 presented an astrological image of the first humans as a pair of twins. They were created to spite the 'Prince of Darkness,' since the humans were able to see at night.

This passage's next image was of Adam as a world-spanning creature, a golem [גולם].³ Psalm 139:5 was understood to imply that the first human stretched from the east to the west of the world. Deuteronomy 4:32 was utilized to include north and south. God's hand, again from Psalm 139:5, showed that the golem reached all the way to the sky. The term "golem" was lifted from Ps. 139:16. In the Bible, golem meant embryo, which was connected to this idea of creation.⁴ Psalm 139, which provided two of these texts, discussed human creation. Its focus was God's relation with humans. This golem image appeared in multiple rabbinic texts.⁵ These three biblical verses were the verses utilized in describing the world-spanner's creation. Another proof-text was cited in Midrash on Psalms 139:5: **From the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth** [Deut. 28:64]. Yet another verse was cited as proof in Genesis Rabbah 21:3: **Though his stature mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds** (Job 20:6).⁶ This final verse focused on the height of the world-spanner, which was indicated by the other proof-texts.

³ Golem is often translated as "soulless lump" or "unformed mass." Susan Niditch, in "The Cosmic Adam: Man as Mediator in Rabbinic Literature," *Journal of Jewish Studies* (1983, Vol. 34), observed that such translations place "certain nuances on the first man's condition before ensoulment which are incorrect." (p. 142) Niditch coined the term "world-spanner." World-spanner is a more neutral term, which allows for the golem's attributes and experiences.

⁴ BDB p. 166. The root occurred infrequently and only once in this form.

⁵ Niditch cites twelve midrashim: GR 8:1, 21:3, 24:2, Lev R. 14:1, 18:2, PRE 11, PR 23:1, ARN B 8, Mid Ps. 139:5, Tan. Vayiqra Tazria 10 on Lev. 13:1-2, Hag 12a, San. 38b. Lev R. 18:2 also refers to this image. The term golem is usually understood to refer to the medieval legend of a being created by a rabbi. This image arose much later than the one in GR 8:1. See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, volume 7, page 754.

⁶ GR 21:3. Job 20:6 was followed by Job 20:7 later in the passage. That second verse was used to show the first man's downfall. Midrashim dealing with that issue will be examined later.

The image of this world-spanning golem was broadly developed within these midrashim. The original location of the dust used to make the first man was revealed, as well:

R. Berekiah and R. Helbo in the name of Samuel the Elder said:
He was created from the place of his atonement, as it is said:
An altar of earth [אדמה] you shall make unto me
(Ex.20:21)...?

This midrash connected the אדמה of the earthen altar with the אדמה used to create man.⁷ The place of atonement is the Temple Mount. The rabbis saw their holy site, Jerusalem, as unique from the very beginning of the universe.

The golem was granted a spectacular vision while in embryonic form. This midrash was attributed to R. Judah b. R. Simon, one of the sages from the main passage on the golem.⁹ R. Judah b. R. Simon said:

While Adam lay as a golem before Him at whose decree the world came into existence, He showed him every generation and its sages, every generation and its judges, scribes, interpreters, and leaders. "Your eyes have seen unformed substance [גלמי], unformed substance which your eyes have seen has already been written in the book of Adam, that is:
This is the book of the generations of Adam (Gen.5:1).¹⁰

The embryonic first man was given fantastic foreknowledge of the future's great figures. This midrash addressed the content of the book of the generations of Adam (Gen.5:1). Other relevant midrashim will be

⁷ GR 14:8. The same rabbis are mentioned, except Samuel b. Nahman is referred to as Samuel the Elder. San.38a-b indicates different locations for man's raw materials. See p.38.

⁸ Gen.2:7

⁹ GR 8:1.

¹⁰ GR 24:2. PR 23:1 attributed this teaching to R. Simeon b. Lakish in the name of R. Eleazar b. Azariah. Tan.Bub. 1:28 included a compact version of this teaching without any attribution.

addressed in the section of Genesis 5:1.¹¹ In this case, the midrash loosened the meaning of the word golem. Thus, Ps.139:16 was viewed as a comment of God to the embryonic golem. Golem was understood to mean the embryonic first man and the future figures yet to be formed. The world-spanner possessed not only enormous size, but also vast knowledge.

Even some midrashim which do not use the term golem still described the first man as huge.¹² In Genesis Rabbah 8:10, the angels mistook Adam for God.¹³ Size was not specifically mentioned, but Adam's stature was probably assumed by the author. The later Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar specifically connected Adam's initial size and the angels' reaction.¹⁴ There, Adam corrected the angels, reciting to them: **The Lord reigns, He is apparelled with majesty** (Ps.93:1). In the Genesis Rabbah version, a parable described God acting as a king to a governor. God clarified man's position by causing him to fall asleep. Isaiah 2:22 was cited, evoking the second creation story: **Cease you from man, in whose nostrils is a breath, for how little is he to be accounted.**

The rabbis grappled with the question of creation in the image of God. They searched for those qualities found in both humans and God. The angels, in addition to God, were understood as higher beings. Thus, some angelic qualities may be duplicated in humans. Also, humans were assumed to share certain qualities with animals.

R. Joshua b. R.Nehemiah said in the name of R. Hanina b. R. Isaac, and the rabbis in the name of R. Eleazar said: He created him with four attributes of the higher beings and four attributes of

¹¹ p.140.

¹² GR 12:6 for example.

¹³ GR 8:10

¹⁴ PRE 13

lower beings. Eats and drinks like an animal. Reproduces like an animal. Excretes like an animal. Dies like an animal. Like a higher being: Stands like a ministering angel. Speaks like a ministering angel. Possesses intelligence like a ministering angel. Sees like a ministering angel. R. Tifdai said in R. Aha's name: The celestial beings were created in the image and likeness [of God] and do not reproduce; while the terrestrial creatures reproduce but were not created in the image and likeness. The Holy One, blessed be he, said: 'Behold, I will create him in [my image] and likeness, the character of the celestial beings, while he will reproduce like the terrestrial beings.' R. Tifdai said in R. Aha's name: The Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'If I create him of the celestial elements he will live and not die, and if I create him of the terrestrial elements, he will die and not live [in a future life]. Therefore, I will create him of the upper and the lower elements: if he sins he will die; while if he does not sin, he will live.¹⁵

This passage was fairly straight-forward. The first man possessed a combination of angelic and animal traits. Those acts required for physical life and death were considered animal. Those traits which are more intellectual, or sensory, were deemed angelic. R. Tifdai's second comment provided a reason, other than Divine fancy, for this combination. God desired a creature who would be less than immortal, but who would survive in the world to come. The mixing of celestial and terrestrial elements was necessary to achieve this end.

¹⁵ GR 8:11. GR 14:3 is an exact parallel, connected to Gen 2:7. See p.34.

The Chronology of Creation:

There were multiple rabbinic discussions regarding the chronological details of creation. One, in Leviticus Rabbah, claimed that human creation occurred on Rosh Hashanah. This passage was concerned with the hourly events on the sixth day of creation.

... on Rosh Hashanah, in the first hour, God conceptualized man's creation; in the second He took counsel with the ministering angels; in the third He assembled Adam's dust; in the fourth He kneaded it; in the fifth He shaped him; in the sixth he made him into a golem; in the seventh He breathed a soul into him; in the eighth He brought him into the Garden of Eden; in the ninth he was commanded; in the tenth he transgressed; in the eleventh he was judged; in the twelfth he was pardoned. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Adam: "This will be a sign to your children. As you stood in judgment before Me this day and came out with a free pardon, so will your children in the future stand in judgment before Me on this day and will come out from My presence with a free pardon."¹

This passage touched upon themes from many other midrashim. This hour by hour schedule was not linked to a specific biblical verse. Neither Genesis 1 or 2 included hints of this division of creation chores. The acts of some hours were biblical: assembling dust, breathing a soul, placing in the Garden, commanding, transgressing, and judging. Other hourly acts stemmed from the rabbis themselves, such as kneading, shaping, and pardoning. The Bible did not clearly indicate the timing of the Garden of Eden narrative. This midrash assumed that all of Genesis 3 occurred during the sixth day of creation. This idea was echoed in other midrashim. According to the rabbis, human creation was related to Rosh Hashanah and atonement. A midrash,

¹ Lev.R.29:1. Parallel material is found in PRK 23:1, Tan.Bub. 1:25, and San.38b.

discussed earlier, connected Adam's creation to the Temple Mount, "the place of atonement."² This was an ongoing thematic link in these midrashim.

The rabbis enjoyed exploring the timing of biblical narratives. They closely examined the numbers presented, and added numbers where they were omitted. The overall order of events caused the rabbis great concern and interest. Genesis Rabbah 8:1, discussed earlier, included this discussion of the chronology of creation:

R. Eleazar interpreted it: He was the latest [אחר] in the work of the last day, and the earliest [קדם] in the work of the first day.³ That is R. Eleazar's view, for he said: **Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature [נפש חיה]** (Gen.1:24) refers to the soul [נפש] of Adam. R. Simeon b. Lakish maintained: He was the latest in the work of the last day and the earliest in the work of the first day. That is consistent with the view of R. Simeon b. Lakish, for he said: **And the spirit of God [רוח אלהים] hovered** (Gen.1:2) refers to the soul of Adam, as you read, **And the spirit of the Lord [רוח] shall rest upon him** (Is.11:2). R. Nahman said: Last in creation and first in punishment. R. Samuel b. Tanhum said: His praise [of God], too, comes only at the last, as it is written: **Hallelujah. Praise you the Lord from the heavens**, the passage continuing until: **He has made a decree which shall not be transgressed**. This is followed by, **Praise you the Lord from the earth**, etc. and only after that, **Kings of the earth and all peoples** (Ps.148:1-11). R. Simlai said: Just as his praise comes after that of cattle, beasts, and fowls, so does his creation come after that of cattle, beasts, and fowl. First we have **And God said: Let the waters swarm** (Gen.1:20), and after them all: **Let Us make man** (Gen.1:26).⁴

² GR 14:8. See p.20.

³ R. Eleazar was continuing a debate over the interpretation of Ps. 139:5.

⁴ GR 8:1. Mid.Ps.139:5 paralleled this passage.

These interpretations did not present an hourly breakdown of creation. They did provide a general outline of humanity's place in the Bible's first week. R. Eleazar and R. Simeon b. Lakish basically agreed that man was the first and last item on the chronological list of creation. R. Eleazar was interpreting Ps. 139:5. **אחור** was understood as meaning the last thing created. **קדם** was viewed as the very start of creation. R. Eleazar focused on the very last day and Adam's soul. He claimed that Adam's soul [נפש] was the living creature [נפש] mentioned in Genesis 1:24, the sixth day of creation. R. Simeon b. Lakish focused on the first day. He stated that Adam's soul was created on the first day of creation. He found **רוח** in Genesis 1:2, when God's spirit hovered. Isaiah 11:2 spoke of the spirit [רוח] of the Lord resting on King David. R. Simeon b. Lakish was assuming that when God's spirit [רוח] was described as hovering, it must be hovering over a specific human soul.

R. Nahman expanded this outline to include Adam and Eve at the moment of punishment.⁵ These humans were the last creatures created, but they were the first beings to sin against God. R. Samuel b. Tanhum then asserted that Adam did not praise God, until after the rest of creation praised God. Psalm 148 listed many types of creations which praise God: angels, luminaries, waters, sea monsters, animals and beasts of all types. Humans were not mentioned until Psalm 148:11. R. Samuel b. Tanhum used this verse to show that humans were late with their praise of God. R. Simlai's comment echoed R. Samuel b. Tanhum's point. Humans were the last to be created, thus logically they were the last to praise God.

Deuteronomy Rabbah included another explanation of creation's subdivisions. The passage commented on the Shema.

⁵ R. Nahman's statement was found in Eru. 18a and Ber. 61a. In both cases, the statement was attributed to R. Ammi.

The rabbis say: God said to Israel: "My children, all that I have created I have created in pairs; heaven and earth are a pair; sun and moon are a pair; Adam and Eve are a pair; this world and the world to come are a pair; but My Glory is one and unique in the world." Where do we learn this from? From what we read in context: **Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one** (Deut.6:4).⁶

This explanation was fairly direct. A list of created pairs was presented and compared to the unity of God's Glory. The rabbinic idea of a world to come was included in this discussion. God's Glory was proved unique through the words of the Shema. God's unity was asserted in that verse from Deuteronomy.

⁶ Deut.R. 2:31

Gen.2:3- **And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy because on it God ceased from all the work of creation that He had done.**

Genesis 2:3 did not mention the first man. However, the rabbis linked the story of Adam's creation to the seventh day. The holiness and observance of Shabbat held tremendous importance to the rabbis. At the beginning of Genesis, Shabbat was mentioned one paragraph before, and one paragraph after, the two references to man's creation. It is not surprising, then, that the rabbis linked Shabbat and human creation.

Shabbat and human creation were dealt with in rabbinic comments on the chronology of creation. Genesis Rabbah included the following interpretation of Genesis 2:3:

R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama b. R. Hanina: The Holy One, blessed be He, created three objects on each day: on the first heaven, earth, and light; on the second, the firmament, Gehenna¹, and the angels; on the third, trees, herbs, and the Garden of Eden; on the fourth, the sun, the moon, and the constellations; on the fifth, birds, fish, and the Leviathan²; on the sixth, Adam, Eve, and moving creatures [רמשים]. R. Phinehas said: On the sixth He created six things: Adam, Eve, creeping things [רמש], cattle, wild beasts, and demons. R. Banayah said: "Which God created and made [ועשה]" is not written here, but **Which God created to make [לעשות]**: whatever the Holy One, blessed be He, was to have made on the seventh, He created beforehand on the sixth.³

R. Levi summarized the days of creation as occurring in sets of three. R. Phinehas corrected him. He claimed six things, not three things, were created on the sixth day. Their different interpretations both rested upon

¹ Gehenna was the rabbinic term for hell.

² The large fish in the book of Jonah.

³ GR 11:9

the word רמש. This word appeared in Genesis 1:30.⁴ R. Levi treated all moving creatures, all רמש, as one category of creation. R. Phinehas read רמש as a major heading including 4 categories of creation. R. Banayah explained R. Phinehas' position as applied to Genesis 2:3. The verse did not have two past tense verbs. There was a past tense verb and an infinitive. R. Banayah claimed this showed the acts were not just the sixth day's labor. The work for the seventh day was prepared on the sixth day. This forethought allowed God to rest on the seventh day.

Elsewhere, Genesis Rabbah linked the first man and Shabbat in a different manner. According to the rabbinic chronology of Adam's creation and sin, both these events occurred on the sixth day. Therefore, Adam's punishment occurred on the sixth day. This punishment was linked as well to a Divine dimming of the heavenly lights. This punishment of the luminaries was then related to Genesis 2:3:

He blessed it in respect of the luminaries. R. Simeon b. Judah said: Though the luminaries were spoiled on Erev Shabbat, yet they were not weakened until the end of Shabbat. This agrees with the rabbis, but not with R. Ammi, who maintained: Adam's glory did not abide the night with him. What is the proof? **But Adam [אדם] passes not the night in glory** (Ps.49:13). The rabbis maintain: His glory abode with him, but at the end of Shabbat He deprived him of his splendor and expelled him from the Garden of Eden, as it is written, **You change his countenance and send him away** (Job 14:20).⁵

R. Ammi disagreed with the majority view regarding the brightness of Adam on the first Shabbat night. R. Ammi was discussing the primeval light found within the created first man. There were midrashim which attributed to the first man a certain glow to his skin. Pesikta Rabbati, in a parallel passage,

⁴ רמש occurred additionally in Gen.1:26 and Gen.1:28.

⁵ GR 11:2. GR 12:6 and PR 23:6 were parallel passages.

made clear reference to the nature of Adam's face. There it stated: **the splendor of his face is changed** (Eccles.8:1).⁶ In Genesis Rabbah, R. Ammi said this glow disappeared immediately upon punishment. The rabbis said that Adam's glow ended when he was judged. In the Bible, neither proof-text referred to Adam. The Psalms verse referred to a man, not Adam. Even the rabbis did not claim the Job verse mentioned Adam by name.

As soon as the sun set on the night of Shabbat, the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to hide the light, but He showed honor to Shabbat; thus it is written: **And God blessed the seventh day**: He blessed it with light. When the sun set on the night of the Sabbath, the light continued to function, whereupon all began praising, as it is written: **Under the whole heaven they sing [ישררו] to Him?** (Job 37:3) because **His light [reaches] unto the ends of the earth** (ibid)⁸. . . R. Levi said in the name of the son of Nezirah: That light functioned thirty-six hours, 12 hours on Erev Shabbat, twelve hours during the night of Shabbat, and twelve hours on Shabbat. When the sun sank at the end of Shabbat, darkness began to set in. Adam was terrified: **Surely, the darkness shall envelop me** (Ps.139:11). Shall he of whom it was written, **He shall strike at your head** (Gen.3:15), now come to attack me? What did the Lord do for him? He made him find two flints which he struck against each other; light came forth and he uttered a blessing over it; hence it is written, **But the night was light about me [בעדני]** (Ps.139:11), i.e. the night was light in my Eden. This agrees with Samuel, for Samuel said: Why do we recite a blessing over a fire at the end of Shabbat? Because it was then created for the first time.⁹

⁶ PR 23:6

⁷ Literally, Job 37:3 would be translated as **He sends it forth under the whole heaven**.

⁸ A section is omitted here. R. Judah b. R. Simeon spoke of the created light, and its hiding.

⁹ GR 11:2. Parallel passages included GR 12:6, Y. Ber. Chap.8, Hal.6 (12b), PR 23:6, and PR 46:1. Y.A.Z. Chap.1, Hal.2 (39c) mentioned Adam fear of the serpent using Gen.3:15. A.Z.8a dealt with Adam's fear of the darkness. GR 11:2 continued with R. Huna discussing the blessing at the end of Yom Kippur.

The rabbis explained how the seventh day was blessed. Normally, the sun sets and light is dimmed at night. This natural fact was true even for the special seventh day. Here, we learn that God blessed this first seventh night with light. The light continued even after the sun had set. Job 37:3 was understood as explaining this unusual event. The word *ישירו* was read as "sing", not as "sent." This singing was identified as praise for that night's light. R. Levi outlined the specifics of that unique Shabbat. Finally, the sun set at the end of Shabbat. The first man, having been created during that thirty-six hour period of light, experienced his first night of darkness. The midrash portrayed him as understandably terrified. Psalm 139 stated a human fear of darkness. Genesis Rabbah easily added a fear of the serpent's attack to enveloping darkness. Then, there was a rabbinic explanation of the origin of fire. In Greek mythology, Prometheus stole fire from Zeus and gave it to humanity. Prometheus was punished eternally for his act of defiance. The rabbinic cosmology was much simpler. There is only one God. In Genesis Rabbah, God taught Adam how to make his own fire. When the light appeared, Adam copied God's act of blessing. The rabbis said God blessed Shabbat with light. Here, Adam blessed the light, which he made at the end of Shabbat. *בעדני* (Ps. 139:11) was read as "in my Eden", instead of "about me." Adam performed the first Havdallah ceremony.

Pesikta Rabbati, in a parallel passage, added the image of Shabbat testifying on behalf of the first man:

Until Shabbat came to intercede, the King had been on his throne deeply troubled about His world--if one dare speak of Him in such a way--saying: "All that I created, I created for the sake of man. Now his sentence is about to be pronounced, a sentence which will set to naught all the work that I have done, and the world will revert to emptiness and chaos." But even as the King was grieving, Shabbat had entered to intercede and

Adam had been granted his remission. That was when the Holy One, blessed be He, said: All that I made-- Shabbat is responsible for its being finished, as is said: **By the seventh day God finished** (Gen.2:2).¹⁰

Genesis 2:2 is reworked to show that Shabbat was more than the finale of creation. Here, Shabbat was instrumental to creation's completion. This passage is yet another example of rabbinic anthropomorphizing. Shabbat thought and spoke in this midrash.

There were other rabbinic passages connecting Adam's creation and Shabbat. The Talmud cited the timing of human creation as an additional defence against the heretics. Since the first man was created immediately before Shabbat, no one can say that he helped God in creation. This argument related to the earlier material on the reasoning behind the manner of human creation.¹¹

As we have already seen, the rabbis were very concerned with the chronology of creation. Many other passages mentioned the relative timing of the creation of individual things. Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar included a relevant example of these passages:

Rabbi Levi said: That [Moses'] rod which was created in the twilight [of the first Shabbat] was delivered to the first man in the Garden of Eden. Adam delivered it to Enoch, and Enoch delivered it to Noah, and Noah delivered it to Shem. Shem delivered it to Abraham...¹²

Moses was connected to Adam in this midrash. The connection was made through the rod the two men carried. The Bible did not mention Adam's rod, but we know Moses had a staff. The author of this passage sought to tie the

¹⁰ PR 46:2. This passage also discussed Rosh Hashanah's relationship to creation, thus evoking Lev.R.29:2. PRE 18 portrayed Shabbat as defending Adam, also.

¹¹ San.38a

¹² PRE 40.

great Israelite leader to the first man. Many of the rabbinic teachings warned against people claiming greater lineage than other people. The rabbis used that as an explanation for the creation of one common ancestor. Here, and in other places, the rabbis were willing to associate Adam with the Jews. It was not possible to claim greater lineage. It was possible to say Moses received his staff through transmission from Adam.

Gen.2:5- **When no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil.**

This verse from the second creation narrative seems to contradict events as presented in the first creation narrative. The Talmud commented on this issue, relating it to the first man:

R. Assi pointed out a contradiction. One verse says: **And the earth brought forth grass** (Gen.1:12), referring to the third day, whereas another verse when speaking of the sixth day says: **No shrub of the field was yet on earth** (Gen.2:5). This teaches us that the plants commenced to grow but stopped just as they were about to break through the soil, until Adam came and prayed for rain for them; and when rain fell they sprouted forth. This teaches you that the Holy One, blessed be He, longs for the prayers of the righteous. R. Nahman b. Papa had a garden and he sowed in it seeds but they did not grow. He prayed, immediately rain came and they began to grow. That, he exclaimed, is what R. Assi taught.¹

R. Assi combined the two accounts together. On the third day, God took preparatory steps towards filling the earth with grass and shrubs. This act was not completed on that day. Adam was created on the sixth day. He prayed for rain and his prayers were answered. According to R. Assi, the growth continued through the earth's surface. R. Nahman provided a literal understanding of R. Assi's teaching. God longs for the prayers of the righteous and therefore God answers those prayers. R. Nahman was counted therefore among the righteous. R. Assi's teaching was another example of an individual interceding with God regarding Adam. In other passages, we saw angels or Shabbat intercede with God. In this case, it was the first man and another very righteous man who intercede with God.

¹ Hul.60b

Gen 2:7- Then the Lord God formed [וַיִּצַר] man from the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living soul.

The word וַיִּצַר can be written with only one yod. In this verse, it was written with two yods. This verb, meaning formed or created, was central to the narrative for obvious reasons. The rabbis suggested multiple understandings of the presence of an extra yod. These explanations presented further evidence their nuanced view of human nature. Genesis Rabbah 14 was the source of several of these interpretations:

וַיִּצַר connotes 2 formations: the creation of Adam and the creation of Eve. Or creation at seven [months] and creation at nine [months]. R. Huna said: When the fetus is formed to be born at seven months, and born at seven months, it is viable. And at nine months, it is viable. When the fetus is formed to be born at nine months and is born at eight months it is not viable. All the more so, if it is born at seven months. R. Abbahu was asked: "how do we know that when the fetus is fully developed at seven months it is viable?" "From your own, I will prove it to you: Live, seven, go, eight¹."²

Gen.2:7 only described the formation of Adam. The unattributed interpretation implied that when God created Adam, God was already thinking of Eve. The word וַיִּצַר had two yods. One yods stood for Adam's creation and one for Eve's creation. A discussion of fetus viability then ensued. This particular debate was related to this chapter for two reasons. One yod stood for seventh months and one for nine months. Also, the biblical verse and the rabbinic teaching both discussed human formation. The rabbis

¹ "Live, seven, go, eight" was based on the Greek. It will be explained in the next paragraph.

² GR 14:2

were presenting their early view of the development of the fetus. They did not possess modern medical knowledge, but they did show an understanding of the problems of premature birth. When questioned, R. Abbahu offered proof from the Greek. Whether or not such a conversation actually occurred, the interchange showed the challenge Greek ideas presented to rabbinic Judaism. The question of rabbinic teaching was presented as arising from a speaker of Greek. R. Abbahu presented a Greek word-play in Hebrew. The letter "zeta" and the command "live" are similar words in Greek. Zeta possesses the numerical value of seven. Thus, seven months was connected to living, or viability. The letter "eta" and the command "go" are similar words as well. Eta possesses the numerical value of eight. Thus, eight months was connected to not living, or a lack of viability. Today, we would not use word-plays when discussing the potential viability of a fetus. However, this was not medical literature. Genesis Rabbah was a literature of the interpretation of words. This word-play fit the general tenor of the text.

The next section of Genesis Rabbah stated that one god was for humanity's earthly qualities and one for its celestial qualities.³ This passage continued with material detailing the source of different human qualities. This material has been discussed earlier as related to Genesis 1:26. Another interpretation was then presented:

וַיֵּצֵר meaning two formations, the good inclination [**יצר טוב**] and the evil inclination [**יצר רע**]. For if an animal possessed these two formations, it would die of fright on seeing a man holding a knife to slaughter it. But surely a man possess these two inclinations. Said R. Hanina b. Idi: He

³ GR 14:3. This passage was parallel to GR 8:11, which was discussed on p.22.

bound up the spirit of man [ויוצר רוח אדם] within him. (Zech 12:1); for if that were not so, whenever a trouble came upon him he would remove it and cast it from him.⁴

Rabbinic thought presented humans as possessing two inclinations: one good and one evil. Genesis 2:7 was the scriptural source of this view. This specific passage linked the two gods of **ויוצר** to the good and evil inclination. This interpretation stood on the solid ground of the same root, **יצר**, in Genesis 2:7 and the word inclination. R. Hanina drew upon a Zechariah passage discussing creation, which used the same root. He demonstrated the human ability to survive possessing both the good and evil inclination. Both of these faculties were bound up together in a human's spirit. This binding enables humans to survive in the world. The Talmud included a similar interpretation, also using animals for comparison:

R. Nahman b. R. Hisda expounded: What is meant by the text **Then the Lord God formed [ויוצר] man?** The two gods show that the Holy One, blessed be He, created two inclinations: the good inclination and the evil inclination. R. Nahman b. Isaac disagreed: According to this, he said animals, of which it is not written **ויוצר**, should have no evil inclination, yet we see that they injure and bite and kick? Thus, it is according to R. Simeon b. Pazzi; for R. Simeon b. Pazzi said: Woe to me because of my Creator [**מיוצרי**] and woe to me because of my inclination [**מיצרי**].⁵

Again, the two gods were clearly linked to the good and evil inclinations. R. Nahman b. Isaac's opposition to this interpretation was left unanswered. R. Simeon b. Pazzi added a fatalistic statement acknowledging that God, the

⁴ GR 14:4.

⁵ Ber. 61a. R. Simeon b. Pazzi's comment was repeated in Eru. 18a.

Creator, created humans with an evil inclination. The common root is again apparent: **יצר**.

Genesis Rabbah presented one more understanding of the double god:

ויצר means two formations: a formation in this world and a formation in the world to come. Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel disagree. Bet Shammai say: His formation in the next world will be different than in this world. In this world skin and flesh are formed first, the sinews and bones last; but in the future He will commence with sinews and bones and finish with skin and flesh. . . Bet Hillel say: Just as he is formed in this world, so will he be formed in the next world. . .⁶

The two gods were connected to the rabbinic idea of the world to come. According to this view, God was aware at the start that there would be two worlds. Genesis 2:7 was read for information regarding this creation and the creation in the future world to come. Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel agreed on this fundamental point, even as they disagreed on the details of the world to come.

Berakot 61a linked the rabbinic readings of Genesis 2:7 and Genesis 1:27. The double god was connected, implicitly, to the first creation story: "R. Jeremiah b. Eleazar said: God created two faces on the first man, as it says, **Behind me and before have You formed me** (Ps. 139:5)."⁷ One god stood for Adam's face and the other god stands for Eve's face. Psalm 139:5 was used to present the idea of a front face and a rear face. This idea was discussed earlier.

⁶ GR 14.5. This passage included a detailed discussion of each sides view, complete with proof texts.

⁷ Ber. 61a. This verse was central to the earlier discussion regarding the first man's creation as a golem.

Another Talmud tractate used the double yod to connect the two creation narratives in a different manner. One yod referred to the creation of man, or man's face. The second yod referred to the creation of man's tail.⁸ This brief reference is better understood in light of a Genesis Rabbah interpretation of the end of Genesis 2:7:

and the man became a living soul [לנפש חיה]. Judah b. Rabbi said: This teaches that He provided him with a tail, like an animal, but subsequently removed it from him for the sake of his dignity.⁹

This interpretation related to other passages which described humanity's animal characteristics. The rabbis were acutely aware of humanity's humble origins, even if they did not conceive of evolution. In this passage, God showed compassion for the first man by caring for his dignity. The rabbis had respect for the human form, as they knew it. The addition of a tail was seen as decreasing human dignity.

Human dignity was tied to the origins of the material used to create the species. The first creation narrative did not mention the raw materials used to form the first man. Genesis 2:7 read: **Then the Lord God formed man of the dust of the earth.** The rabbis were interested in why both dust and earth were mentioned. Either word on its own would have been sufficient. As discussed in an earlier section, Genesis Rabbah 14:8 identified Adam's dust as coming from the Temple Mount.¹⁰ Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar widened the source to include the whole world:

⁸ Eru.18a.

⁹ GR 14:10. The passage continued and applied the term **לנפש חיה** to slavery.

¹⁰ GR 14:8 was discussed in the section on Adam as a Golem. See p.20.

He began to collect the dust of the first man from the four corners of the world; red, black, white, and green. Red is the body. Black is the insides. White is the bones and sinews. Green is the body. Why did He gather his dust from the four corners of the world? Thus said the Holy One, blessed be He: If a man comes from the east to the west, or from the west to the east, or from any place he may go, he should not say "The dust of your body is not mine, and I do not accept you. Return to the place you were created. Rather this is to teach you, that in any places a man goes on the earth, from there his dirt was taken, and to there he shall return, as it says: **For dust you are and to dust you shall return** (Gen.3:19).¹¹

This interpretation taught a similar lesson as the passages regarding the initial singularity of human creation.¹² Dirt from around the world was combined in the creation of humanity. Thus, not only can no one claim superior human ancestry, no one can even claim superior raw materials. The dirt used in creation was the whole earth's dirt. The colors used in creation related the rabbinic understanding of the complexity of human creation. It has been suggested that the different colors may refer to the range of human skin colors.¹³

The Talmud provided other possible sources for Adam's dirt:

R. Oshaiah said in Rab's name: Adam's trunk came from Babylon, his head from the Land of Israel, his limbs from other lands, and his private parts from Akra di Agma.¹⁴

The linkage of the first man with Babylon and Israel made sense. Babylon was the site of Jewish scholarship and authority when the Babylonian Talmud was written. The Land of Israel was the historical location of

¹¹ PRE 11.

¹² See M.San.45 and Tos.San.84-8. See pp.14-15.

¹³ Gerald Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (New York, Hermon Press, 1970), p.77.

¹⁴ San.38a-b.

Israel and the focus of Jewish prayers and hopes. The reasoning behind the inclusion of other lands may have been the same as in the previous passage. All people had a stake in the common ancestor. Akra di Agma was chosen as the site of Adam's private parts because of that town's immoral reputation.¹⁵ This attempt to identify the location of Adam's dust was due to the rabbinic interest in origins. The origins of a name, object, or teaching were important to the rabbis. They viewed the essence of a thing as linked to its origin. Origins were all the more important when dealing with Adam, who was after all the origin of human origins.

¹⁵ The Soncino Talmud translation located Akra di Agma near Pumbedita in Babylon. Ginzberg explained that Akra di Agma was "notorious on account of the loose morals of its inhabitants. Ginzberg, Vol. 5, p. 72, note 15.

Gen.2:7- Why Did God Create Man?

The question of the motive behind the first man's creation was bound to be raised by the rabbis. They examined every detail of the biblical narrative. The motive behind the whole enterprise of human creation was addressed. Several possibilities were suggested. Genesis Rabbah linked Adam's creation with Abraham:

Then the Lord God formed the man: for the sake of Abraham. R. Levi said: It is written, **The greatest man among the Anakim** (Josh.14:15): **man** means Abraham, and why is he called the greatest man? Because he was worthy of being created before Adam, but the Holy One, blessed be He, reasoned: "He may sin and there will be none to set it right. Hence I will create Adam first, so that if he sins, Abraham may come and set things right."¹

The passage tied Adam to Jewish particularity. Adam was created first, even though Abraham was a greater man. R. Levi quoted from Joshua's division of the Land of Israel. This verse discussed Kiryat-Arba, a city connected with Abraham's life. Thus, Abraham was identified as the greatest man in the verse. God knew that Adam would sin. God, therefore, created Adam before Abraham. Abraham, the first Jew, eventually set things right after Adam's sin.

Pesikta Rabbati linked Adam's creation with another great Jewish figure. It says: "Jeremiah was one of four men referred to in scripture as supremely perfect creatures whom God Himself had formed."² Genesis 2:7 was utilized to show that Adam was formed by God. The passage assumed

¹ GR 14:6.

² PR 26:1.

Adam was created perfect and did not attempt to prove it. Jacob and Isaiah were the other two perfect men mentioned in this passage.

Leviticus Rabbah presented a different reason for Adam's creation:

Resh Lakish, in the name of R. Simeon b. Menasya, said: The apple of Adam's heel outshone the globe of the sun; how much more so the brightness of his face. . . Adam was created for the service of the Holy One, blessed be He, and the globe of the sun for the service of man.³

The idea that Adam's skin had an unusual shine is encountered multiple times in the writings of the rabbis. This passage gave a very high level of importance to Adam and all humanity. Adam was created to serve God. This was analogous to the sun's creation to serve man. Both Adam and the sun were bright, shining creations.

Talmud Yerushalmi presented three ideas regarding Adam's role in the world. The three ideas were part of a comment on Mishnah Shabbat 2:6. The Mishnah passage listed three reasons women die in childbirth: not performing hallah, not observing nidah, and not lighting the candles.⁴ Talmud Yerushalmi used this as a springboard for discussing Adam's place in the world:

The first man [אדם] was the lifeblood [דם] of the world.⁵ As it is written: **a flow would well up from the ground** (Gen.2:6), and Eve caused him to die, thus women were assigned the mitzvah of nidah. And hallah? The first man was the clean

³ Lev.R.20:2. Eccl.R.8:2 was a parallel passage. In Eccl.R.8:2, Resh Lakish's statement was attributed to R. Levi. Both passages continued with material which will be discussed in relation to Gen.2:22.

⁴ M.Shab.2:6. Hallah is the dough offering. Nidah is the ritual laws surrounding menstruation. Lighting the candles referred to Shabbat candles.

⁵ Jacob Neusner used lifeblood, instead of just blood in his translation.

hallah for the world: **the Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth** (Gen.2:7). This agrees with what R. Jose b. Ketsarah said: When a woman kneads her dough with water, she then raises up the dough offering from it, and Eve caused him to die, thus women were assigned the mitzvah of hallah. And the lighting of candles? The first man was the light of the world, as it was written: **The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, [searching all the inward parts]** (Prov.20:27), and Eve caused him to die, thus women were assigned the mitzvah of candles.⁶

Adam was identified as three different valuable parts of the world: its lifeblood, its hallah and its lamp. Lifeblood was derived by taking the word blood [דם] from the word Adam [אדם]. Hallah was derived by comparison of Adam to the dough offering of a woman making bread. In the Genesis Rabbah parallel passage, Genesis 2:6 and Genesis 2:7 were presented consecutively. They were both related to hallah. Genesis 2:6 helped explain both the lifeblood and the hallah images. The connection made sense as presented in Talmud Yerushalmi and Genesis Rabbah. Proverbs 20:27 was used to show that Adam, the man, was the lamp of the Lord. To be the lamp of the Lord was the same as being the lamp of the world. All three interpretations portrayed Adam as the completion and the inspiration of the world.

⁶ Y. Shab. Chap. 2, Hal. 4 (5b). G.R. 14:1 paralleled the hallah statement, also attributing it to R. Jose b. Ketsarah. G.R. 14:1 presented Gen. 2:6, directly next to Gen. 2:7. This placement allowed for a clearer explanation of Adam as hallah. Tan. Bub. 2:1 paralleled the entire passage.

Gen.2:7- **Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth...**

The rabbis were interested in many different aspects of human creation. The rabbinic fascination with numbers led some rabbis to speculate regarding the age of the first man and the first woman. The Bible stated Adam's age at death (Gen.5:5), but what was his relative age at birth? Two answers were suggested in Genesis Rabbah's interpretation of Genesis 2:7.

Of the dust [עפר]. R. Judah b. R. Simon said: a young man [נוער], he was created as a young man in his fullness. R. Eleazar b. R. Simeon said: Eve too was created fully developed. R. Johanan said: Adam and Eve were created as at the age of twenty. R. Huna said: dust [עפר] is masculine, while earth [אדמה] is feminine: a potter takes male dust and female earth in order that his vessels may be sound.¹

R. Judah b. R. Simon added one letter to the word dust [עפר], reading it as young man [נוער]. This opinion did not give a specific age. We did learn that the first man was created young and strong. R. Eleazar further clarified that Eve was created in the same young, strong, fully developed state. R. Johanan provided an even more specific answer. Adam and Eve were both created as if they were 20 years old. This opinion provided no supporting reasoning. R. Huna's point was an aside, interpreting the same biblical verse. This rabbi was unconcerned with the first man's age. He was interested in explaining why the verse used both dust and earth. Only one term was necessary.

Numbers Rabbah arrived at the same conclusion as R. Johanan. The passage in question provided supportive reasoning:

¹ GR 14:7. The passage continued with a discussion of R. Huna's point.

Another interpretation is that **Upon King Solomon** [שלמה] (Song 3:11) means upon the King who produced his created things perfect [שהשלים]. He created the sun and the moon in their fullness and all the works of creation were brought into existence in their full stature; as it says, **The heaven and the earth were finished, and all their array** (Gen.2:2). Bar Kappara observed: Adam and Eve were created as adults of twenty years of age.²

Bar Kappara's explanation built upon the interpretations of age in Genesis Rabbah. Bar Kappara taught that Adam was created fully developed at age twenty. This view was supported by Genesis 2:2. This verse was read to prove that all of creation was created fully developed.

² Num.R.12:8. This passage was part of a discussion of Num.7:1.

Gen.2:9- **And from the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden, and the tree [עץ] of knowledge of good and evil.**

The issues arising from Genesis 2:9 revolve around the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The reader may wonder about the role and purpose of each of these trees. Why did God place the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden if it was off-limits to the first human couple? The rabbis addressed a seemingly more mundane issue: What kind of tree was the tree of knowledge of good and evil? The rabbis did not suggest the apple, the fruit identified in popular Western culture. Many other possibilities were presented.

What was the tree from which Adam and Eve ate? R. Meir said: It was wheat, for when a person lacks knowledge people say, "That man has never eaten bread of wheat." Rabbi Samuel b. Isaac asked R. Ze'ira: "Is it possible that it was wheat?" "Yes," he said. He said: "But surely tree is written?" He replied: "It grew tall like the cedars of Lebanon."¹

Wheat was suggested by R. Meir. He supported his view with a contemporary saying. Regarding the unintelligent man, it was said: That man has never eaten bread of wheat. This saying was rendered in the Aramaic. Aramaic was the daily language of these rabbis. Often such colloquial comments, and real life examples, were presented in Aramaic. The passage continued with other possible identifications:

R. Judah b. R. Ilai said: It was grapes, for it says, **Their grapes are grapes of gall, their cluster are bitter** (Deut.32:32): those clusters brought bitterness into the world.

¹ GR 15:7

R. Abba of Acco said: It was the etrog, as it is written, **When the woman saw that the tree [העץ] was good for eating** (Gen.3:6). Go and see, what tree is it whose wood [עץ] can be eaten just like its fruit? and you find none but the etrog.²

R. Judah b. R. Ilai used Deuteronomy 32:32 to associate grapes as a fruit of bitterness. In Genesis 3:6, Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Her very first bite brought bitterness into the world. The expulsion from Eden was sealed from the moment of Eve's eating. R. Judah proposed that if grapes were associated with bitterness in Deuteronomy, then they must have been the fruit involved in bringing bitterness into the world.

R. Abba b. Acco looked at the fruit from a different perspective. He focused on the description of the tree in Genesis 3:6. In that verse, the tree was described as good to eat. The biblical verse may have meant the tree's fruit, but R. Abba took a very narrow view of Genesis 3:6. עץ means both tree and wood. If the etrog is the only tree whose wood is good to eat, then it was possible that the forbidden tree was the etrog tree. There is no evidence that the wood of the etrog is any more edible than the wood of other trees. However, the Jerusalem Talmud and Leviticus Rabbah included passages describing the etrog's wood as edible.³ The edible nature of etrog wood appears to have been an accepted teaching in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Regarding the grape, Leviticus Rabbah mentioned R. Judah's use of Deut.32:32. In that text, an additional unattributed teaching supported the grape's identification:

² GR 15:7. GR 20:8 mentioned R. Abba's identification of the etrog. Num.R. 10:2 also identified the forbidden fruit as grapes.

³ Y.Suk. Chap.3, Hal.5 (53d) and Lev.R.30:11. This material was garnered from the etrog chapter in Max. Asaph Goor and Max Nurock, The Fruits of the Holy Land (Jerusalem, Israel Universities Press, 1968) pp.153-4.

At last it bites like a serpent [and stings [יפרש] like a basilisk](Prov.23:32). Even as the basilisk divides [מפריש] between life and death, so did wine cause a separation [הפריש] between Adam and Eve.⁴

This passage connected the forbidden fruit to grapes, using Prov.23:32. The Proverbs passage discussed drinking wine. The sting of a basilisk was one of the images used to describe wine's effects. The midrash worked with the root פ.ר.ש. which can mean sting or divide. Wine can sting like a basilisk and it can divide people. If wine can cause separation, then the association of grapes with the forbidden fruit was possible.

The Genesis Rabbah passage continued:

R. Jose said: They were figs. He learns this from a parable. This may be compared to a royal prince who sinned with a slave girl, and the king, on learning of it, expelled him from the court. He went from door to door of the maidservants, but they would not receive him; but she who had sinned with him opened her door and received him. So when Adam ate of that tree, the Holy One, blessed be He, expelled him and cast him out of the Garden of Eden; and he appealed to all the trees but they would not receive him. What did they say to him? Said R. Berekiah: "Behold, a deceiver who deceived his Creator, who deceived his Master," as it is written: **Let not the foot of pride overtake me** (Ps.36:12), which means, the foot that presumed against its Creator; **And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away** (ibid.); don't let it take a leaf from me. But because he had eaten of its fruit, the fig tree opened its doors and received him, as it is written, **And they sewed fig-leaves together, etc.** (Gen.3:7)⁵

⁴ Lev.R.12:1. A basilisk is a kind of serpent. Est.R.5:1 paralleled Lev.R.12:1, including it in a longer passage regarding wine and its effects.

⁵ GR 15:7. PRK 20:6 and PR 42:1 paralleled GR 15:7 up to this point. San.70a-b discussed wine and wheat. Ber. 40a mentioned everything but the etrog. GR 19:6 also identified the fig as the fruit.

R. Jose identified the forbidden fruit as a fig. He taught this lesson through a parable. The trees of the garden were the maidservants. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was the maidservant who accepts the man. The fig tree was associated with that maidservant. R. Berekiah added to the parable by putting the words of Psalm 36:12 in the mouths of the trees. The other trees would not allow Adam and Eve near them. The fig tree assented for its leaves to be picked by the first couple. Thus, this passage identified the tree of knowledge of good and evil and explained the use of fig leaves in Gen.3:7. Actually, Genesis Rabbah 15:7 continued with two specific species of fig trees: one whose name means mourning and one meaning weeping. These names were in reference to the mourning and weeping the tree of knowledge of good and evil brought into the world.

This Genesis Rabbah passage was located at the end of a chapter. Genesis Rabbah chapters often ended with an uplifting message. Following these multiple interpretations of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the chapter warned against attempting to identify the tree.

R. Azariah and R. Judah b. R. Simon in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi said: Heaven forbid. The Holy One, blessed be He, did not and will not reveal to man what that tree was. For see what is written: **And if a woman approach unto any beast, and lie down thereto, thou shalt kill the woman, and the beast** (Lev.20:16). Now if man has sinned, how did the animal sin? [It is killed] because if the animal would be brought through the market, people would say, "Through this animal that person was stoned." Then if the Holy One, blessed be He, was anxious to safeguard the honor of his descendents, how much more his own honor.⁶

⁶ GR 15:7. Tan. Bub. 4:32 paralleled this last part of GR 15:7. The Lev. verse was not mentioned, but the explanation was similar.

These rabbis were concerned for the honor of the first man. They assumed that God would have identified the tree of knowledge of good and evil, if God had wanted the identity known. The rabbis assumed that the Leviticus verse does not imply a sin on the part of the animal. An animal has no control over its use by a woman for a sin. However, the animal was destroyed to give proper regard for the woman. The woman had sinned and had been punished. She should not be insulted following her punishment. This principle was applied to Adam. We should not focus on Adam's eating the fruit and being expelled. We should remember him for the positive aspects of his life.

The rabbis proposed several possible identifies for the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They were: wheat, grapes, etrog, and figs. More important than any one identification was the principle underlying each view. Grapes were used to show the dangers of wine. Figs and grapes were used to focus on the bitterness Adam and Eve brought into the world. Wheat and etrog did not indicate a higher principle. Most significantly, the chapter ended with the warning against identifying the tree. We should remember the first human couple for their good, and not their bad, aspects.

Gen.2:16-17- **And the Lord God commanded the man, saying: "Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die."**

According to this verse, God gave only one command to Adam. Adam was not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The rabbis understood Adam's obligations differently. Rabbinic literature included a number of passages which enumerated the multiple commandments God gave to Adam.

And the Lord אלהים commanded the man, saying: "Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat, etc. (Gen.2:16). R. Levi said: He gave him six commandments: And [He] commanded [ויצו] means idolatry, as it is said: Because he willingly walked after idols [צו] (Hos.5:11). The Lord means blasphemy, as it is said: And he that blasphemes the name of the Lord (Lev.24:16). אלהים means the judges, as it is said: You shall not revile אלהים (Ex.22:27). The man means bloodshed, as it is said: Whoever sheds a man's blood (Gen.9:6). Saying means forbidden sexual relations, as it is said: Saying: If a man put away his wife, etc. (Jer.3:1). Of every tree of the Garden you are free to eat: here, He commanded him against theft.¹

R. Levi drew six commandments out of this one verse. According to this passage, God commanded Adam against: idolatry, blasphemy, reviling judges, shedding blood, specific sexual relations, and stealing. Genesis 2:16 was divided into six sections. Each section was related to one of these six commandments. The end of the word **He commanded** [ויצו] was read as an entire word צו in Hosea. צו can be read as filth or as command. The rabbis understood Hosea 5:11 as referring to the tribe Ephraim's idolatry. The word

¹ GR 16.6. PRK 12:1 paralleled this passage, but attributed it to R. Judah b. Simon. Deut.R.2:25 paralleled GR 16.6, but attributed the interpretation to Rabbi. Mid.Ps.1:10 mentioned that six commandments were given to Adam, without providing details.

link was enough to support R. Levi's view. The next connection to blasphemy was relatively easy to draw. **Lord** was mentioned in Genesis 2:16 and Leviticus 24:16. The command against reviling judges involved a clear word link. Exodus 22:27 stated: **You shall not revile אלהים, nor curse a ruler of your people.** אלהים can mean judges, or God. The fifth commandment banned bloodshed. **The man**, from the exegetical verse, was mentioned in Genesis 9:7, the prohibition against bloodshed. Finally, the last part of the verse was read in its original context. God clarified which trees were public property and which were to be avoided. Eating from the tree of life or the tree of knowledge of good and evil would clearly be theft.

Genesis Rabbah 16:6 continued with some alternate understandings of the verse:

The rabbis interpreted the passage thus: **And the Lord God commanded.** He said to him: "What am I? I am God and you should treat me like God and not curse me. Forbidden sexual relations--**Clings to his wife** (Gen.2:24), which implies, but not to his neighbor's wife, not to a male, not to an animal.²

The interpretation, attributed to the rabbis, read Genesis 2:9 as three commands in one: respect God, do not curse God, and do not engage in forbidden sexual activities. Genesis 2:24 was used to prove this last command. All three of these commands can be found in R. Levi's earlier list. In Sanhedrin 56b, the teaching attributed here to the rabbis was attributed to R. Judah in the name of Rab. That Talmud tractate included laws of social interaction among the commandments understood to be given to Adam.³

² GR 16:6.

³ San 56b

Genesis Rabbah 16:6 continued with the last section of the biblical verse:

Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat. R. Jacob of Kefar Hanan said: When does [an animal] become food, and when is it permitted to eat it? When it is ritually slaughtered. Thus it was intimated that you can't eat a limb torn from a living animal.

R. Jacob of Kefar Hanan added a new command. He stated that Genesis 2:9 forbade the eating of flesh torn from an animal. This command may be irrelevant because there was no reference to Adam eating any meat. In a similar passage, Sanhedrin 58b focused on: **See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food (Gen.1:29).** The implication of this command, according to R. Judah in the name of Rab, was that Adam could not eat animals.⁴

Genesis Rabbah 24:5 agreed that Adam was given six commandments. The small number of commands was contrasted to the six hundred and thirteen commandments given to the Israelites. Adam was given only six commandments, because he had trouble following even those few instructions. He certainly could not have handled a larger number.⁵

Adam was given six commands. Noah was given seven commands. The ban on flesh torn from a living animal was the extra command. Sanhedrin 56b compared Noah's and Adam's commandments.⁶ Midrash on Proverbs 31

⁴ San.58b

⁵ GR 24:5. This passage will be mentioned later in reference to Gen.5:1. PRK 15:1 echoed the view expressed in GR 24:5.

⁶ San.56b. Mid.Ps.6:2 mentioned Gen.2:16, linking it to Adam's six commandments. The only detail stated was Noah's additional commandment.

clarified this difference. This passage noted also that other commands were added for Abraham, Jacob and Judah. For example, Abraham's extra commandment was that of circumcision. The passage then jumped to consideration of the 613 commandments given to all the Israelites.⁷

Midrash on Psalms discussed the idea of circumcision and the first man. It was agreed that circumcision was not a commandment until the time of Abraham. However, the rabbis looked for ways to consider Adam and others circumcised. We learn that thirteen men were born circumcised. Adam was included in this list because he was the "first of God's creation."⁸

⁷ Mid.Prov.31:29.

⁸ Mid.Ps.9:7

Gen.2:18- The Lord God said: "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a fitting helper [עזר כנגדו] for him."

Rabbinic commentary on this verse focused on the stated role of the first woman. What did it mean to be an עזר כנגדו? Genesis Rabbah offered this interpretation:

I will make him a help [עזר] against him [כנגדו]. If he is fortunate, she is a help; if not, she is against him.¹

The words עזר כנגדו were read as separate words, not as the word pair intended in the Bible. The reader can see how Eve was not necessarily helpful for Adam. We can see how Adam was not fortunate and his wife was against him. Many of the rabbinic comments on this narrative portrayed Eve in such a negative light.

The Talmud attributed the above teaching to R. Eleazar. However, an alternate interpretation was provided as well:

R. Eleazar point out a contradiction: It is written כנגדו [against him], but we read כניגדו [help for him]. If he is worthy she will help him, if he is not worthy she will chastise him.²

This interpretation used two meanings of the word in question. כנגדו could be read as against him or helping him. This understanding was in Eve's favor. The blame was placed upon Adam's worth. If, and only if, he was worthy would a man receive the help of his wife.

Seder Eliyahu Rabbah presented Eve as a paradigm for the ways women can help men:

עזר כנגדו means a wife who would help him stand up on his own two feet and would help put a sparkle in his eye. ... Adam

¹ GR 17:3

² Yeb.63a

gave [wheat and barley] to his wife who made them edible: she prepared the grains by sifting them and grinding them in a mill, and thus out of grains made bread. . . When Adam gave flax to his wife, she wove a garment out of its fibers. . . Out of her he brought increase to humanity. Because of his appreciation of her, he did not go about committing adultery.³

Seder Eliyahu Rabbah described Eve as an ideal wife. She performed the domestic tasks expected of a wife, while the husband worked outside. The passage continued with the idea that all good wives should bring a sparkle to their husbands' eyes, make bread, weave clothing, and produce offspring.⁴

Genesis Rabbah added this view of the female role in the world:

But for Adam no fitting helper was found (Gen.2:20). And why did He not create her for him at the beginning? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that he would bring charges against her, therefore He did not create her until he expressly demanded her, But as soon as he did so, then The Lord God cast a deep sleep upon the man, and while he slept. . . (Gen.2:21).⁵

This passage portrayed a God who cared about Adam and Eve's well-being. God saw that Adam would blame Eve, which Adam eventually did. God was attempting to avoid exactly that situation. However, Adam was lonely without a fitting helper. The author of this interpretation read into the biblical text. In the Bible, God declared Adam's need for companionship. In this passage, it was assumed that Adam demanded Eve. This reading implied a Divine foreknowledge of events, and a Divine desire to avoid certain inevitable actions.

³ S.E.R. 10 (Friedman). Yeb. 63a included a similar passage.

⁴ S.E.R. 10 (Friedman).

⁵ GR 17:4. These verses were discussed in reference to Adam's wisdom. See p.10.

Gen.2:21- So the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon the man; and, while he slept, He took one of his ribs [מלצתיו] and closed up [ויסגר] the flesh at that spot [תחתנה].

The creation of the first woman out of part of the first man was a source of rabbinic commentary. The comparison of this second creation story to the first story was discussed previously. However, the detailed account of the second creation story was a fruitful source of rabbinic comments. Genesis 2:21 became the source for interpretations regarding man's biology and the nature of Eve's creation.

R. Samuel b. Nahmani said: He took one of his sides, as you read: **And for the second side [צלע] of the tabernacle, on the north side** (Ex.26:20). But Samuel said: He took two ribs. "At its spot [תחתיה]" is not written, rather at "their" spot [תחתנה].¹

The rabbis presented an attempted identification of the type of surgery performed on Adam. The connection with the side of the ark was referred to in an earlier section dealing with the first creation. R. Samuel b. Nahmani taught that Eve was constructed from an entire side of Adam. Samuel disagreed, reading the verse more literally. In fact, he looked at the grammar of the whole verse. God did not just take one rib. God must have removed more than one rib. Samuel noted that the end of the verse included a plural form [תחתנה] not a singular form [תחתיה]. He reasoned that the plural was used because more than one rib had been removed.

The end of Genesis Rabbah 17:6 included alternate understandings of the human biology involved in this verse.

¹ GR 17:6

R. Hanina, son of R. Isaac, said: He gave him an orifice beneath him, so that he would not be embarrassed like an animal. R. Ammi and R. Yannai [disagreed.] One said: He made him a lock and saddle cloth covering it, so that he would not have pain when he sat. The other responded that He made cushions.²

All three of these teachings connect the word *תחתנה* with posterior [*תחת*]. These three rabbis interpreted the flesh closed up in slightly different ways. R. Hanina understood *תחתנה* to mean beneath the first man. He therefore discussed the part of man which is beneath the body. Humans would be embarrassed if their posteriors were exposed like those of animals. R. Ammi used a rabbinic euphemism for the anus and posterior: lock and saddle cloth.³ R. Yannai focused only upon the buttocks themselves. He describes them as cushions. These last two teachings were concerned with the need for humans to sit on their rear ends.

Genesis Rabbah 17:7, the next section, focused on the question of Adam's sleep during Eve's creation:

A lady asked R. Jose. She said: "Why with theft [was Eve created]?" He replied with a parable: "If a man deposited an ounce of silver with you in secret, and you return to him 12 times that amount in public; is that theft?" She said to him: "But why in secret?" He replied to her: "At first, He created her for him. He saw her full of discharge and blood. He removed her from him. He created her a second time."⁴

This type of conversation was a common technique in midrashim. The conversation may have never occurred, but the author wanted to convey a

² GR 17:6. The passage concluded with the teaching regarding burial. It stated that at this point God commanded that humans should be buried in shrouds.

³ This euphemism was explained in Jastrow, p.103, and Soncino Translation, p.137.

⁴ GR 17:7. The passage continued with 2 further examples of the same point. San. 39a attributed these questions to the Emperor and the answers to Rabban Gamaliel. GR 18:4 included a similar explanation of the difference between the two creation stories.

specific idea. R. Jose taught that the gift of Eve's creation was worth far more than Adam's loss, even though Adam was sleeping. R. Jose's second comment combined the second creation narrative with the first creation narrative. God made Adam sleep during Eve's creation, because the first attempt was not successful. Adam did not find Eve pleasing when Adam witnessed her creation in Genesis 1.

The next section of Genesis Rabbah included a practical application of this verse.

R. Joshua was asked: "Why is a man born with his face downward? And why is a woman with her face upwards?" He answered: "The man looks to the place of his creation and the woman looks to the place of her creation." And "Why must a woman use perfume, while a man does not need to use perfume?" He replied: "Adam was created from earth and earth never spoils. Eve was created from bone. For example, if you leave unsalted meat sitting for three days, it will spoil."⁵

Men were created from the dirt, while women were created from the rib of the first man. These interpretations applied the literal message of Genesis 2:7 and Genesis 2:21 to the ordinary world. R. Joshua observed that men and women are born facing in certain directions because of the nature of their respective creations. Another consequence of the different material for human creation was then commented upon. Women needed perfume because they were created from bone, while men were created from earth. The passage continued with reference to other female and male traits or behaviors. The unrealistic nature of R. Joshua's application was less important than the attempt to apply the Bible to known human experience.

⁵ GR 17:8. Other examples were given as the passage continued.

Another comment on Genesis 2:21 discussed the impact of Eve's creation upon the world:

R. Hanina, son of R. Adda, said; From the beginning of the book until here, no samech [ס] has been written. For when she was created, Satan [סטן] was created with her. If someone will say to you, **the one that winds [סובב]**, say to that person: there it refers to rivers.⁶

R. Hanina asserted that Eve's creation brought Satan into the world. He noted that Gen.2:21 was the first time a ס was used relating to a human. The ס was found in the word **closed up [ויסגר]**. Here, Satan represented evil desires and temptation. According to this interpretation, such things did not exist until a woman was created. He did not say that the woman was Satan, just that Satan's creation coincided with Eve's creation.

⁶ GR 17:6. In GR, this passage came in the middle of the interpretations quoted earlier.

Gen.2:22- And the Lord God fashioned the rib that He had taken from the man into a woman; and He brought her to the man.

This verse marked an adjustment in the focus of the rabbinic commentary on the creation narrative. Up until this point, the interpretations dealt mainly with Adam and his role as the first human. From the end of Genesis 2 through Genesis 3, Eve's role and actions played a much larger role. In response, the rabbis included more comments regarding Eve. Genesis Rabbah 18 was the starting point for much of rabbinic teaching regarding the first woman's creation. The rabbis offered multiple interpretations of the word **ויבן**.

And the Lord God fashioned [ויבן] the rib. R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Jose b. Zimra: She was given greater understanding [**בינה**] than the man. For we learn elsewhere: The vows of an eleven year old girl are examined, while the vows of a twelve year old girl are valid and we examine her throughout her twelfth year. But the vows of a twelve year old boy are examined, while the vows of a thirteen year old are valid and we examine him throughout his thirteenth year. R. Jeremiah said in the name of R. Samuel son of R. Isaac: Some reverse it. It is the way of women to stay home. It is the way of men to go to the market and learn [**למד בינה**] from other people.¹

R. Eleazar based his interpretation upon a twisting of the root of **ויבן**. The real root is **ב.נ.ה**. R. Eleazar read it as **ב.נ.ו**. The word was taken out of context to imply that "God gave the woman greater understanding than the man." The core of the interpretation was the similarity of the Hebrew roots of understanding and building. This interpretation was supported through the quotation of Mishnah Niddah 5:2. This mishnah described a situation where a girl's vows were valid at a younger age than a boy's vows. The

¹ GR 18:1. A parallel passage in Nid.45b attributed this first teaching to R. Hisda.

implication was that women have greater understanding than men. R. Jeremiah was not commenting on Adam and Eve. His teaching represented an alternate response to this mishnah.

R. Aibu, and others say this in the name of R. Bannayah, and it was also taught in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai: He adorned her like a bride, and after that He brought her to him. For there are places where hairdo is called building [בנייה].²

This teaching stated that God prepared Eve through "building" her hair. God did not just fashion a woman out of the rib. God built [ויבן] the first woman's hairdo [בנייה] as well. Apparently, in some places a hairdo was called a building. God, according to the rabbis, was not just the creator of man and woman, but was intimately involved in arranging their marriage. God did not just take a rib and build. God saw to the details regarding each step of Creation. Eve's hairdo was one minor detail. Many other details were included in the wedding which the rabbis read into Genesis.

Genesis Rabbah 18:1 continued:

R. Hama b. R. Hanina said: Do you think that He introduced her to him under a carob tree or a sycamore tree. Surely, He adorned her with 24 pieces of finery and then He brought her to him: **You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, the carnelian, the topaz, and the emerald, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the carbuncle, and the smaragd, and gold; the workmanship of your settings and of your sockets was in you, in the day that you were created they were prepared (Ezek.28:13).** The Rabbis and R. Simeon b. Lakish disagreed. The rabbis said: "There were ten canopies." R.

² GR 18:1. The idea of God preparing Eve for her wedding was repeated in several other places. Eru. 18a was the most complete parallel passage. Eru.18a and Shab.95a cited this teaching in the name of R. Simeon b. Menassia. Nid.45b cited Resh Lakish in the name of R. Simeon b. Menassia. Shab.95a and Nid.45b located this teaching of building in the "sea-towns." Tan. Bub. 4:4 and Tan. Bub. 5:2 attributed the hairdo interpretation to R. Abbahu.

Simeon b. Lakish said: "There were eleven canopies." R. Hama b. R. Hanina said: "There were thirteen." ... R. Aha b. Hanina said: He made the walls of gold and the covering of precious stones and pearls. R. Eleazar b. Karsana said in R. Aha's name: He even made him hooks of gold.³

This passage added to the rabbinic idea of the first wedding. The wonderful things God built, or prepared, for the wedding of the first man and woman were listed. God did not simply introduce Eve to Adam under some random tree. Rather, God adorned woman in fine stones. This claim to Divine adornment was supported through the use of Ezekiel 28:13. Ezekiel described the human situation in Eden as filled with gems and gold. He listed these wonderful items. The scriptural context of Ezekiel 28:13 was the prophet berating the King of Tyre. This context cast no light on the midrashic reading. The verse, out of context, added detail to the attention God paid to this first wedding. A debate developed regarding the exact number of wedding canopies. This number was to be found in the list of finery included in the Ezekiel quotation. Regardless of the exact number, the point was clear. God had carefully prepared the site of this wedding.

Other passages mentioned other wedding details. Genesis Rabbah 8:13 included God in other wedding roles:

R. Abbahu said: The Holy One, blessed be He, took a cup of blessing and blessed them. R. Judah b. R. Simon said: Michael and Gabriel were Adam's groomsmen. R. Simlai said: We find that the Holy One, blessed be He, blesses bridegrooms, adorns brides, visits the sick, and buries the dead.⁴

According to R. Abbahu, God provided the Kiddush cup for the wedding ceremony. God then blessed Adam and Eve. Two angels were presented as

³ GR 18:1. The omitted material was a detailed discussion of the number of wedding canopies and Ezek 28:13. Parallel passages included: Lev.R.20:2 (R. Levi in the name of R. Hama bar R. Hanina), PRK 4:4 (also R. Levi), PRE 12, Eccl.R.7:2:3, Tan.Bub. 5:2, B.B. 75a.

⁴ GR 8:13. The blessing related also to Gen.1:28: **God blessed them**. See Tan.Bub. 5:1.

Adam's attendants. R. Simlai taught that God prepared Adam, in addition to Eve, for their wedding. Other Divine acts of caring for humanity were mentioned also. There were other passages which identified God as Adam's best man:

He brought her to the man teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, acted as groomsman for the first man. From here [we learn] that a great man should act as a groomsman for a lesser man and not feel bad about it.⁵

In this Talmud passage, God was identified as Adam's groomsman. A practical lesson was derived from this midrashic interpretation. If God can be Adam's groomsman, then any man can be any man's groomsman. Regardless of status, one man may perform this act for another man.

Midrash on Psalms spoke of God preparing the bridal chair, not of wedding canopies. This passage was linked to **It is not good for man to be alone** (Gen.2:18). The interpretation continued: "God fashioned Eve out of Adam's rib and set her in a bridal chair."⁶ All these interpretations portrayed the care God showed Adam and Eve following their creation. God saw to every detail, no matter how trivial.

Other interpretations of ויבן offered very different views of its meaning. R. Hisdai suggested:

He built [בנה] more chambers in her than in man, fashioning her broad below and narrow at the top, so that she could receive children.⁷

⁵ Eru.18b. This idea existed as early as GR. It was mentioned in GR 18:3.

⁶ Mid.Ps.68:4.

⁷ GR 18:3. Eru.18a-b included parallel material.

The chamber under discussion here was the womb. God provided woman with the organ and shape necessary to bear children. This interpretation understood God's building Eve to refer to the details of Eve's construction.

This Genesis Rabbah chapter included yet another interpretation of the word **ויבן**.

R. Joshua of Siknin said in R. Levi's name: **ויבן** is written, signifying that He considered **[רחבונן]** from what part to create her. He said: "I will not create her from his head, lest she be swelled-headed; nor from his eye, lest she be a flirt, nor from the ear, lest she be an eavesdropper; nor from the mouth, lest she be a gossip, nor from the hand, lest she be thief-like; nor from the foot, lest she be a gadabout; but from the modest part of man, for even when he stands naked, that part is covered." And as He created each limb, He ordered her: "Be a modest woman." Yet in spite of all this, **You spurned all my advice and would not hear my rebuke** (Prov.1:25).⁸ I did not create her from the head, yet she is swelled-headed, as it is written: **They walk with stretched-forth necks** (Is.3:16); nor from the eye, yet she is a flirt: **and wanton eyes** (ibid.); nor from the ear, yet she is an eavesdropper: **Now Sarah listened at the tent door** (Gen.18:10); nor from the heart, yet she is prone to jealousy: **Rachel envied her sister** (Gen.30:1); nor from the hand, yet she is thief-like: **And Rachel stole the teraphim** (Gen.31:19); nor from the foot, yet she is a gadabout: **And Dinah went out** (Gen.34:1).⁹

This interpretation cast the verb in the hitpoel: **רחבונן**. This form was used to show that God considered the implications of building Eve from different parts of the body. God hoped to avoid undesirable traits in the soon to be created female. The following parts were deemed to cause problematic traits: head, eye, ear, mouth, heart, hand, and foot. In each case a negative attribute was paired with a specific body part. God decided to use the rib,

⁸ This Bible verse was quoted from New JPS, not JPS.

⁹ GR 18.2. The mouth was not mentioned in the list of actual characteristics.

because it was found in a modest, covered place on man's body. The ideal of feminine modesty was highlighted in this part of the passage. God instructed the woman to be modest, while He created her. However, none of this consideration and caution mattered. According to this passage, women possess those undesired, negative characteristics which God had hoped to avoid. A series of biblical texts illustrated the existence of these negative traits in women. Proverbs 1:25 was an introduction to this list. In the biblical context, wisdom, personified as a woman, was chastised for ignoring God. Genesis Rabbah read these verses to show that all Israelite women, including specific biblical heroines, possessed negative characteristics. God avoided the head, but the "daughters of Zion" were haughty (Is. 3:16). God avoided the eye, but they also stared (Is. 3:16). God avoided the ear, but Sarah eavesdropped from within the tent (Gen. 18:10). God avoided the heart, but Rachel was jealous of her sister (Gen. 30:1). God avoided the hand, but Rachel stole her father's idols (Gen. 31:19). Finally, God avoided the foot, but Dinah wandered ["went out"] (Gen. 34:1). The midrashic passage wandered from its focus, but a message was delivered regarding the imperfection of creation. The authors of this interpretation did not mention any possible positive character traits. Woman's eventual role in breaking God's command may contribute to this interpretation. A negative view of women was presented in this passage.

That negative view differed from the above-mentioned statement of R. Eleazar. R. Eleazar held that women were created with greater knowledge than men.¹⁰ Another positive characteristic attributed to Eve was that of beauty.

¹⁰ GR 18:1. See p.61.

R. Azariah and R. Jonathon b. Hani in the name of R. Isaac said: Eve's image was transmitted to the reigning beauties of each generation. Elsewhere it is written: **and the damsel was very fair** (1 Kings 1:4), which means that she attained Eve's beauty, but here in truth it is written: **The Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair** (Gen.7:14), which means, even more beautiful than Eve's image.¹¹

Eve was presented as the paradigm of feminine beauty. Each generation's most beautiful woman inherited that characteristic from Eve. The damsel in 1 Kings 1:4 was Abishag the Shunammite. She was the woman brought to King David when he was old and cold. The Bible described her as very beautiful. This midrashic passage clarified that Abishag's beauty was nothing compared to Sarah's beauty. The first Jewish woman was naturally more beautiful than a concubine. In fact, Sarah was even more attractive than Eve herself. The Talmud offered the opposite opinion. Sarah was attractive, but nothing compared to Eve:

Compared with Sarah, all other people are like a monkey to a human being, and compared with Eve, Sarah was like a monkey to a human being, and compared with Adam, Eve was like a monkey to human being, and compared with God's presence, Adam was like a monkey to a human being.¹²

This passage considered Sarah beautiful, but nothing compared to Eve. Eve may be the paradigm of feminine beauty, but she was nothing compared to Adam. Here, the man was presented as superior to the woman. Naturally, God's presence was brighter than the beauty of humans. Origins were important to the rabbis. Here, the earlier a person was created, the more beautiful the person was thought to be.

¹¹ GR 40:5

¹² BB 58a. This passage stated that R. Abbahu's beauty came from Jacob, whose beauty came from Adam. Both Adam and Eve were presented as the ideals of beauty.

The rabbis offered a wide range of interpretations of ויבן. The possibilities used different understandings of this key word. They also portrayed different views of female characteristics. Many details were presented to illustrate God's care for Adam and Eve.

Gen.2:23- **Then the man said: "This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called woman, for from man was she taken."**

Genesis Rabbah 18:4 offered multiple explanations of this verse. The rabbis wondered about the phrase **this one** [this time, **זאת פעם**]. The first interpretation was the same as a midrash mentioned earlier.

R. Judah b. Rabbi said: At first, He created her for him and he saw her full of discharge and blood; thereupon He removed her from him and recreated her a second time. Hence he said: **This one at last is bone of my bones.**¹

According to R. Judah, the second creation occurred because Adam could not bear to see Eve at first. Therefore, God started all over again. The second time, Eve was created while Adam slept. Adam awoke and was pleased at what he saw. He spoke with an awareness that Eve was taken from his rib. This second time, Adam identified Eve as coming from his bone, specifically his rib. The passage continued:

This is she of the previous occasion; this is she who is destined to strike the bell and to speak against me, as you read: **A golden bell [פעמון] (Ex.28:34); it is she who troubled me [מפעמון] all night.** All these remarks showed his amazement.²

Adam recognized that there had been a new creation of the same female. This interpretation played on the root **פעם**, adding letters to form **פעמון**, a bell. Eve was the "bell" who would speak out against Adam. This statement referred to the woman's role in the expulsion from the Garden. Exodus 28:34 confirmed the root of the word bell, but added no new details to the image. Another understanding offered a different play on the root **פעם**. The

¹ GR 18:1. GR 17:7 included the same interpretation, applied differently.

² GR 18:4. This passage continued with related interpretations, which were not directly connected to Adam and Eve.

passage stated that Adam recognized Eve as one who **מפעהני**, [troubled me]. Adam predicted that the woman would disturb him "all night long." Following the last interpretation, the passage reported that all these understandings were made in amazement.

The Talmud tractate Yebamot presented a radically different interpretation of this verse.

R. Eleazar said: What is meant by the Scriptural text: **"This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh?"** This teaches that Adam had intercourse with every beast and animal but found no satisfaction until he cohabitated with Eve.³

This interpretation assumed that Adam engaged in sexual relations with the animals prior to Genesis 2:23. Genesis 2:18 stated that: **It is not good for man to be alone.** Different animals were then created and named. The end of Genesis 2:20 stated: **but for Adam no fitting helper was found.** The Talmud offered a rather creative image of the testing process to determine if Adam had a **fitting helper**. This interpretation appeared to be unique in its assertion that Adam had intercourse with any of the animals.

³ Yeb.63a

Gen.2:25- **The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, yet they felt no shame.**

Genesis Rabbah presented an interpretation of this verse based upon linguistic connections.

R. Eleazar said: There were three who did not remain in their tranquility for six hours. They were Adam, Israel and Sisera. Adam, for it is written: **yet they felt no shame** [לֹא יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ], meaning: six hours had not come [לֹא בָאוּ שֵׁשׁ שָׁעוֹת]. Israel: **And the people saw that Moses delayed** [בִּשָּׁשׁ] (Ex.32:1), for six hours had passed [בָּאוּ שֵׁשׁ שָׁעוֹת] and Moses had not come. Sisera: **Why is his chariot so long** [בִּשָּׁשׁ] **in coming** (Judges 5:28)? Every day he would return after three or four hours, but today six hours have passed [בָּאוּ שֵׁשׁ שָׁעוֹת], yet he has not come.¹

This passage based its interpretations on the word יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ [yet they felt no shame]. R. Eleazar used the letters of this word to draw a connection between Adam, Israel, and Sisera. All three were described as not remaining tranquil for even three hours. Regarding the first man: יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ was read as לֹא בָאוּ שֵׁשׁ שָׁעוֹת [six hours did not come]. Adam did not have six hours of tranquility. The word was read in a way to emphasize the short time between Eve's creation and the expulsion from the Garden. Genesis Rabbah presented the expulsion as foreshadowed in Genesis 2.

Regarding Israel, Exodus 31:1 was cited. The verse says that the people saw Moses בִּשָּׁשׁ [delay] coming down from the mountain. Genesis Rabbah read this as בָּאוּ שֵׁשׁ שָׁעוֹת. Six hours had passed in that situation as well. The People of Israel doubted and became restless. Regarding Sisera, all of Judges 5:28 was necessary for the connection: מָדוּעַ בִּישָׁשׁ רָכְבוֹ לָבוֹא [Why is his chariot so long in coming]? Genesis Rabbah stated that

¹ GR 18.6

Sisera usually was out riding for three or four hours. Six hours had passed [באו שש שעות] since Sisera departed. On that day, Sisera was delayed because he was dead.

The brief span of Adam's tranquility was read into this verse. Adam and Eve were not in the Garden of Eden for long. Life in that paradise was tranquil and calm. Life in the remainder of the world would require caution and hard work. Israel and Sisera were included linguistically in this passage. Genesis Rabbah was not attempting to draw thematic connections between these three sets of events.

Gen.3:1- Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild beasts that the Lord God had made. It said to the woman: "Did God really say: You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?"

Interpretations of Genesis 3:1 linked that verse with Genesis 2:25, the immediately preceding verse. The rabbis noticed the proximity of these two verses to each other. Genesis Rabbah 18:6 commented on the order of the biblical verses.

Yet they felt no shame (Gen.2:25). Now the serpent was the shrewdest . . . (Gen.3:1). Now surely Scripture should have stated: And the Lord God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them (Gen.3:21). R. Joshua b. Karkah said: [This order] teaches you of the sin which the wicked creature persuaded [Eve and Adam to commit], because it saw them engaged in their natural functions and it developed a desire for her. R. Jacob of Kefar Hanan said: It is written in this way to avoid concluding with the passage of the serpent.¹

Genesis 2:25 stated that Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed. Genesis Rabbah assumed this meant that they were clothed by God in the middle of this verse's events. If they were not clothed, how could they have had no shame? Therefore God was assumed to have clothed them at this early point. Why then did the Torah not state this until Genesis 3:21? R. Joshua b. Karkah offered one explanation for this sequence of verses. The serpent saw Adam and Eve engaged in their natural functions, meaning sexual intercourse. It lusted after the woman. That lust motivated the serpent to trick the humans into disobeying God. The order of the verses was designed, according to Genesis Rabbah, to clarify that the man and the woman were naked when they encountered the serpent. They needed to be naked to have

¹ GR 18:6. "Natural function" is a translation of **ט"מ ט"י**, which was a euphemism for sexual relations. See Jastrow, p.323.

sexual relations. R. Joshua's explanation assumed the serpent encountered the humans in the middle of Genesis 2:25, but before God clothed them.

R. Jacob of Kefar Hanan explained that Genesis 3:21 came at the end, so that the section would not end discussing the serpent. A positive image should occur at the end of this biblical portion, as divided by that rabbi. In other words, Genesis 3:21 provided evidence of God's caring for Adam and Eve even after they ate the forbidden fruit. His comment also ended Genesis Rabbah 18 with a *nechemta*, an uplifting ending. If God still cared for Adam and Eve after their expulsion from the garden, then God can still care for the Jews following their exile from the Land of Israel.

Genesis Rabbah 19 continued this idea of Adam and Eve's intercourse. The passage questioned Adam's location during Eve's conversation with the serpent.

Now where was Adam at this time? Abba Halfon b. Koriah said: He had engaged in his natural functions and then fallen asleep. The rabbis said: The Holy One, blessed be He, took him and led him around the entire world, saying: "Here is a place for planting, here is a place for sowing." Thus it is written: **Through a land that no man passed through, and where no man [אדם] dwelt** (Jer.2:6). [This means] Adam [אדם] had not dwelt there.²

Two possibilities were suggested for Adam's location during the interchange between Eve and the serpent. Abba Halfon b. Koriah posited that Adam was sleeping. He was sleeping, because he was exhausted following sexual relations with Eve. The rabbis suggested that Adam was touring the world during that crucial conversation. God was showing Adam the best places to grow certain crops. The Jeremiah verse came from a context discussing God's leading the Israelites through uncharted deserts. This

² GR 19:3. This section actually commented upon Gen.3:2.

verse portrayed God in the role of Divine tour-guide. The connection with the first man came from the use of the word **דָּרָא**.

In the Talmud, Jeremiah 2:6 was used in a similar context. A different perspective was used in relating Adam to that verse.

R. Jose b. R. Hanina said: What is meant by the verse: **Through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt** (Jer.2:6). If no one passed, how could anyone dwell? It is to teach you that any land which Adam decreed should be inhabited is inhabited, and any land which Adam decreed should not be inhabited is not inhabited.³

According to R. Jose b. R. Hanina, any land that was occupied in his day had always been occupied. Adam established the locations which would be inhabited by future generations. The same Jeremiah verse, which was used to describe a Divine tour of the world, was used to support this view of inhabited territories. It may be that the later talmudic interpretation was aware of the earlier Genesis Rabbah interpretation. The later one could stand independently. It could also be related to knowledge of a teaching that Adam toured the entire earth.

³ Ber.31a. The passage began with the identification of certain palm trees as dating from Adam's time. Sot. 46b included a parallel passage.

Gen.3:2-3- **The woman replied to the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden. It is only about fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said: 'You shall not eat of it or touch it, lest you die.'"**

The rabbis considered different possibilities regarding the serpent's actual remarks to Eve. The second half of Genesis Rabbah 19:3 offered this interpretation of their conversation:

Thus it is written, **Add not to His words, lest He reprove you, and you are found to be a liar** (Prov.30:6). R. Hiyya taught: That means that you must not make the fence more than the principal thing, lest it fall and destroy the plants. Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, had said: **For as soon as you eat of it, you shall die** (Gen.2:17); whereas she did not say that, rather: **God said: "You shall not eat of it or touch it, lest you die** (Gen.3:3)." When it [the serpent] saw her thus lying, it took and thrust her against it. It said to her: "Have you died? Just as you did not die because of touching, so you will not die because of eating, **but God knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like Divine beings who know good and evil** (Gen.3:5)."¹

This teaching suggested a limit to the general rabbinic precept of building a "fence around the law." R. Hiyya taught that protective overstatements could destroy the law itself and the law's followers. God instructed Adam to avoid eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. By the time Eve spoke to the serpent, Eve included touching in the Divine prohibition. The serpent, somehow, knew that touching was not prohibited by God. It shoved Eve against the tree and she was unharmed. Thus, the serpent tricked Eve into doubting the prohibition against eating, in addition to the non-existent prohibition against touching. Avot de Rabbi Natan stated that Adam added the prohibition against touching.² He hoped to scare Eve away from eating

¹ GR 19:3.

² ARN 1:5.

the tree's fruit. R. Hiyya used this interaction as a warning against overdoing a protective ruling around the heart of the law.

Midrash on Psalms included a parallel version of this interaction. That account attributed an additional statement to the serpent.

Then the serpent said to her: "Our Creator ate of this tree, and then created the world and all that is in it; and if you eat of the tree, you will have the power to create a world as He did, for it is said, **You shall be as God [אלהים]** (Gen.3:5). But, of course, every craftsman hates to have a rival in his craft."³

The Genesis Rabbah version included only the serpent's negative enticement to Eve. She was encouraged to eat, because the serpent challenged the power of the prohibition. Midrash on Psalms included a positive aspect in the serpent's enticing of Eve. Eve was encouraged to eat, because she would acquire Divine powers through the fruit. The serpent claimed that God's powers came from the fruit. The midrash utilized Genesis 3:5 to prove this point. In the Bible, this verse claimed that the fruit would only give knowledge: **God knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil** (Gen.3:5). In this rabbinic setting, the serpent claimed that the fruit would bestow the power of creation. אלהים may mean Divine beings or God. Either meaning could be twisted to refer to any part of God's abilities. The serpent was portrayed as claiming that the fruit of that particular tree would make Eve fully god-like. The serpent even added an explanation of God's original prohibition regarding the tree. The serpent claimed that God

³ Mid.Ps.1:9. This passage was a complete parallel of GR 19:3, attributing the teaching to R. Joshua of Siknin in the name of R. Levi. This statement by the serpent was added to the end of the passage.

was jealously protecting his sole possession of the powers of creation. God was described as a craftsman, who was suspicious of any competitors.

Whatever her actual motivation may have been, Eve did eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

At the last, it bites like a serpent (Prov.23:32). The Holy One, blessed be He, says to them: "What was the end of Eve? Because she went where her eyes led her, taking the advice of the serpent," As you read: **When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating . . .** (Gen.3:6).⁴

The passage from Proverbs discussed the power of wine. This midrash laid blame upon Eve. The serpent may have been clever in its seducing of Eve to eat the fruit. Eve, however, could have resisted the serpent's words. Eve followed the advice of the serpent and broke God's commandment. She did this because she **"saw that the tree was good for eating."** The serpent acted against God's desires, but Eve can not avoid shouldering the blame for her own actions.

⁴ Num.R.102.

Gen.3:6- When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate.

The rabbinic fascination with chronology and numbers led to attempts to describe the relative timing of the events in the garden. As early as the sixth century, Leviticus Rabbah clarified that Adam sinned fairly early after his creation. The first man's sin was mentioned in a discussion of the rules regarding trees and their first fruits.

R. Judah b. Pazzi expounded: O that someone had removed the dust from your eyes, Adam! For you were unable to stand firm for a brief time in your obedience, and thus your children have to wait in regard to your forbidden fruit for three years.¹

R. Judah b. Pazzi identified Adam's stay in the garden as relatively brief. Adam was unable to focus on God's single instruction. The immediately preceding teaching in the midrash spoke of the need to concentrate in battle. This opening allowed for a discussion of Adam's inability to think clearly. It was due to Adam's quick sin that the Israelites were prohibited from eating fruit until their fourth year in the land. Adam's actions provided a reason for the ban in Leviticus 19:23:

And when you shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then you shall count the fruit thereof as forbidden; three years shall it be as forbidden to you; it shall not be eaten (Lev.19:23).

A few centuries later, Ecclesiastes Rabbah stated that the time of Adam's sin and departure from the garden was proper.

To everything there is a season (Eccl.3:1) There was a time for Adam to enter the Garden of Eden, as it is said: And

¹ Lev.R.25:2

He put him into the Garden of Eden (Gen.2:15), and a time for him to leave it, as it is said: So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden (Gen.3:23).²

This unattributed teaching did not identify a specific chronology of the events in Eden. Applying the statement from Ecclesiastes, the midrash stated that the timing was fitting. Adam was placed in the garden at the appropriate time and removed at an equally appropriate time. The events happened as they should have happened.

Genesis Rabbah 18 presented a chronology of the garden's events in a comment on Genesis 2:25.³ The midrash implied that Adam had been in the garden for three hours when he sinned. A later midrashic interpretation based itself upon an assumed span of three hours between Adam's creation and his sin. Exodus Rabbah portrayed God as responding to the Israelites' sins as follows:

God said: You have followed the course of Adam who did not withstand his trials for more than three hours, and at nine hours, death was decreed upon him.⁴

According to this chronology, Adam sinned three hours after creation and was expelled from the garden six hours later. The numbers in different rabbinic accounts did not always coincide. There was some consistency. Three hours were identified in both Genesis Rabbah and Exodus Rabbah.

Another chronology counted out the entire sequence of events in the Garden of Eden. This chronology was found as early as Leviticus Rabbah, and repeated many times in rabbinic literature. This passage was quoted earlier.⁵ God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden eight hours after God first

² Eccl.R.3:1.

³ GR 18:6 was discussed on p.73.

⁴ Ex.R.32:1.

⁵ See p.23.

conceptualized the first man. The passage continued: "in the ninth he was commanded; in the tenth he transgressed; in the eleventh he was judged; in the twelfth he was pardoned."⁶ The chronology here was different than the Genesis Rabbah accounting. The rabbinic view remained constant regarding the quickness of Adam's sin.

⁶ Lev.R.29:1. Parallel passages included PRK 23:1, Tan.Bub. 1:25, and San.38b.

Gen.3:7- Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they perceived that they were naked; and they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves loincloths.

Genesis Rabbah included a short comment on each part of this verse. Rabbinic interpretations were linked to the opening of eyes, the perception of nakedness, and the sewing of fig leaves. The Genesis Rabbah section followed the order of the biblical verse.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened (Gen.3:7). Had they been blind? R. Judan in the name of R. Johanan b. Zakkai, and R. Berekiah in the name of R. Akiba explained it by comparing them to a villager who was passing a glass-worker's shop and just when a basket full of goblets and cut-glass ware was in front of him, he swung his staff and broke them. Whereupon [the owner] stood and seized him. He said to him: "I know that I cannot obtain redress from you, but come and I will show you how much valuable stuff you have destroyed." Thus He showed them how many generations they had destroyed.¹

Genesis Rabbah began with the plain meaning of the verse. Genesis stated that Adam and Eve had their eyes opened. If their eyes needed to be opened, had they been blind literally? The parable of the glass shop illustrated the metaphoric meaning of opening eyes. Adam and Eve could see in front of them. They could not understand the nature of their actions, until after they ate of the forbidden tree. The store owner was compared to God, who could not make Adam and Eve pay adequately for their transgression. God was portrayed as showing Adam and Eve the consequences of their act. Generations would be destroyed, like cut-glass before a staff. There were two levels to these human consequences. First, future humans would not dwell in the Garden of Eden. Life would be bitter and painful. Second, and more important, humans would now experience death. The theme of death

¹ GR 19:6.

was be mentioned in many other midrashim, which deal with this part of the Eden narrative.

Genesis Rabbah presented another nuance to the opening of their eyes.

and they perceived that they were naked (Gen.3:7). Even of the one commandment which they had possessed they had stripped themselves.²

In this midrash, Adam and Eve were viewed as having received only one commandment from God. They were ordered not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They ate from the tree and saw that they were naked. Genesis Rabbah was observing that their nakedness extended past their clothes. Adam and Eve were also "naked" of the ability to follow God's commandment. After they ate of the tree, they realized they had disobeyed God.

Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar suggested that Adam had actually been dressed before his sin. Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar 14 presented the idea that the first man was dressed in "a skin of nail and a cloud of glory."³ This skin and cloud were removed when Adam broke God's commandment. This midrash viewed Adam's and Eve's nakedness in Genesis 3:7 as the realization that their skin had a new look. They were no longer covered with nail or the cloud of glory.

Following their realization of their actual nakedness, Adam and Eve made clothing for themselves. The end of the Genesis Rabbah 19:6 passage discussed the number of garments they produced.⁴ The midrash presented two comments regarding their sewing of fig leaves.

² GR 19:6.

³ PRE 14.

⁴ GR 19:6. This discussion was located at the very end of this section, following the next comment.

And they sewed together fig leaves [תאנר] (Gen.3:7). R. Simeon b. Yohai said: That is the fig leaf which brought grief [חואנר] into the world. R. Isaac said: You have acted sinfully: then take thread and sew.⁵

R. Simeon b. Yohai connected the words fig [תאנר] and grief [חואנר]. Only the letter **ו** divided the two terms. Earlier, Genesis Rabbah included an interpretation which identified the fig as the tree of knowledge of good and evil.⁶ This comment alluded to that identification. R. Isaac connected the sewing of garments with the requirement of human labor, which followed eating the forbidden fruit. God had not yet formally decreed a punishment. However, Adam and Eve were already paying the price for ignoring God's commandment.

⁵ GR 19:6.

⁶ GR 15:7. This midrash can be found on p.48.

Gen.3:8- They heard the sound of the Lord God moving about in the garden at the breezy time of day; and the man and his wife hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

The eating of the fruit had massive consequences for the first humans. In the eyes of the rabbis, the impact of the transgression occurred immediately. Some of the consequences were discussed in relation to Genesis 3:8, before God officially punished Adam and Eve. Genesis Rabbah 19 included this passage:

R. Abba b. Kahana said: מַרְגֵּל is not written here, rather מִרְגֵּל is written here, which means that it leaped and ascended. The real home of the Shechinah was on the earthly plain; when Adam sinned it withdrew to the first firmament; when Cain sinned, it withdrew to the second firmament; when the generation of Enosh sinned, it withdrew to the third; when the generation of the Flood sinned, it withdrew to the fourth; with the generation of the Tower of Babel, to the fifth; with the Sodomites, to the sixth, with the Egyptians in the days of Abraham, to the seventh. But as against these there arose seven righteous men: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Moses, and they brought it down again to earth. Abraham stood and brought it down to the sixth [firmament]; Isaac stood and brought it from the sixth to the fifth; Jacob stood and brought it from the fifth to the fourth; Levi stood and brought it from the fourth to the third; Kohath stood and brought it from third to the second; Amram stood and brought it from the second to the first; Moses stood and brought it all the way down.¹

R. Abba b. Kahana commented on the Bible's use of the hitpael [מִרְגֵּל], rather than the simpler pi'el [מַרְגֵּל]. He offered the explanation that the hitpael form implied leaping and ascending. R. Abba b. Kahana viewed God's voice as meaning the Shechinah, the Divine presence. The Divine presence was portrayed as ascending away from the human, earthly plain. Originally,

¹ GR 19:7. Song R.5:1 exactly paralleled this passage. It included a continuation of the discussion regarding the Tabernacle and the Shechinah. PRK 1:1 included parallel material. PR 5:7 paralleled GR 19:7, adding biblical prooftexts to explain each sin.

the Shechinah dwelled in the garden with Adam and Eve. Human sin drove the Shechinah further and further into the heavenly spheres, or firmaments. Rabbinic teaching viewed certain biblical characters as representing the worst human sins. This midrash listed these greatest human sins: Adam's eating of the fruit, Cain's killing of Abel, Enosh's worshipping of an idol², the sins of Noah's generation, the generation of Babel, and the Sodomites. The last great sin in this list encompassed the acts of the Egyptians in the time of Abraham. These sins drove the Shechinah away from the earth.

Seven righteous men counter-acted those awful sins. These great men were: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Moses.³ Their good deeds were portrayed as drawing the Shechinah back to earth. Each great sin drove the Divine presence one level farther away. Each righteous person drew the Shechinah one level closer. When Moses and the Israelites built the Tabernacle, God was said to dwell amongst them. This dwelling was the Shechinah, which returned to earth for the first time since Adam and Eve sinned.

The next section of Genesis Rabbah 19 included a discussion of the events surrounding this first transgression.

They heard [וישמעו] (Gen.3:8). Don't read וישמעו [they heard], rather וישמיעו [they caused to be heard]. They heard the voice of the trees, which said: "The deceiver who has deceived his Creator." Another interpretation: They heard the voice of the angels, who said: "The Lord God is going to those in the garden." R. Levi and R. Isaac disagreed. R. Levi said: "The one in the garden is dead [מה אורו שבגן]." R. Isaac said: "He goes about [מהלך לו]"⁴

² The rabbis saw Enosh as the first idol worshipper. This idea was discussed in Ginzberg, vol.1, pp.122-123.

³ Kohath was Levi's son and Moses' grandfather. Amram was Moses' father.

⁴ GR 19:8.

This midrash twisted the word וישמעו [they heard] to mean that others caused them to hear. The new form was the causative hifil, וישמיעו. Adam and Eve were caused to hear other voices. First, it was suggested that the trees were speaking. The trees witnessed the transgression, which involved one of their own. The trees accused Adam and Eve of deceiving their creator. Another interpretation was that the angels called out. These angels, jealous for their position, took glee at the human sin. They stated that God was coming to deal with Adam and Eve. R. Levi and R. Isaac both suggested stronger language. R. Levi's angels directly stated that Adam will die for breaking the commandment. This interpretation was arrived at through dividing the biblical מרחלך [moving] into two words: מה רלך [goes about dead]. R. Isaac's angels expressed shock at Adam's continued movement, since he had already broken God's commandment. After all, the penalty for eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was death. Adam was made the subject of the verb, מרחלך.

The Pesikta de Rab Kahana dealt with the unusual verb for "moving" through an explanation of Adam's stature before and after his sin. Additionally, the midrash discussed Adam's and Eve's reaction to God's voice.

R. Ishmael taught: As long as man refrains from sin, he is an object of fear and awe. The moment he sins, he is subject to fear and awe. Before Adam sinned, God's voice sounded familiar to him; after he sinned, it sound strange to him. Before Adam sinned, it was usual for him to stand erect while he was listening to God's voice. Thus it is written: **They used to hear the voice of the Lord God as [Adam] walked in the garden (Gen.3:7).**⁵ After Adam sinned, as soon as he heard God's voice, he crouched to hide himself, as is said: **the man and his**

⁵ The midrash read the verse differently in this passage than as was translated at the beginning of this section.

wife hid. . . (Gen.3:7). R. Aibu said: In that instant, Adam's height diminished and became only one hundred cubits.⁶

R. Ishmael set a general principle that humans have a higher standing if they do not sin. According to this passage, Adam's sin lead to a fear of God's voice and crouching at the approach of God. God's voice no longer sounded familiar to Adam, thus the unusual form **מהרלך**. This midrash read Genesis 3:8, as implying that Adam used to walk around the garden when God spoke. Adam, not God, was presented as the object of **מהרלך**. This reading was derived simply by changing the subject. No words were added or changed. Adam crouched to avoid being seen by God. The first man no longer stood in God's presence.

R. Aibu's interpretation at the end of the passage drew upon the rabbinic image of the golem.⁷ The first man was described as a golem of enormous height. After his sin, Adam's height was severely reduced. Pesikta de Rab Kahana linked this image with R. Abba b. Kahana's view of Adam hiding from God. At the moment Adam hid from God, Adam's size was decreased. The talmudic versions of this image portrayed God as having an active role in Adam's shrinking. Sanhedrin 38b stated: "But when he sinned, the Holy One, blessed be He, laid His hand upon him and diminished him."⁸ **And laid Your hand [כפכה] upon me** (Ps. 139:5) was used as a proof text. Hand [כף] possesses a numerical value of one hundred. The rabbis used this verse to identify Adam's shrunken height as one hundred amah. This description rounded out the image of the first man created as a golem. That

⁶ PRK 5:3. PRK 1:1 included a less clear version of this passage. R. Aibu's statement was mentioned in GR 19:6. PR 15:3 paralleled PRK 5:3. Num.R. 11:2 paralleled this passage, attributing it to R. Simeon b. Yohai.

⁷ This image was discussed on pp.17-20.

⁸ San.38b. Hag.12a included a parallel passage.

rabbinic image only worked if Adam was described as shrinking at some point.

Genesis Rabbah 19 included yet another interpretation of Genesis 3:8. Regarding God's decree of death upon Adam and Eve, the midrash stated:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: **לְרוּחַ יוֹם** [the breezy time of the day], meaning **לְרִיוֹחַ יוֹם** [after the day's respite]: "Behold, I will give him the day's respite. For thus spoke I to him: **for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die** (Gen.2:17). Now you do not know whether that means one day of Mine or one day of yours. But behold I will grant him one day of Mine, which is a thousand years, and he will live nine hundred and thirty years and leave seventy for his children," as it is written: **The days of our years are threescore years and ten** (Ps.90:10).⁹

This midrash was interested in the time of the day, not the verb. **לְרוּחַ יוֹם** [the breezy time of the day] was interpreted as **לְרִיוֹחַ יוֹם** [after the day's respite]. This reading explained why the humans did not die immediately after eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam and Eve they would live a full day, following their sin. The length of the day was linked to God's days, not human days. Psalm 90 was used as the source of human and Divine days. Verse 4 linked God to a thousand years, a number meant to imply never ending time. Verse 10, as cited, limited average human life to seventy years. Human life is relatively short, compared to God's span. Adam was granted a Divine day of a thousand years. Seventy years were removed to allow for the lives of future humans. This interpretation fit with the biblical age of Adam at his death, which was 930 years.¹⁰

⁹ GR 19:8. This passage continued with a debate over the word **לְרוּחַ יוֹם**. The debate revolved around God's relative lenience towards Adam.

¹⁰ Gen.5:5.

The rabbinic reading of Genesis 3:8 linked multiple consequences to Adam's sin. These included the following immediate responses: the withdrawal of the Shechinah; the mocking of Adam by the trees and angels; Adam's fear of God; Adam's loss of stature; and the limit put on the human life-span. These were simply the immediate consequences of Adam's transgression. Rabbinic commentary on other verses further illustrated the impact of eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

**Gen.3:9- The Lord God called out to the man and said to him:
"Where are you?"**

Genesis Rabbah 19 described God's remarks to Adam, as it continued its interpretation of Genesis 3.

**The Lord God called out to the man and said to him:
"Where are you [איכה] (Gen 3:9)?"** How has it happened [איך היו?] Yesterday, [you acted] according to my will, and today [you act] according to the serpent's will. Yesterday, [you stretched] from one end of the world to the other, and now [you can hide] among the trees of the garden.¹

This interpretation turned the single word question **איכה** [how] into the lament **איך היו** [how has it happened]. Linguistically, the midrash used the first two letters, **א.כ.**, for the first word, and the last letter, **ה.**, at the start of the second word. The rabbis assumed that an omniscient God already knew Adam's location. God's question was a fuller remark of remorse. Adam strayed and followed the serpent's advice. In a reference to the golem image, God mentioned Adam's decreased stature following the sin. The once massive Adam was small enough to hide behind a tree.

The midrash continued

R. Abbahu said in the name of R. Hanina: It is written: **But they are like a man [כאדם], they have transgressed the covenant (Hos.6:7). They are like a man [כאדם]** means like Adam: just as I led Adam into the Garden of Eden and commanded him, and he transgressed my commandment, whereupon I punished him by dismissal and expulsion, and bewailed him with **איכה**. I placed him in the Garden of Eden, as it is written: **The Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden (Gen.2:15); and I commanded him: And the Lord God commanded the man (Gen.2:16); and he transgressed My commandment: Did you eat of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat (Gen.3:11)? and I**

¹ GR 19:9.

punished him by dismissal: **So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden** (Gen.3:23); and I punished him by expulsion: **He drove the man out** (Gen.3:24); I bewailed him with **איכה** [how]: **And the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, איכה [How]?** (Gen.3:9) "איכה" is written. So also did I bring his descendants to the Land of Israel and command them, and they transgressed my commandment, and I punished them by sending them away and expelling them, and I bewailed them with **איכה**! I brought them into the Land of Israel, as it is written: **And I brought you into a land of fruitful fields** (Jer.2:7); I commanded them: **And you shall command the children of Israel** (Ex.27:20), they transgressed My command: **Yea, all Israel have transgressed Your law** (Dan.9:11); I punished them by sending them away: **Send them away out of my sight, and let them go forth** (Jer.15:1); by expulsion: **I will drive them out of My house** (Hos.9:15); and I bewailed them with **איכה**: **איכה [How] does the city sit solitary** (Lam.1:1).²

The midrash compared Adam to the Israelites. Adam was placed in the garden and commanded. He transgressed, was punished, and was mourned by God. The Israelites were placed in the Land of Israel and commanded. They transgressed, were punished, and were mourned by God. This analogy was connected at both ends of the passage. At the start, the midrash read Hosea 6:7 as connecting the transgressions of Adam and Israel. In the biblical context, this verse was part of a chapter entreating Israel to follow the commandments. The midrash understood the verse's use of **כאדם** [like a man] as referring to Adam. The end of the midrash linked Adam and the Israelites through the word **איכה**. Genesis 3:9 and Lamentations 1:1 used the same consonants with different vowels. In Genesis, the word was a question regarding Adam's location. The midrash borrowed the remorseful tone of the later biblical book. **איכה** became a lament for Adam's and Israel's transgressions. The prooftexts were used to complete both images.

² GR 19:9. Lam.R. Petichta 4 was a parallel passage.

In the midrash, two verbs were used to describe Adam's removal from the garden, because there were two references in Genesis.³

³ Gen. 3:23 and 3:24 mentioned God expelling Adam.

Gen.3:12- The man said: "The woman You put at my side-- she gave me of the tree and I ate."

In the Bible, Adam first spoke in Genesis 3:10. Genesis 3:12 was his first sentence which served as the exegetical source for rabbinic commentary. Adam's biblical words were written in Hebrew. The Talmud commented that: "R. Judah also said in Rab's name; The first man spoke Aramaic, for it is written: **How weighty also are Your thoughts unto me, O God** (Ps.139:17)."¹ R. Judah's statement was probably part of defense regarding the Babylonian Jewish use of Aramaic.²

Regardless of the language he used, the rabbis commented upon Adam's response to God's inquiry following the sin.

There are four upon whose flask the Holy One, blessed be He, knocked, only to find a chamber pot, and they are: Adam, Cain, Balaam, and Hezekiah. Adam, who said: **The man said: "The woman... (Gen.3:12)." Cain: And the Lord said unto Cain: "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said: "I know not... (Gen.4:9)." Balaam the wicked, as it is written: And God came unto Balaam, and said "What are these with you?" And Balaam said unto God... (Num.22:9-10). Hezekiah: Then came Isaiah the prophet unto King Hezekiah, and said unto him: What said these men (II Kings 20:14)? But Ezekiel was found superior to all of them: **Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered: "O Lord God, You know (Ezek.27:3)." ³****

In some passages, Adam was presented as the paradigmatic human. This midrash portrayed Adam as one of the most worthless humans ever. Adam was grouped with Cain, Balaam and Hezekiah. In each example, a proof-text presented God questioning a biblical figure. In the case of Hezekiah, God spoke through Isaiah. Each biblical figure responded in an unacceptable

¹ San.38b. This view was only mentioned in this one source. The passage continued, discussing the book of the generations of Adam. See p.140.

² This idea was suggested in the Soncino translation of the Talmud.

³ GR 19:11. Num.R.20:6 included a similar passage, without mention of Adam or Ezekiel.

manner. Adam answered God by blaming Eve and, indirectly, God who had provided the woman. Ezekiel was the one biblical figure who responded appropriately to God's questioning.

The next section of Genesis Rabbah compared Job to Adam.

Thus it is written: **Then would I speak, and not fear Him; for I am not so with myself** (Job 9:35). Job said: I am not like him. He said: **The woman you put at my side...** (Gen.3:12). Thus, he hearkened to his wife, but I did not hearken to my wife.⁴

This midrash preferred Job's actions to those of Adam. In the biblical context, Job was discussing his willingness to be judged by God. Adam blamed his wife when approached by God. In a continuation, the midrash presented a rabbinic image of Job's wife as a vile woman. Job stated that he rejected his wife's bad counsel. Unfortunately, Adam followed his wife's mistaken advice.

Genesis Rabbah continued with an interpretation of the last phrase of Genesis 3:13.

R. Abba said: **ואכלתי** [and I ate] was not written, rather **ואוכל**, I did eat and I will eat. R. Simeon b. Lakish said: Adam was not banished from the garden of Eden until he reviled and blasphemed, as it is written: **And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes** (Is.5:2).⁵

R. Abba's view was based on the capacity of Hebrew verbs to form two tenses with the same consonants. The difference between a completed verb and an incomplete verb can be found solely in the vowels. In the Bible, Adam said: "and I ate." The midrash read this statement as incomplete. Adam did

⁴ GR 19:12. The passage continued discussing Job.

⁵ GR 19:12.

not use an unmistakably completed form, such as **ואכלהי**. He spoke in a form which implied the potential for continued rebellion. Adam was ready to ignore other Divine commands. R. Simeon b. Lakish explained that this attitude led to the expulsion from Eden. God might have forgiven Adam's breaking of one commandment. God could not accept continuous disobedience. Adam was banished for reviling God, not for eating the forbidden fruit. The Isaiah proof-text presented a parable of God's planting a vineyard in Israel for the Israelites. God hoped for good grapes, but wild grapes grew as well. The midrash related this image to God's placing Adam in the Garden of Eden and hoping for proper behavior. Unfortunately, Adam rebelled and broke God's commandment.

The end of Genesis Rabbah 19 switched its focus to Eve's comment to God. Eve responded to God in the verse which followed Adam's response.

The woman replied: "The serpent duped me [השיאני], and I ate (Gen.3:13), meaning he incited me, he incriminated me, he beguiled me. "He incited me," as you read: The enemy shall not incite [ישיא] him (Ps.89:23). "He incriminated me," as you read, When you do lend [חשה] to your neighbor (Deut.24:10). "He beguiled me," as you read: Now therefore let not Hezekiah beguile [ישיא] you (II Chron.32:15).⁶

Eve's response mirrored Adam's response. She avoided personal responsibility, blaming the serpent. The midrash expanded Eve's one verb into three responses. The root of all three rabbinic responses was the same as Eve's biblical comment, **נשא**. The rabbis suggested that Eve described the serpent as inciting, incriminating, and beguiling her. The Deuteronomy

⁶ GR 19:12.

prooftext implied that lending something made the receiver liable for a debt. This debt was a type of incrimination.

This chapter of Genesis Rabbah did not end with the message of comfort which usually ended Genesis Rabbah chapters. Both Adam and Eve were portrayed as avoiding the responsibility for their own actions. Adam blamed Eve and God. Eve blamed the serpent. Inevitably, neither human would avoid the consequences of their transgressions.

Gen.3:14- **Then the Lord God said to the serpent. . .**

The rabbis said many different things regarding the serpent, its actions, and its punishment. This section focuses only on rabbinic material which discussed Adam and Eve, along with the serpent. Assuming the importance of every biblical detail, the rabbis commented on the order and the content of the Divine judgments. God judged the serpent, Eve, and Adam in that sequence. They were not the only ones punished, according to Genesis Rabbah.

And God said: "Let the earth sprout vegetation..."

(Gen.1:11). It was taught in the name of R. Nathan: Three entered for judgment, but four came out guilty. Adam and Eve and the serpent entered for judgment, and the earth was punished with them, as it is written: **Cursed be the ground because of you** (Gen.3:17), which means that it would produce accursed things for you, such as gnats, insects, and fleas. . . Why was she [the earth] punished? R. Judah b. R. Shalom and R. Phinehas disagreed. R. Judah b. R. Shalom said: Because it disobeyed a command. For the Holy One, blessed be He, said to it: **Let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit** (Gen.1:11). Just as the fruit is eaten, so should the tree be edible. It did not do this, rather: **The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit** (Gen.1:12). The fruit could be eaten, but not the tree. R. Phinehas said: It exceeded His command, thinking to do the will of her Creator. **And trees of every kind bearing fruit** (Gen 1:12) implies that even non-fruit-bearing trees yielded fruit.¹

This midrash compared Genesis 1:11-12 to Genesis 3:17. R. Nathan noticed that the earth was cursed along with the serpent, Eve, and Adam. He explained that the earth's curse was to produce gnats, fleas, and other annoying insects. This opinion did not explain why the earth was punished.

¹ GR 5:9. The passage continued with a comparison of the two rabbis' views. Num R. 10:2 also mentioned the punishment of the earth.

R. Judah b. Shalom and R. Phinehas offered explanations of the earth's transgression. Their answers were predicated upon a linguistic difference between God's command (Gen. 1:11) and the earth's action (Gen. 1:12). The two rabbis suggested two different explanations, but both tied their explanations to that biblical difference.

That midrash did not imply that God spoke directly to the earth in judgment. God cursed the earth while judging Adam. A later Genesis Rabbah chapter mentioned the manner of God's decrees of punishment.

Then the Lord God said to the serpent (Gen. 3:14). With Adam, He discussed, with Eve He discussed, but with the serpent He did not discuss. Rather the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "This wicked serpent is ready with answers. If I discuss the matter with it, it will answer me: 'You commanded them and I commanded them. Why did they ignore your command and follow my command?'" Therefore He pronounced its sentence summarily.²

This midrash commented on the lack of discussion between God and the serpent. Adam had a discussion with God before he was judged.³ Eve answered God's questions before she was punished.⁴ The serpent never received a chance to explain its actions. According to this passage, God was avoiding a troublesome debate with this clever creature. God simply judged the serpent and declared its punishment.

Genesis Rabbah 19 presented a possible reason for the order of God's decrees.

R. Hiyya taught: When conferring honor, we commence with the greatest; when cursing, we commence with the smallest. When conferring honor, we commence with the greatest: **And Moses**

² GR 20:2. San 29a also described the serpent as possessing many answers.

³ Gen. 3:9-12.

⁴ Gen. 3:13.

said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons (Lev.10:6). But in cursing, we commence with the smallest: Then the Lord God said to the serpent (Gen.3:14). . . And to the woman He said (Gen.3:16). . . To Adam He said... (Gen.3:17). This teaches that the serpent was cursed first, then Eve was cursed, then Adam was cursed.⁵

R. Hiyya presented a principle which could be followed by a reader of the midrash. Honor should be conferred on the most worthy first. Disgrace should be placed on the least worthy first. He cited Leviticus 10:6 as an example of giving honor. Moses instructed Aaron and then his sons following the death of Nadav and Abihu. R. Hiyya understood that discussion as an example of conferring honor in descending order. The example of disgrace was the order in which God punished the serpent, Eve, and Adam. The reader should also learn from the Divine manner of judging transgressions. God punished the least worthy one, the serpent, first.

Another behavioral lesson was linked to these decrees in Numbers Rabbah.

Forty stripes he may give him, he shall not exceed (Deut.25:3). This is due to the forty curses with which the serpent, Eve, Adam, and the ground were cursed, and the Sages have reduced the stripes by one on account of **he shall not exceed.**⁶

Deuteronomy limited the punishments which could be decreed by a human court. When judges invoked beating of the condemned man, they could only call for forty lashes. The number was not explained by the Bible. This midrash linked that number to the number of curses received by the residents of Eden. This interpretation may be based on an accounting of the details in the judgments decreed by God in Genesis 3. Numbers Rabbah

⁵ GR 20:3. Tean.15b included parallel material. GR 20:3 continued with a discussion of the manner of sexual relations of humans, serpents, and fish.

⁶ Num.R.18:21.

observed that judges were later constrained to a limit of thirty-nine lashes. The court needed to avoid exceeding the forty through a miscount.

The serpent's punishment was directly connected to the judgment of Adam and Eve. These passages discussed the connection between the various Divine decrees. The order of God's statements was given close attention.

Gen.3:16- **And to the women He said: "I will make most severe your pangs in childbearing; in pain shall you bear children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.**

The Bible rarely presented God speaking to women. The rabbis discussed God's discussion with Eve.

R. Judah b. R. Simon and R. Johanan in the name of R. Eleazar b. R. Simon said: The Holy One, blessed be He, never spoke directly with a woman save with that righteous woman [Sarah]¹, and that too was due to a particular cause. R. Abba b. Kahana said in R. Biryi's name: And what a roundabout way He went in order to speak with her. As it is written: **And He said: No, but you did laugh** (Gen.18:15). But is it not written: **And she [Hagar] called the name of the Lord that spoke unto her** (Gen.16:13)? R. Joshua b. Nehemiah answer in R. Idi's name: That was through an angel. But is it not written: **And the Lord said unto her [Rebekah]** (Gen.25:23)? R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama b. R. Hanina: That was through an angel. R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Jose b. Zimra: That was through the medium of Shem.²

This passage emphasized the unusual nature of God's talking with Sarah. The midrash identified Sarah as the only woman with whom God had ever spoken. This view did not really deny God's interchange with the first woman. This midrash focused on Sarah and her righteousness. The two parallel passages did not even mention Eve. God spoke to Sarah, when she denied laughing in response to the prediction that she would conceive. This passage inquired regarding God's communication with Hagar and Rebekah. The midrash explained that in both cases God spoke through angels. R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Jose b. Zimra that Rebekah received the Divine

¹ Y.Sot.Chap.7, Hal.1 (21b), a parallel passage, identified the righteous woman as Sarah.

² GR 20:6, GR 45:10, GR 68:7, and Y.Sot.Chap.7, Hal.1 (21b), as noted above, were parallel passages. These parallel passages did not refer to Eve.

communication through the medium of Shem. This interpretation was based on a view presented later in Genesis Rabbah.³

The rabbis detailed the nature of Eve's punishment.

Your pangs refers to the pain of conception; **in childbearing**, to the discomfort of pregnancy; **in pain**, to the sufferings of miscarriages; **shall you bear**, to the agony of childbirth; **children**, to the suffering involved in the upbringing of children. R. Eleazar b. R. Simeon said: It is easier for a man to grow myriads of olives in Galilee than to rear one child in the Land of Israel.⁴

The midrash divided Genesis 3:16 into its component phrases and words. Each part was identified as a separate punishment. According to this passage, Eve's suffering would include: conception, pregnancy, miscarriage, childbirth, and raising children. This statement conveyed a sensitivity to the difficulties women face through childbirth. This sentiment was supported by R. Eleazar b. Simeon. He observed that raising children was even more difficult than cultivating olive trees in the Galilee.

Genesis Rabbah listed five punishments within Eve's Divine judgment. Other rabbinic writings dealt with the same question. Numbers Rabbah counted seven "curses."⁵ That passage did not provide details of its seven curses.⁶ Avot de Rabbi Nathan noted ten "curses."⁷ Some of these curses corresponded to Genesis Rabbah. Some of them were different. According to that passage, Eve's ten punishments were:

³ GR 68:6.

⁴ GR 20:6. A discussion Eve's punishment and the human gestation period preceded this interpretation.

⁵ Num.R.10:2.

⁶ Num.R.10:2. The Soncino translation suggested that Num.R. added **I will make most severe** (Gen.3:16) and **your urge shall be for your husband** (Gen.3:16) to the Genesis Rabbah list. However, neither the midrash nor Soncino offered exact explanations for each curse.

⁷ ARN 1:7.

The two discharges of blood: menstruation and virginity. **Your pangs**, this is the anxiety connected with the rearing of children. **In childbearing**, this is the pain associated with conception. **In pain shall you bear children**, this is to be understood in its literal meaning. **Yet your urge shall be for your husband**, this teaches that a woman particularly yearns for her husband when he is about to set out on a journey.⁸ **And he shall rule over you**, for the man demands by word of mouth whereas the woman solicits in her heart. She is wrapped up like a mourner, shut up as in a prison, and banished from the company of all men.⁹

Avot de Rabbi Nathan mentioned the blood of menstruation and the loss of virginity. These curses were not mentioned in Genesis Rabbah. The interpretation of the phrases of Genesis 3:16 followed the earlier midrash. Avot de Rabbi Nathan added that a woman would miss her husband while he travelled. Another addition was the view of male and female sexual desire. According to this passage, women hold their requests silently, while men can express their desires.¹⁰ The customs and pain of menstruation may explain the last three curses: mourning, restriction, and isolation.¹¹

Genesis Rabbah suggested other interpretations of the phrase **Yet your urge shall be for your husband**.

There are four desires: the desire of a woman is for none but her husband: **Yet your urge shall be for your husband**. The desire of the evil inclination is for none but Cain and his associates: **Sin couches at the door, and unto thee is its desire** (Gen.4:7). The desire of the rain is for nothing but the earth: **You have remembered the earth, and them that**

⁸ Yeb.62b also mentioned this interpretation of the husband's journey.

⁹ ARN 1:7. Eru.100b was a parallel passage.

¹⁰ This explanation was presented by Jastrow, p.1645.

¹¹ This interpretation was suggested by the Soncino translation of this passage.

desire her (Ps.65:10)¹² And the desire of the Holy One, blessed be He, is for none but Israel: **And his desire is toward me** (Song.7:2).¹³

This midrash connected Eve's punishment with four other types of desire. In each example, the prooftext included a form of the word **רָצוּן** [desire]. The word in Psalms verse had a different biblical meaning, but the midrash read it as "desire." The four great desires were: a woman for her husband; the evil inclination for Cain; the rain for the earth; and God for Israel. Eve's judgment was a punishment for all women. The desire of females was related to other powerful urges.

Genesis Rabbah continued with another interpretation of the phrase at hand.

When a woman sits on the birthstool, she declares: "I will never again engage [in sexual relations] with my husband." Thus, the Holy One, blessed be He, says to her: "You will return to your desire, you will return to the desire for your husband."¹⁴

This interpretation dealt with a realistic issue. Childbirth was very painful for the woman. The rabbis had referred to its pain as a curse. The midrash explained that God foresaw this issue. God provided that a woman's desire would be for her husband. In this passage, God provided motivation for each woman, while she gave birth. Each woman was reminded that: **your urge shall be for your husband** (Gen.3:16). This passage also provided an interesting historical detail. At the time of this midrash, the fifth century, women gave birth while sitting on some form of stool.

¹² JPS translated this verse: **Thou hast remembered the earth, and watered her, greatly enriching her** (Ps.65:10).

¹³ GR 20:7. The passage continued with Israel's response to God's desire.

¹⁴ GR 20:7.

Gen.3:17-19- To Adam He said: "Because you did as your wife said and ate of the tree about which I commanded you: 'You shall not eat of it,' Cursed be the ground because of you; by toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life: Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you. But your food shall be the grasses of the field; By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat, until you return to the ground. . .

Following its treatment of the curses for the serpent and Eve, Genesis Rabbah discussed Adam's punishment. This interpretation began with a rabbinic restatement of Eve's actions leading to Adam's sin.

To Adam He said: Because you did as your wife said: R. Simlai said: She came upon him with her answers all ready, saying to him, "What do you think? That I will die and another Eve will be created for you? **There is nothing new under the sun** (Eccl.1:9). Or do you think that I will die while you remain idle? **He created it not a waste, He formed it to be inhabited** (Is.45:18)." The rabbis said: She began weeping aloud [בקול] over him; thus it is written: **To Adam He said:** for it is not written: "to the words of your wife," but **as your wife said [לקול אשתך]** [literally: to the voice of your wife].¹

When interpreting Adam's punishment, the rabbis defended Adam through a discussion of Eve's actions. God linked Adam's failure to follow one Divine command with Adam's listening to the words of his wife. The rabbis focused on the nature of Eve's words, not Adam's actions. R. Simlai described Eve as full of answers for Adam's doubt regarding the fruit. First, Eve quoted Ecclesiastes, proving that no new female would be created for Adam. Second, she quoted an Isaiah passage, whose biblical context spoke of the earth's creation for the sake of being used and inhabited. R. Simlai presented Eve as using this quote to threaten Adam. Eve would not wait around for Adam to take the initiative.

¹ GR 20:8. The passage continued, mentioning the etrog as the fruit in question. See p.47.

Another interpretation was attributed to the rabbis. This view looked at the phrase used in Genesis 3:17: **לְקוֹל אִשְׁתּוֹ**. The rabbis observed that the Bible said "voice", not "words." God punished Adam for hearkening to the "voice" of his wife. This interpretation read "voice" as implying that Eve came to Adam crying. Eve used emotion to convince Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Deuteronomy Rabbah presented the idea that men can either profit or loose on account of their wives. The illustration of loss was Adam and Eve.

To Adam He said: "Because you did as your wife said: R. Isaac said: This can be compared to a king who said to his servant: "Do not taste any food until I return from the bath;" but his wife said unto him: "Taste the dish so that the king will not need to put in salt or sauce." The king returned and found him smacking his lips, and he said to him: "Did I not forbid you to eat, and yet you have eaten?" He replied: "Sire, your maidservant gave it to me." Whereupon the king exclaimed: "And have you listened to my maidservant, rather than me?" So God commanded Adam: but as for the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you must not eat of it (Gen.2:17).²

This later midrash presented a colorful illustration of the interaction between Adam and God. In the parable: God was the king; Adam-- the servant; and Eve-- the maidservant. Adam's transgression was identical to the servant's mistake. A man should listen to the master's command, not the advice of his wife. In the context of Deuteronomy Rabbah, this comment had a softer impact. The midrash stated that men profit and loose on account of their wives. The passage continued with a discussion of Abraham profiting due to Sarah's advice.³

² Deut.R.4.5. The passage continued, spelling out each part of the parable.

³ Deut.R.4.5.

Adam's punishment was presented in several clauses. Genesis Rabbah commented on many of the pieces.

[And ate of the tree] about which I commanded you saying [לאמר]: What is the meaning of לאמר? I commanded you to forbid it to the cattle, beasts, and birds; yet not only didn't you forbid them, but you even gave them and they ate of it.⁴

The Bible stated only that Eve and Adam ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This interpretation implied that Adam fed the fruit to the various animals. The interpretation was based upon the inclusion of the word לאמר. This word indicated a quotation in the biblical context. The sentence worked grammatically without לאמר, since it merely seems to be a non-translatable colon. The midrash understood this word as implying that Adam was to speak [לאמר] this command to all the animals. He did not inform the animals, and they ate of the tree.

The punishment of the ground was discussed in an earlier section.⁵ However, the section here discussed the role the ground's curse would play in human life.

By toil [בעצבון] shall you eat of it (Gen.3:17). R. Issi said: The difficulties of earning a livelihood are twice as great as those of childbirth. In respect to birth it is written, **"In pain [בעצב] shall you bear children (Gen.3:16),** whereas in respect to a livelihood it is written: **By toil [בעצבון] shall you eat of it...** R. Eleazar said: Redemption is likened to the earning of a livelihood, and the reverse. As it is written: **And has delivered us from our adversaries ... who gives food to all flesh (Ps.136:24-5).** Just as redemption requires wonders, so does earning a livelihood require wonders. Just as

⁴ GR 20:8.

⁵ See p.98. GR 20:8 referred to the ground's curse in the same manner as that earlier section.

a livelihood must be earned every day, so does redemption occur every day.⁶

R. Issi compared Adam's punishment to Eve's punishment. He concluded that Adam's judgment was worse than that of his wife's. Eve was given childbirth, while Adam was made responsible for a livelihood. R. Issi commented on the words **pain** [בעצב] and **toil** [בעצבון]. The words came from the same root, but toil was a longer form than pain. Therefore, R. Issi decided that Adam's livelihood must have been worse than Eve's childbirth.

R. Eleazar utilized Adam's judgment as an opening to discuss the nature of work and redemption. He placed a very high value upon earning a livelihood, even comparing it to redemption. Psalm 136 was used to show that God provided regular redemption and regular sustenance. We need to work for both, but God was the ultimate source of redemption and a livelihood. R. Eleazar used the biblical curse in a positive interpretation. Since God has made it necessary for humans to earn livelihoods, then there needed to be a positive reason for this judgment.

Genesis Rabbah 20:10 focused upon the next part of judgment given Adam.

Thorns [קוץ] and thistles [דרדר] shall it sprout for you.

קוץ is artichokes, while דרדר is cardoon⁷. Some reverse it:

דרדר is cardoon, while קוץ is artichokes.⁸

The rabbis desired to clarify these plants included in Adam's curse. Earlier, the rabbis had attempted to identify the tree of knowledge of good and evil:

⁶ GR 20:9. The midrash continued, presenting R. Samuel b. Nahman's view on the relationship between a livelihood and redemption.

⁷ The Hebrew דרדר was identified as cardoon, an edible species of thistle. Jastrow, p.1078.

⁸ GR 20:10.

Such interpretations portrayed a desire to relate the Bible to the world as the contemporary author understood it.

The interpretation of the curses continued:

But your food shall be the grasses [herb] of the field.

R. Judah and R. Nehemiah disagreed. R. Judah commented: Had you merited it, it would have brought forth all the trees of the Garden of Eden for your benefit; now that you have not merited then **Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you.** R.

Nehemiah said: Had you merited it, you would have taken herbs from the Garden of Eden and tasted in them all the delights of the world; now that you have not merited it: **your food shall be the grasses of the field.**⁹

The rabbis suggested alternatives regarding the meaning of this verse.

According to R. Judah, Adam could have eaten from the trees of the garden for his whole life. He might have even eaten of these trees after his sin, if he had merited it. R. Nehemiah differed with him. He suggested that Adam could have taken herbs from the garden. He would have tasted in those herbs all the delights of the world. The delights of the world were what Adam tasted in Eden. In either case, Adam did not merit anything other than the grasses of the field. His food was to be plain, ordinary grass.

R. Isaac presented an illustration which connected the mention of grasses, the sweat of the brow, and bread.

R. Isaac said: This was said with reference to the present-day generations, when a man repeatedly plucks his field and eats it as grass. When Adam heard this, his face broke out in a perspiration and he exclaimed: "What? Shall I be tied to the feeding-trough like a beast?" The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Since your face has sweated, **Shall you get bread to**

⁹ GR 20:10.

eat." R. Issi said: It would have been better for him to remain with the first curse.¹⁰

R. Isaac read **your food shall be the grasses of the field**, as describing human eating as grazing the land. Literally, human food was to be the grass plucked from the earth. In this passage, Adam heard that curse and panicked. He began to perspire, thinking that God was condemning him to eat as an animal. This illustration's perspiration was offered as an explanation of **By the sweat of your brow**. God disapproved of Adam's response and decreed yet another curse. This decree was **shall you get bread to eat**. The bread was given as a negative response to Adam's sweat.

The Talmud included an interpretation of this series of Divine judgments upon Adam.

[Ben Zoma] used to say: So many labors Adam had to carry out before he obtained bread to eat. He ploughed, he sowed, he reaped, he bound [sheaves], he threshed and winnowed and selected the ears, he ground, and sifted, he kneaded and baked, and then at last he ate; whereas I get up, and find all these things done for me. And how many labors Adam had to carry out before he obtained a garment to wear. He had to shear, wash [the wool], comb it, spin it, and weave it, and then at last he obtained a garment to wear; whereas I get up and find all these things done for me. All kinds of craftsmen come early to the door of my house, and I rise in the morning and find all these before me.¹¹

Ben Zoma did not discuss the punishment aspect of Genesis 3:19. He applied the verse in a comparison of Adam's life and the life of the contemporary Jew of Ben Zoma's day. Adam had to depend on himself for all the actions necessary for food. Ben Zoma could depend on other people to supply food.

¹⁰ GR 20:10. ARN 11:7 presented a parallel interpretation of this exchange. In that source, Adam was described as trembling, but not specifically as sweating. That later version did not explain the prooftext as clearly. The next part of GR 20:10 applied Adam's curses to omens for an invalid.

¹¹ Ber 58a.

The production of clothing was presented as another illustration. In this passage, the Talmud differentiated between Adam's life and the time of the Talmud.

The role of death in God's judgment of Adam was linked to Genesis 3:22-23 by the rabbis.¹² However, there were some interpretations of Genesis 3:19 which discussed death.

Until you return to the ground-- For from it you were taken. He said to him: "Is it not the handful of dust, from which you were created, an unlawful spoil in your possession? **For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.** R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Here Scripture hints at resurrection, for it does not say: "For dust you are, and to dust you shall go," but **you shall return.**¹³

The first interpretation in this passage made reference to: **The Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth** (Gen.2:7). God had made man out of dust. Upon Adam's sin, God reminded Adam that the human was a Divine creation. God owned the dust of which Adam was composed. God would someday reclaim that very dust. That day would be Adam's death.

R. Simeon b. Yohai commented on the wording of the Divine decree that Adam would return to dust. He noticed that the Bible did not say that Adam would "go to" dust, rather that he would "return." Through a slightly different reading of the verse, R. Simeon b. Yohai saw a Divine promise that Adam would return to life after he died. The rabbinic view of resurrection was read back into Genesis.

¹² See p.122.

¹³ GR 20:10.

Gen.3:20- The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

Adam was never specifically named in the Bible. This verse described Adam's naming of Eve. The Bible gave one reason for this name. The rabbis suggested some other reasons.

The man named his wife Eve [חווה]. She was given to him for an advisor [לחיותו], but she acted like a serpent [כחיה]. Another interpretation: He showed [חיוה] her how many generations she had destroyed. R. Aha interpreted it: The serpent was your serpent and you are Adam's serpent.¹

This passage worked with words that had similar roots. Eve's name was חווה. חיוה was a term meaning advisor. חיוה was one of the words for animal, in this case meaning serpent.² Eve was given to Adam to help him. However, she acted like a serpent towards him. R. Aha's statement clarified this interpretation. The serpent led Eve astray, and Eve's advice led to Adam's downfall. The middle interpretation played on the idea of advice as well. After they were punished, Adam informed Eve of the consequences of her actions. He showed her the many generations whose lives were influenced by the eating of the forbidden fruit.

The next section of Genesis Rabbah 20 offered a rather unusual understanding of "mother of all the living."

because she was the mother [אם] of all the living. R. Simeon b. Eleazar said: That means that she is associated with [אם] all living... R. Simeon said: **the mother of all the living** means, the mother of all life. For R. Simon said: Throughout the entire one hundred and thirty years during which Adam held aloof from Eve the male demons were made ardent by her and she bore, while the female demons were inflamed by

¹ GR 20:11. This analogy of Eve as a serpent was also mentioned in GR 22:2.

² These two words were defined on Jastrow, p.452.

Adam and they bore, as it is written: **if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men** [מִדְּאִם] (2 Sam.7:14), which means the children of the first man³

R. Simeon mentioned the similarity of the words אִם [mother] and אִתּוֹ [with]. He posited that Eve was not only the mother of all living humans, but that she was associated with everything that lived. R. Simeon then stated a rabbinic view that Adam and Eve refrained from having sex following their expulsion from Eden. According to this midrash, the first human couple engaged in sexual relations with demons during that time. Eve was the mother of all the living because she was the mother of the humans and the demons. This interpretation never gathered much support. Ginzberg noted that it may have been a counter-argument for certain Persian beliefs.⁴

³ GR 20:11. Parallel passages included GR 24:6, Eru. 18b, and Tan. Bub. 1:26. Tan. Bub. 1:17 mentioned this idea.

⁴ The idea of Adam and Eve having sexual relations with demons was discussed by Ginzberg, vol. 5, p.148, #47. Later Kabbalistic sources discussed this unusual image further. PRE 21 presented an image of Eve conceiving with Samael [Satan].

Gen.3:21- **And the Lord God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.**

The idea of God creating clothing for the first human couple was the source of many rabbinic comments. The nature of these garments and their fate were discussed and debated.

And the Lord God made garments of skins [עור] for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. In R. Meir's Torah it was found written: "garments of light [אור]": this refers to Adam's garments, which were like a torch, broad at the bottom and narrow at the top. Isaac the Elder said: They were smooth as a finger-nail and as beautiful as a jewel. R. Johanan said: They were like the fine linen garments which come from Bet Shean.¹ **Garments of skins** meaning those that are nearest to the skin. R. Eleazar said: They were of goat skin. R. Joshua said: Of hare skin. R. Jose b. R. Hanina said: It was a garment made of skin with its wool. Resh Lakish said: It was of Circassian wool, and these were used later by first-born children. R. Samuel b. Nahman said: From the wool of camels and the wool of hares. **Garments of skins** meaning those which are produced from the skin.²

Multiple answers were provided regarding the nature of Adam's garments. Each sage attempted to envision the characteristics of Divinely-produced clothing. It was said that R. Meir's Torah wrote the word עור [skin] as אור [light]. The two words are pronounced almost identically. The garments had the gleam, and even the shape, of a torch. This image would be repeated in later rabbinic interpretations. Isaac the Elder noted that the garments were smooth and beautiful. An unattributed opinion suggested that **of skin** meant the clothing worn closest to the skin. R. Eleazar mentioned goat skin and R. Joshua mentioned hare skin, while R. Jose b. R. Hanina suggested that only wool was used. Resh Lakish said one kind of wool, while R. Samuel b.

¹ GR 19:1 also mentioned the fine linen of Bet Shean.

² GR 20:12. The passage continued with a tangentially related message regarding the purchases. It said that one should spend less than one can afford on clothing.

Nahman offered another kind of wool. The final, unattributed interpretation was a literal one. The **garments of skin** were made of skin. Regardless of its actual identification, these sages all thought the garments were fantastic, high-quality clothing.

This passage's only suggestion regarding the fate of the garments was made by Resh Lakish. He stated that first-born children wore these clothes. This image was repeated elsewhere. Another chapter of Genesis Rabbah supported this idea with an illustration.

Behold, I am at the point to die (Gen.25:32). Another interpretation is that Nimrod was seeking to slay him [Esau] on account of the garment which had belonged to Adam, for when he put it on and went out into the field, all the beasts and birds in the world would come and flock around him.³

Esau was the first-born son, and he was wearing Adam's clothing. The biblical verse was from the chapter where Esau sells his birthright to his brother, Jacob. According to this interpretation, Esau's hurried mood was due to Nimrod's attempt to kill him. Nimrod was jealous of the wondrous robe of Adam, which attracted all the animals.

Numbers Rabbah mentioned the inheritance by the first-born of these Divine garments. This interpretation was linked to the idea that Adam sacrificed to God.⁴

Go back to the beginning of the creation of the world. Adam was the world's firstborn. When he offered his sacrifice, as it says: **And it pleased the Lord better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs** (Ps.69:32)-- he donned high priestly garments; as it says: **And the Lord God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.** They were robes of honor which subsequent firstborns used. When

³ GR 63:13.

⁴ See p.138.

Adam died he transmitted them to Seth. Seth transmitted them to Methusaleh. When Methusaleh died he transmitted them to Noah. . . Noah did and transmitted them to Shem. . . Because Noah foresaw that the line of patriarchs would issue through him. . . Shem died and handed it on to Abraham. . . Abraham died and handed it on to Isaac. Isaac arose and handed it on to Jacob. . . Do you suppose that it was for no good reason that Jacob asked Esau to sell him the birthright? No! Jacob wished to offer sacrifices and could not, because he was not the firstborn.⁵

This midrash traced the fate of Adam's garments through several generations. The garments were part of the birthright of the firstborn. Those included in this list were: Adam, Seth, Methusaleh, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Some of these people were not the firstborn in their family. Seth was considered the firstborn, due to Cain's murder of Abel. Explanations, not quoted here, were provided for Shem's and Abraham's inclusion. Basically, they were included because Israel would stem from them. Jacob purchased the garment from Esau, as described above in Genesis Rabbah 63:13.⁶ The passage implied that the high priests of the Israelites had possession of these robes. The firstborn of the priests would receive the garments and with them the authority to perform sacrifices.

⁵ Num.R.4:8. The passage continued with a discussion of the firstborn, but there was no further mention of Adam's garments.

⁶ See p.116.

Gen.3:22- **And the Lord God said: "Now that the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, what if he should stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."**

On the surface, this verse implied that man was now similar to God in knowledge of good and evil. God was cautious that the man should not eat of the tree of life. Thus, in the next verse, God banished Adam from the Garden of Eden. The Bible presented Genesis 3:22 in that context. The rabbis read Genesis 3:22 in many different ways. Genesis Rabbah 21 presented several different options.

How long shall be the vision concerning the continual burnt-offering (Dan.8:13)? Shall the decree which was decreed against Adam continue forever? No. And the transgression that causes desolation (Dan.8:13): Shall his transgression make him desolate in the grave? To give both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot (ibid.)? Shall he and his descendants be trampled by the angel of death. And he said unto me: "Unto two thousand and three hundred evenings-mornings; then shall the sanctuary be victorious (Dan.8:14).¹ R. Azariah and R. Jonathan b. Haggai in R. Isaac's name observed: Surely when it is evening it is not morning and when it is morning it is not evening? But the meaning is this: when the morning of the nations of the world turns to evening, and the evening of Israel to morning, at that time, Then shall the sanctuary be declared victorious (ibid.), meaning, I will declare him [Adam] clear of that decree: And the Lord God said to him: Behold, let the man become as one of us.²

This second half of a petichta used Daniel 8:13 to understand Genesis 3:22. The exegetical verse was viewed as God's eventual statement of the return of Adam and his descendants to immortality. In its biblical context, the Daniel verse discussed a vision regarding the continued desecration of the

¹ This literal translation is necessary for the midrashic understanding of the verse.

² GR 21:1. This passage is part of a full petichta. The final translation of Gen.3:22 is according to this midrashic reading. Tan. Bub. 1:23 paralleled this passage.

Temple. This midrash understood the Temple as an image for Adam and his descendants. Would humans always be banished from the Garden of Eden? This same basic question was presented in two different forms. The answer was found in the statement of evening and morning. At the end of days, when other nations face their evening, Israel would see light again. This elevation of Israel would mark the end of the decree of banishment. The reality of death was linked with the decree of banishment. The biblical context presented God's statement of Genesis 3:22 at the time of the banishment. According to this passage, this verse will be stated by God at the return of Israel to Eden and immortality.

The second petichta in this chapter ended with this interpretation:

So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden
(Gen.3:23): having sent him forth He began to bewail him,
saying: **Behold, the man was as one of us.**³

Death was also the focus of this petichta. However, God's statement remained at the time of banishment from Eden. Two changes are made by the midrash. First, this passage placed Genesis 3:23 before verse 22. Second, the midrash read the verb as **was** instead of **is**. God expelled Adam and then mourned the human's loss of immortality. Once, Adam was immortal like God. Now, humans would be mortal.

Genesis Rabbah 21 continued:

Though his stature mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds (Job 20:6), meaning, until he reaches up to the clouds. R. Joshua b. R. Simon in R. Eleazar's name said: He created him extending over the whole world... **Yet he shall perish forever like his own dung [or rolling]** (Job 20:7): because he rolled away from an easy

³ GR 21:2. Again, this is the end of a petichta. The final translation of Gen.3:22 is according to this midrashic reading.

command, he was banished from the Garden of Eden. **They that have seen him shall say: Where is he** (ibid.)? Meaning, where is man [Adam]? Having sent him forth, He began to bewail him, saying: **Where is the man who was as one of us?**⁴

This third petichta utilized Job 20:6 to illustrate the rabbinic image of Adam as world-spanning golem. When Adam failed to follow one commandment, he was shrunk by God. In this passage, the exegetical verse was presented as a question. Adam was reduced to a very small size. God was accustomed to a golem-sized Adam. God mourned Adam's lost stature, saying: **Where is the man who was as one of us?** The man's great size had made him similar to God.

The next section also used a verse from Job:

You make him strong forever (Job 14:20): the strength with which the Holy One, blessed be He, endowed Adam was intended to be **forever**, for all time; **and he passes** (ibid), since he ignored God's wishes and went after the counsel of the serpent, **You change his countenance and send him away** (ibid.). Having sent him away, He began bewailing him, saying: **Behold, the man was as one of us.**⁵

According to this interpretation, God had endowed Adam with amazing strength. God wanted this strength to last forever. When Adam sinned, he lost his strength. Genesis 3:22 was read as God's sadness that Adam no longer possessed Divine strength.

The next section offered two understandings of the verse:

R. Pappas lectured: **"Now, the man has become like one of us [ממנו]** means like one of the ministering angels." R. Akiba said to him: "Is that enough for you? How then do you interpret ממנו? It means that the Holy One, blessed be He, set two paths

⁴ GR 21:3. Num.R.16:24 discussed Adam's death as related to transgressing one commandment.

⁵ GR 21:4.

before him, life and death, and he chose the other path. R. Judah b. R. Simon interpreted: Like the Unique One of the universe, as it is written, **Hear O Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one** (Deut.6:4). . . Resh Lakish said: Like Jonah, **But as one was felling a beam** (2 Kings 6:5): just as the latter fled, so the former fled; just as that one's glory did not stay the night with him, so this one's glory did not stay a night with him. R. Berekiah said in R. Hanan's name: Like Elijah, just as he did not experience the taste of death, so [Adam] was not meant to experience death. . . As long as there was [only] Adam he was one, but when his rib was taken from him, it was **To know good and evil**.⁶

R. Pappas taught that Genesis 3:22 referred to the angels. He focused on the plural **one of us** [ממנו]. After his sin, Adam was no longer like the angels. R. Akiba disagreed. He read ממנו as referring to Adam's new-found ability to discern good from evil. R. Judah b. R. Simon focused upon the word **one** which was used in both the Shema and Genesis 3:22. Next, the discussion switched direction. Adam's transgression was linked to Jonah's flight from God. Adam was then compared to Elijah. Neither one was intended to die. However, Adam transgressed and was punished with death. The passage ended with one more interpretation. R. Berekiah taught that Adam was initially one. When Eve was created from his rib, he was no longer one. At that point the potential for sin entered the world. This teaching placed the burden of the transgression upon Eve. Eve's creation made the sin possible. The Jerusalem Talmud directly blamed Eve for bringing death into the world. In a discussion of funeral practices, it said: "women go first [in a mourning procession] . . . invoking the reason that they caused death to come into the world."⁷ This statement inferred that women

⁶ GR 21:5. GR 16:1, Lev.R.27:4 and PRK 9:4 were parallel passages. PR 48:2 mentioned a similar idea, but compared Adam to the angels who do not die. Death as a punishment for Adam's transgression was mentioned in Sifre on Deut. Piska 323.

⁷ Y.San.Chap.2, Hal.4 (20b).

should lead the way at a funeral, because Eve's actions led to human mortality.

Genesis Rabbah 21:6 focused on another part of Genesis 3:22.

What if [פ] he should stretch out his hand. R. Abba b. Kahana said: This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, provided him with an opportunity of repentance. . . פ can only mean "not." Then the Holy One, blessed be He, said: **What if he should stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat?** If he does eat, he will live forever. Therefore, **the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden.** Having sent him forth, He began lamenting him: **"Now, the man** (Gen.3:22).⁸

R. Abba b. Kahana proposed that Genesis 3:22 was intended as God's understanding of Adam's additional potential. The first man had already attained the Divine ability to discern good and evil. God was fearful that Adam would eat of the tree of life. R. Abba read פ as "not", rather than "if." God's statement was one of concern that Adam shouldn't gain Divine immortality.

The midrashic discussion changed course again, focusing on the quality of God's decree.

R. Judah and R. Nehemiah disagreed. R. Judah said: He was sent forth from the garden of Eden in this world and in the next. R. Nehemiah maintained: He was sent forth from the garden of Eden in this world, but not in the next. In R. Judah's view, He laid a severe punishment upon him, while in that of R. Nehemiah He was lenient toward Him.⁹

This passage presented two opinions regarding the degree of lenience in God's judgment. R. Judah viewed God's decree as very harsh. Adam was banished forever from Eden. R. Nehemiah presented God's decree as more

⁸ GR 21:6.

⁹ GR 21:7. This passage continued with a further discussion of R. Nehemiah's opinion.

lenient. Adam would be allowed to return to the garden of Eden in the world to come. This debate continued with a third view.

R. Joshua b. Levi said: When He created him, He created him by His attributes of justice and mercy, and when He banished him, He likewise banished him in accordance with His attributes of justice and mercy.¹⁰

Earlier, the rabbinic view that God created Adam with justice and mercy was discussed.¹¹ R. Joshua b. Levi applied this idea to Adam's punishment. God considered both justice and mercy when Adam was judged.

Pesikta de Rab Kahana discussed the nature of God's judgment of Adam.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: . . . Adam found no iniquity in Me, but you found iniquity in Me. With whom may Adam be compared? With a sick man whom a physician was attending. The physician said: "You may eat this thing and may not eat that thing." But the sick man disregarded the physician's instructions and so found himself on his deathbed. When his relatives came in to him and asked him: "Would you say that the physician used bad judgment in his treatment of you?" He replied: "Certainly not. I am the one who brought death upon myself. The physician gave me specific instructions, saying 'You may eat this thing and may not eat that thing.' But when I disregarded his instructions, I brought death upon myself." Likewise all the generations came to Adam and asked him: "Would you say that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed lack of consideration in his treatment of you?" Adam replied: "Certainly not. I am the one who brought death upon myself. He had given me specific instructions, saying: **'Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat, but as for the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you must not eat of it (Gen.2:17).'** But when I disregarded his instructions,

¹⁰ GR 21:7. This passage continued with another illustration of the same idea. PR 40:2 also discussed the idea of God punishing Adam with both justice and mercy.

¹¹ See pp. 35-6.

I brought death upon myself, for He said: **'for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die (ibid.).'**¹²

In this midrash, Adam, himself, affirmed the justice of God's judgment. The parable presented Adam as a sick man and God as a physician. God's advice to Adam was sound. Adam chose to disregard the Divine instruction. Adam suffered the consequences of his own action. The midrash applied this lesson to the need for Israel to follow God's commandments. If Adam found no fault in God, certainly Israel has no grounds for finding fault with God. Israel should therefore respect the Torah and follow its rules.

Adam's transgression had a massive impact on all humanity, according to the rabbis. All humans were mortal because Adam had lost his immortality. Deuteronomy Rabbah applied this principle to Moses.

R. Levi said: It is like the case of a pregnant woman who was thrown into prison and gave birth to her son there. When the child grew up, the king once passed by the prison, whereupon the boy began to cry out: "My lord king, why am I kept in prison?" The king replied: "You are kept here for the sin of your mother." So Moses pleaded: "Master of the Universe, there are thirty-six transgressions punishable by extinction enumerated in the Torah, for the commission of any of which a man is liable to be put to death.¹³ Have I then transgressed any one of them? Why do You decreed death upon me?" God replied: "You are to die because of the sin of the first man who brought death into the world."¹⁴

This passage taught that mortality was part of humanity. It was not implying that the sins of the parents would be visited upon their children. The opening parable was intended to illustrate the implications of Adam's

¹² PRK 14:5.

¹³ This thirty-six transgressions were enumerated in the first chapter of the talmudic tractate Keritot.

¹⁴ Deut.R.9:8. Shab.55a-b applied the same principle to Aaron, in addition to Moses. Num.R.19:18 did not discuss Moses or Aaron, but presented the idea that all humans would die. In that passage, Adam stated that other humans were guilty for transgressions of far more than his one commandment.

sin in human terms. The mother broke the law. The child was forced to live with the consequences of that action. Even Moses, the most perfect man, was liable to the death that followed Adam's sin. Adam's transgression removed the possibility of immortality from all his descendants.

God's judgment of death upon Adam was the source of many rabbinic interpretations. Most of Genesis Rabbah 21 dealt with this issue. Genesis 3:22 was the exegetical verse utilized for these discussions. This verse was read from many different angles. Some of these views contradicted one another. The basic rabbinic view of this verse was that Adam and his descendants were liable to die, because he transgressed God's command. Adam ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God wanted to avoid Adam's eating of the tree of life.

Gen.3:24- **He drove the man out, and stationed east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life.**

Genesis Rabbah included a few brief interpretations of this verse's first phrase.

He drove [ויגרש] the man out. ויגרש, which intimates that He showed him the destruction of the Temple, **He has also broken [ויגרם] my teeth with gravel stones** (Lam.3:16). R. Lulianus b. Tibri said in R. Isaac's name: He banished him to the open outskirts [למגרש] of the Garden of Eden, and appointed watchmen to watch over it, as it is written: **I will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it** (Is.5:6).¹

Both of these interpretations were based upon midrashic readings of ויגרש. This word was not needed in Genesis, because the previous verse had stated that Adam was banished. The first reading used a ג instead of the ש. ויגרם, a rare word², appeared in a verse mourning the destruction of the Temple. The midrash explained that God showed Adam the future destruction of the Temple. This foreknowledge was conveyed at the same time that Adam was banished from the Garden. R. Lulianus b. Tibri said in R. Isaac's name that it should be understood as למגרש [open outskirts]. The root letters were the same for this word as for ויגרש. This second approach interpreted the word as showing Adam's location following his expulsion. Adam moved to the open ground outside the garden. The midrash utilized Isaiah 5:6 to connect the clouds with the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword. In the biblical context, the former are appointed over the Land of Israel. The latter guard the tree of life.

¹ GR 21:8.

² BDB, p.176.

Gen.4:1- Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gained a male child with the help of the Lord."

The reality of death and the banishment from Eden meant that Adam's descendants faced a possible fate of Gehenna [hell]. In Genesis Rabbah 21, Adam responded to that possibility.

When Adam saw that his descendants were fated to be consigned to Gehenna, he engaged less in procreation. But when he saw that after twenty-six generations Israel would accept the Torah, he applied himself to producing descendants; hence,
Now the man knew his wife.¹

This passage assumed that God provided Adam with foreknowledge of his descendants. Adam had resisted engaging in sexual intercourse. He feared that some of his offspring would experience Gehenna. Then, Adam realized that his descendants would receive the Torah in twenty-six generations. The passage explained that only after that realization did Adam engage in sexual relations with Eve.

This midrash explained the necessary precondition for Adam and Eve to have offspring.

Remember, O Lord, Your compassions and Your mercies for they have been from old (Ps.25:6). R. Joshua b. Nehemiah interpreted it: Thus, you treated Adam, for You said to him: **for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die** (Gen.2:17). If you had not given him one of Your days, which is a thousand years, how could he have applied himself to begetting descendants.²

Adam was able to have children, only because God did not kill him immediately following his transgression. Genesis 2:17 implied that Adam

¹ GR 21:9. The connection between 26 generations and creation was mentioned in GR 1:10.

² GR 22:1. The idea of God's day of a thousand years was discussed on p.89. Mid.Ps.25:8 was a parallel passage.

would die on the very day he ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The midrash explained that God meant a Divine day of one thousand human years. Granted that much time to live, Adam and Eve were able to produce offspring.

Genesis Rabbah viewed their very act of producing offspring as unusual.³

R. Huna and R. Jacob in R. Abba's name said: No creature ever copulated before Adam. It is not written, man [אדם] knew, but **Now the man [האדם] knew**, which intimates that he made known sexual functions to everyone. [Another interpretation:] He knew how he had been robbed of his tranquillity; he knew what his serpent had done to him.³

R. Huna and R. Jacob in R. Abba's name explained that Genesis 4:1 described the first occurrence of sexual relations among any species. None of the animals engaged in sex before that moment. The midrash focused on the use of the definite article, ה, in the exegetical verse. Following his sexual relations with Eve, Adam explained sex to the rest of the animals.

The passage continued discussing the miracle of sexual relations.

And she conceived and bore Cain. R. Eleazar b. Azariah said: Three wonders were performed on that day: on that very day they were created, on that very day they had sexual relations, and on that very day they produced offspring.⁴

R. Eleazar b. Azariah implied a certain chronology of events during these first chapters of Genesis. In his view, Adam and Eve's creation and Cain's conception and birth occurred on the same day. He understood all three of these events to be miraculous.

³ GR 22:2. The passage continued with an analogy of Eve as a serpent. See p.113.

⁴ GR 22:2. The passage continued with a discussion of Eve's offspring.

Genesis Rabbah 22:2 concluded with one more interpretation of Genesis 4:1.

With the help of [אֵל] the Lord... [R. Akiba said:]... In the past, Adam was created from the ground, and Eve from Adam; but henceforth it shall be, **in our image, after our likeness** (Gen. 1:26): neither man without woman nor woman without man, not both of them without Shechinah.⁵

This passage explained that Adam and Eve were both created in unusual manners. All other humans would be created through normal sexual relations. R. Akiba based this view on the word **אֵל** which he viewed as a **רַבּוּי**, a word which implied missing information. The missing information was that all future human conception would involve a man and woman. A Divine role remained in human conception. The Shechinah, God's Divine presence, was part of the beginning of any human life.

⁵ GR 22:2. This idea was also included in GR 8:9.

Some Other Events Following the Expulsion from Eden:

One rabbinic image of Genesis was that Adam was created on Shabbat. According to this view, Adam was expelled from the garden at the end of Shabbat, Saturday evening. Adam experienced the fear of darkness for the first time. These ideas were discussed earlier.¹ The following rabbinic passages dealt with the period of time following Adam's expulsion. While not yet penitent, Adam turned to God and considered the natural order. There were multiple rabbinic references to Adam's offering of a sacrifice following his expulsion.

As [his first] evening set in and Adam saw the world darkening in the west, he exclaimed: "Woe is me. Because I have sinned, the Holy One, blessed be He, is darkening the world upon me." He was unaware that such was the course of nature; but in the morning when he saw the world become light in the east he was exceedingly happy. He arose and built an altar, he took a bullock whose horns came into being before its hoofs and offered it as a burnt-offering, as it is stated, **And it shall please the Lord better than bullock that has horns and hoofs** (Ps.69:32).²

According to the rabbis, Adam was struck with fear the first time he witnessed a sunset. The next morning, Adam praised God as the sun rose again. Adam discovered that the daily cycle was part of nature, not a punishment for his sin. After this realization, Adam sacrificed an animal. The rabbis identified this bullock as an unusual one. An animal's hoofs usually develop before that same animal's horns develop. This first sacrifice was a special event with a unique offering. The Talmud observed that Adam's offering had another interesting characteristic.

¹ See p.30.

² ARN 1:8. The same proof-text was used in reference to Adam's sacrifice in Num R.4:8 and in this section's next few passages. Parallel passages included Hul.60a and A.Z.8a.

R. Judah further said: The bullock which Adam sacrificed had but one horn in its forehead, as it is said: **And it shall please the Lord better than bullock that has horns [מקרן] and hoofs** (Ps.69:32). But does not מקרן imply two horns? R. Nahman said: מקרן is written.³

This talmudic reading interpreted מקרן as one horn, instead of horned. The regular form would have read מקרין, as in מפרים [hoofed]. The single horned bullock, whose horn developed before its hoofs, was a unique type of sacrifice.

This first offering to God occurred in a very important location.

And he offered burnt-offerings on the altar (Gen.8:20). R. Eliezer b. Jacob said: That means on the great altar in Jerusalem, where Adam sacrificed, as it is written, **And it shall please the Lord better than a bullock that has horns and hooves** (Ps.69:32).⁴

Jerusalem was the only fitting site for sacrifices, according to the rabbis. Genesis 8:20 discussed Noah's sacrifice after his ark landed in the mountains of Ararat (Gen.8:4). The rabbis attempted to locate any biblical sacrifice at the proper site for such offerings. Therefore, both Adam's and Noah's altars were identified with Jerusalem. Another source stated that Adam's sacrifice occurred on Yom Kippur.⁵ He praised God on the correct day in the right place.

The rabbis placed Adam's sacrifice at the ideal site for offerings. They also presented his act as a paradigm for future sacrifices.

R. Berekiah said: **Man** (Lev.1:2) alludes to Adam. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: Let your offering be like the offering of Adam, who, since all things were in his ownership, offered not anything acquired by robbery or violence, so you,

³ Hul.60a. A.Z.8a and Shab.28b included parallel passages.

⁴ GR 34:9. PR 43:2 also referred to Adam sacrificing at the future site of the Temple.

⁵ Mid.Ps.39:3. The first part of this passage also used Ps.69:32.

too, offer not anything acquired by robbery or violence; and if you act accordingly, **it shall please the Lord better than a bullock** (Ps.69:2)⁶

R. Berekiah claimed that Adam owned everything on earth, because he was the only man on earth. This interpretation assumed that women could not own property. R. Berekiah, then, presented Adam's offering as a pure offering. His sacrifice was his own. It was not attained through robbery or violence. This Leviticus Rabbah passage stated that all sacrifices were to be free of the taint of crime. Israelite sacrifices would be even better than Adam's offering. Adam owned everything. He could not steal. The Israelites had to resist temptation and provide fitting offerings.

Another rabbinic approach to Adam's actions following expulsion explained the following:

Our rabbis taught: When Adam saw the days getting gradually shorter, he said: "Woe is me, perhaps because I have sinned, the world around me is being darkened and returning to its state of chaos and confusion; thus then is the kind of death to which I have been sentenced from heaven." So he began keeping a fast of eight days. But as he observed the winter equinox and noted the day getting increasingly longer, he said, "This is the world's course," and he set forth to keep an eight days' festivity. In the following year, he appointed both as festivals. Now, he fixed them for the sake of Heaven, but the [gentiles] appointed them for the sake of idolatry. This is quite right according to the one who holds that the world was created in Tishri [the fall], so that he saw the short days before seeing the longer days; but according to the one holding that the world was created in Nisan [the spring], Adam must have seen the long days as well as the short ones. Still, he had not yet seen the very short days.⁷

⁶ Lev.R.2:7.

⁷ A.Z.8a. The passage continued with a discussion of Adam's response to darkness and comments regarding his sacrifices. Y.A.Z.Chap.1, Hal.2 (39c) included an incomplete parallel passage. PRE 8 also discussed Adam's setting of the calendar.

This passage from the Babylonian Talmud explained an older rabbinic image. This image was more complex than the rabbinic image of Adam's response following the first night. According to this idea, Adam observed the length of nights and days throughout an entire year. In response to the differing lengths, he instituted a fast and a festival. Adam became aware of the annual cycle of the sun. This image was compared to the rabbinic debate regarding the dating of creation. This passage seemed to fit with Tishri as the time of creation. However, the Talmud did mention Nisan as the alternative for the beginning of the world.

Adam's sacrifice and fixing of holidays were not linked to any specific exegetical verse. These rabbinic narratives occurred following Adam's expulsion from the garden. The rabbis used these images to make observations regarding the proper religious offerings and the significance of the annual calendar.

Gen.4:8- Cain said to his brother Abel and when they were in the field, Cain set upon his brother Abel and killed him.

Adam and Eve did not play an active role in the biblical story of Cain and Abel. The rabbis included the first human pair in their interpretations of the first pair of brothers.

Judah b. Rabbi said: Their quarrel was about the first Eve. Said R. Aibu: The first Eve had returned to dust. Then about what was their quarrel? Said R. Huna: An additional twin was born with Abel, and each claimed her.¹

This passage represented only one of many rabbinic suggestions regarding the quarrel of Cain and Abel. R. Judah b. Rabbi suggested that the brothers fought over the first Eve, the woman in Genesis 1. According to this view, their mother was the second Eve, the woman in the second creation narrative. R. Aibu presented the mainstream view that the first Eve no longer existed. This passage suggested that the brothers argued over Abel's second twin sister. There was a rabbinic idea that Adam and Eve produced a twin girl with Cain and an additional twin girl with Abel. Genesis Rabbah explained:

R. Joshua b. Karhah said: Only two [Adam and Eve] entered the bed, and seven left it: Cain and his twin sister, Abel and his twin sisters.²

The rabbis clearly struggled to explain the genealogy presented in the Bible. The Bible only mentioned the birth of sons, yet there were women around for those sons to marry. The Jerusalem Talmud included multiple references to these twin sisters.³ Those passages debated the legality of Cain and Abel

¹ GR 22:7. The passage continued with the brothers' argument.

² GR 22:2. The first part of this passage was discussed on p.127.

³ Y.San.Chap.5,Hal.1 (22c), Y.San.Chap.9,Hal.1 (11d), and Y.Yeb.Chap.11,Hal.1 (26d).

marrying their sisters. Cain and Abel were deemed to have done nothing wrong, but future generations were not to copy their actions.

Other rabbinic sources discussed Adam's mourning following Abel's murder.

R. Simon said: Adam separated himself from his wife Eve for one hundred and thirty years after Abel was killed. Adam said: "How am I to beget children when they go to destruction?"⁴

According to R. Simon, Adam was distraught to the point of abstaining from sexual relations. This passage implied that one hundred and thirty years passed between Abel's death and Seth's birth. This view was based on Genesis 5:3, which stated: **When Adam had lived 130 years, he begot a son in his likeness after his image, and he named him Seth.**

Avot de Rabbi Nathan also described Adam's mourning and eventual consolation.

When the son of Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai died, his disciples came in to console him. R. Eliezer came and sat before him and said: ... Adam, the first man, had a son who died, and he allowed himself to be comforted in his loss. And whence do we know that he accepted condolence: For it is stated: **Adam knew his wife again** (Gen.4:25). Therefore do you accept condolence?" He retorted: "Is it not sufficient for me to bear my own grief that you have to mention Adam's grief?"⁵

Adam's mourning process was presented as potential consolation to R. Johanan b. Zakkai. This passage interpreted Genesis 4:25 as describing the end of Adam's mourning. **Adam knew his wife again** meant that he accepted Eve's consolation.

Another explanation of Genesis 4:25 was presented in Genesis Rabbah.

⁴ Tan. Bub. 1:26. The passage also included Adam's intimate encounters with demons, as discussed on pp.113-114.

⁵ ARN 8:6. The passage continued with other biblical examples of mourning and condolence.

Adam knew his wife again (Gen.4:25). Desire was added to his desire. Formerly he had experienced no desire when he did not see her, but now he desired her whether he saw her or not. R. Abba b. Judan said in R. Aha's name: This is a hint to seafarers to remember their homes and return there immediately.⁶

This passage explained that the word "again" implied that Adam possessed extra desire for his wife. He grew to desire her at all times. This idea was applied to the contemporary issue of sailors. They were encouraged to return to their wives the moment they returned to port.

Adam's eventual intercourse with Eve led to the birth of Seth. Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar mentioned the birth of Seth.⁷ His birth indicated that future righteous ones would descend from Adam and Eve through their third son, Seth. The rabbis used Cain and Abel as a means of presenting a few images regarding Adam and Eve.

⁶ GR 23:5.

⁷ PRE 22:1.

Gen.4:16- **Cain left the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.**

Following his murder of Abel, Cain moved away from Adam and Eve. The Bible included no other interaction between the son and his parents. The rabbis used Cain as a foil for his father's eventual repentance.

R. Hama said in the name of R. Hanina b. Isaac: He [Adam] went forth rejoicing, as you read: **He goes forth to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart** (Ex.4:14). Adam met him [Cain] and asked him: "How did your case go?" He replied: "I repented and am reconciled." Thereupon, Adam began beating his face, crying: "So great is the power of repentance, and I did not know." Immediately, he arose and exclaimed: **"A Psalm, a song for Shabbat, it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord (Ps.92:1-2)."**¹

This passage presented a recurring image of Cain and Adam reuniting. Cain's description of his repentance led Adam to repent. Adam realized that if a murderer can repent, than certainly he was capable of moving past his own transgression. Psalm 92:1 was used as a statement of penance. **להודות** [give thanks] was read as "make confession." Adam confessed his sin to God and asked for forgiveness.

This repentance marked the first time Adam had admitted his transgression. When first confronted by God, Adam responded as follows:

A man's pride shall bring him low (Prov.29:23) applies to Adam. How? When Adam transgressed the commandment of the Holy One, blessed be He, and ate of the tree, the Holy One, blessed be He, desired that he should repent, and He gave him an opening, but Adam did not do so. Hence it is written: **And the Lord God said: Now that the man has become like one of us. . . what if [פך ועצה].** . . (Gen.3:22). R. Abba b. Kahana asked: What is the import of **ועצה**? Simply this: that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: **"ועצה"**, while Adam said: **"פך"**, meaning

¹ GR 22:13. Parallel passages included Lev.R.10:5, PRK 24:11, PR 50:5, and Tan.Bub. 1:25. Mid.Ps.39:3 also used Ps.92:2 in reference to Adam's praise of God.

"I will not." R. Simeon b. Lakish said: As soon as Adam came away from the judgment he began to revile and blaspheme. . . This explains **A man's pride shall bring him low**, because since he was too proud in the face of the Holy One, blessed be He, to repent, He made him low and drove him from the garden of Eden.²

This passage suggested that God wanted Adam to repent from the moment of judgment. God's use of the word **ענה** presented Adam with the opportunity. Adam answered **כי**, rejecting the Divine offer. Adam not only refused to repent, he reviled God while he was being judged. In response, God banished him from the garden of Eden.

Despite the rabbinic images of Adam's sacrifice, other rabbinic passages depict Adam as refusing to praise God. Exodus Rabbah stated that God "created Adam, yet he did not utter song."³ In that passage, Moses and the Israelites were the first to ever praise God with song.

The rabbis also discussed Eve's role when it came to human repentance. Eve was blamed for heeding the serpent and tricking Adam into disobeying God. Again, it was only Moses and the Israelites who were cleansed of Eve's actions.

R. Johanan said: When the serpent came unto Eve he infused filthy lust into her. If that be so, also to Israel. When Israel stood at Sinai that lust was eliminated, but the lust of idolaters, who did not stand at Sinai, did not cease.⁴

R. Johanan's interpretation should not be seen as implying a Christian view of Original Sin. The rabbinic view was that Adam's sin brought death, but not sin for each human. R. Johanan observed that Eve's lust was passed down to each generation. The receipt of the Torah removed that lust from the

² Num.R.13:3. The passage included additional prooftexts to support the assertion of Adam's blasphemy. Mid.Ps.100:2, PR 7:1, and Tan.Bub. 1:25 included parallel passages.

³ Ex.R.23:4.

⁴ A.Z.22b. Shab.146a was an exactly parallel passage.

Israelites. This idea was far more limited than Original Sin. It certainly was not relevant for the Israelites after Sinai.

Many rabbinic passages condemned Eve. Adam's repentance was described in many passages. Midrash on Proverbs was the only rabbinic source to describe a sense of repentance in Eve.

She sits in the doorway of her house, or on a chair at the heights of the town, calling to all wayfarers who go about their own affairs (Prov.9:14-15). This shows that she [Eve] offered repentance to the generations, saying: "Whoever's ways are right will not sin as I have sinned. Woe unto anyone whose ways are not right, for he will become as culpable as I," as it is said: **Let the thoughtless enter here; And to the devoid of sense, she speaks to him** (Prov.9:16). Let anyone lacking in knowledge learn from me, for I stealthily deluded God and I stealthily deluded Adam, and found this sweet for a while, but afterwards it was bitter.⁵

Eve, as described here, experienced more than repentance. This passage's Eve desired to caution others away from sin. She admitted her sin and her trickery. Proverbs 9 was utilized to present an Eve who admitted past failure and was attempting to set things right.

⁵ Mid.Prov.9:14. The passage cited two more prooftexts to support Eve's last statement.

Gen.5:1- This is the book of the generations of Adam.¹

Several rabbinic ideas were connected with Genesis 5:1. This verse introduced a short synopsis of Adam's life, which was followed by the Bible's first genealogy. The rabbis suggested that God showed Adam this mysterious book of the generations of Adam. Genesis Rabbah suggested that this interaction occurred while Adam was a world-spanning golem.

R. Judah b. R. Simon said: While Adam lay as a golem before Him at whose decree the world came into existence, He showed him every generation and its sages, every generation and its judges, scribes, interpreters, and leaders. He said to him:

Your eyes did see unformed substance [גלמים] (Ps.139:16): the unformed substance which your eyes did see have already been written in the book of Adam: **This is the book of the generations of Adam.²**

R. Judah b. Simon stated that God previewed all of history for Adam. God displayed for Adam each generation and its greatest figures. Psalm 139:16, a central verse in the rabbinic golem image, was interpreted here to mean that Adam saw unformed substances. The generations of humanity were the unformed substances which Adam saw. A talmudic passage described Adam's reaction to the foreknowledge of one particular man's life.

When he came to the generation of R. Akiba, he [Adam] rejoiced at his learning but was grieved at his death and said: **How weighty are Your friends [רעים] to me, O God** (Ps.139:17).³

¹ This sentence is translated according to JPS. New JPS translated this sentence: **This is the record of Adam's line.**

² GR 24:2. Parallel passages included Lev.R.26:7, ARN 31:3, Ex.R.15:2-3, Tan.Bub. 1:32, PR 23:1, and San.38b. Some of these passages included God showing Adam the generations, but omitted the image of the golem.

³ San.38b. JPS translated רעים as "thoughts", not "friends." A 25a included a parallel interpretation.

The rabbis held R. Akiba to be one of the greatest people ever to live. Adam rejoiced and grieved at the high and low points of Akiba's life. Psalm 139:17 was read by the midrash as indicating Adam's appreciation of Akiba's life. The midrash viewed Akiba as one of "God's friends."

Adam was not the only person to view the book of the generations of Adam. Exodus Rabbah described Moses' encounter with the book.

God did not... tell Moses whom he should appoint [for each task], hence Moses inquired: "To whom shall I speak?" God replied: "I will show you." So what did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He brought him the book of Adam and showed him all the generations that would arise from creation to resurrection, each generation and its kings, its leaders, and its prophets, saying unto him: "I have appointed all these from that time [creation], and Bezalel, too, I have appointed from that time. This is why it says, **See, I have called by name Bezalel** (Ex.31:2).⁴

This passage suggested that God displayed the book of the generations of Adam before Moses, just as God had shown the book to Adam. Moses learned of each generation and its leaders. Bezalel, the artisan who built the tabernacle, was identified during Moses' reading of Adam's book. The midrash played upon the use of "see" in Exodus 31:2. According to this passage, when God said "see", God meant "see Bezalel's name in the book."

The Talmud mentioned another individual who had read from the book.

Samuel Yarchina'ah was Rabbi's physician. Now, Rabbi having contracted an eye disease, Samuel offered to bathe it with a lotion, but he said: "I can not bear it." He said: "Then I will apply an ointment to it." He objected: "This too I can not bear." So he placed a vial of chemicals under his pillow and he was healed. Rabbi was most anxious to ordain him, but the opportunity was lacking. Let it not grieve you, he said; I have seen the Book of Adam, in which is written: "Samuel Yarchina'ah

⁴ Ex.R.40:2

shall be called sage, but not rabbi, and Rabbi's healing shall come through him.⁵

Samuel Yarhina'ah, according to this passage, had seen the book of the generations of Adam. This section described his successful treatment of Rabbi's illness. Following his recovery, Rabbi desired to ordain Samuel Yarhina'ah. Samuel confessed that he had prior knowledge that he was not to be ordained. This information came from the book of the generations of Adam.

Genesis Rabbah utilized Genesis 5:1 to teach that God intended to give Adam the Torah.⁶ However, following his sin, God waited to give the Torah to Moses. That midrash was discussed earlier. Similarly, Genesis Rabbah included this midrash:

R. Jacob of Kefar Hanan said: It was fitting that the twelve tribes should have sprung from Adam. What is the proof? **This [יה] is the book of the generations of Adam**, implying the numerical value of יה [twelve]. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "He is the creation of My hands, and am I not to give them to him?" Subsequently He said: "I gave him two sons, and one arose and slew the other; how then am I to give him twelve?" Hence, **To Adam [לְאָדָם] He said (Gen.2:17), לֹא אָדָם [not Adam]: I will not give [them to him]. But to whom will I give them? To his sons: This [יה] is the book of the generations of Adam.**⁷

R. Jacob contended that God planned for the twelve tribes of Israel to come from Adam's sons. His scriptural proof was the word יה in Genesis 5:1. This word has the numerical value of twelve, equal to the number of tribes. However, when Cain killed Abel, God doubted that Adam would be able to peacefully produce the required number of sons. The passage understood God

⁵ B.M.85b-86a.

⁶ GR 24:5.

⁷ GR 24:5.

to state his change of plans in Genesis 2:17, God's judgment of Adam. The word לְאָדָם [to Adam] was read by the midrash as לֹא אָדָם [not Adam]. Adam would produce only one more son, Seth.

Another section of Genesis Rabbah suggested that Genesis 5:1 told of Adam's teaching his descendants.

R. Tanhuma in R. Eleazar's name and R. Menahamah in Rab's name said: Adam taught them all forms of craftsmanship. What is the proof? **And the craftsmen from Adam** [אָדָם] (Is.44:11)⁸, that is from the first Adam. Rab said: Adam even taught the way of ruling parchment for the scroll. **This is the book** and its ruling.⁹

This passage stated that Adam taught many different skills to his offspring. Isaiah 44:11 was read in a midrashic sense supporting this view. Genesis 5:1 was interpreted as referring to Adam's instructing scribes on the proper ruling, a type of preparation, of Torah pages.

Lastly, Leviticus Rabbah spoke of a limit to the generations listed in Adam's book.

R. Tanhum said, and some say it in the name of the rabbis: The King-Messiah will not come until all the souls which it was originally the Divine intention to create shall have come to an end, namely, those spoken of in the book of Adam, the first man, of which it is said: **This is the book of the generations of Adam.**¹⁰

According to this passage, the book of the generations of Adam listed only those people who would live between creation and redemption. The messianic redemption would occur when the hidden list in Adam's book was exhausted.

⁸ This is a midrashic reading of Is.44:11. JPS translated this verse as: **And the craftsmen skilled above men.**

⁹ GR 24:7.

¹⁰ Lev.R.15:1.

Gen.5:5- **All the days that Adam lived came to 930 years, then he died.**

The rabbinic fascination with numbers led to several comments based on the length of Adam's life. Numbers Rabbah linked Adam's years to the offerings in the desert.

R. Phinehas b. Yair said that the princes presented their offerings in allusion to the generations who flourished from the time of Adam until the Tabernacle, and in allusion to the commandments which they were given. **One silver dish** [קערה] (Num.7:13) Do not read קערה, rather עקרה, which alludes to Adam who was the root [עיקר] of humanity. R. Shemaiah said: How can you infer that the expression **silver dish** [קערה כסף] was said in allusion to Adam? From the fact that the total number of Adam's years was nine hundred and thirty. And how do we know that Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years? Because it says: **All the days that Adam lived came to 930 years, then he died.** Why was the dish made of silver? Because he was given six commandments¹. . . , and the Torah is called silver, as it says: **The words of the Lord are. . . as silver tried in a crucible on the earth** (Ps.12:7). Why is **one** mentioned in connection with it? In allusion to Eve who was created out of him, and in reference to whom it says: **He took one of his ribs** (Gen.2:21).²

Following the construction of the Tabernacle, Moses accepted offerings from each of the tribes. Numbers 7 described the offering made by the head of each tribe. The offerings included the silver dish mentioned in this midrash. Adam was associated with the silver dish through two devices. Two letters in the word קערה were reversed to read עקרה. This new word possessed the root letters of the word root [עיקר]. This new reading related to Adam's role as the genealogical root of all humanity. Clearly, the root of all humanity would be connected with offerings for the newly built

¹ According to GR 16:6, Adam was given 6 commandments by God. See p.51.

² Num.R.14:12.

tabernacle. The second association was built upon the rabbinic idea that Adam had been given multiple commandments by God. God's commandments could be associated with Torah. Psalm 12:7 identified the Torah with silver. The midrash associated this Psalm with the silver dish in Numbers 7. Finally, the passage included Eve in the connection between the first man and the desert offerings.

Genesis Rabbah included several references to Adam's age upon death.³ God had declared: **for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die** (Gen.2:17). However, God was lenient with Adam after he ate of the forbidden fruit. God granted Adam the length of one Divine day, a thousand years, before he would die. Seventy years of Adam's life were removed for the lives of Adam's descendants.

Rabbinic references to the length of Adam's life can be linked with passages discussing Adam's grave.

R. Yannai said: **[And whosoever in the open field touches one that is slain with a sword, or one that dies of himself, or a bone of a man,] or a grave, [shall be unclean seven days]** (Num.19:16). Even if that one touched the grave of the first man, he is made unclean.⁴

R. Yannai taught that the rules regarding the uncleanness of a corpse applied even to Adam's body. This Jerusalem Talmud passage implied that these rules referred to the bodies of all people, Jewish or gentile.

Another rabbinic image suggested that Adam and Eve were buried along with the Israelite patriarchs and matriarchs in the Cave of Machpelah.

Adam said: "While I am yet alive I will build for myself a mausoleum in which to rest." He planned and built for himself a

³ GR 19:8, see p.87. Also, Adam's age was discussed in Num.R.23:13.

⁴ Y.Naz.Chap.7,Hal.2 (56b).

mausoleum in which to rest beyond Mount Moriah. . . "After my death they will come and take my bones, and they will make them into an image for idolatry, but I will put my coffin deep [in] . . . the Cave of Machpelah. . . There Adam was put and his partner, Abraham and his partner, Isaac and his partner, Jacob and his partner.⁵

Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar described Adam's burial plans in this passage.

According to the rabbis, the fitting place for Adam's and Eve's graves would be along with the families of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Even with his death, the rabbis sought to connect the first man with the Israelites.

⁵ PRE 20. B.B. 58a also mentioned Adam's burial in the Cave of Machpelah.

Adam and the Psalms:

Many rabbinic passages used Psalms as prooftexts for statements about Adam and Eve. A few interpretations drew even closer connections between the first man and the Psalms. Pesikta de Rab Kahana suggested:

According to R. Levi, the first verse of [Psalm 92], a verse usually read: **A Psalm, a song for Shabbat [שבת]** (Ps 92:1), is to be read: "A Psalm, a song for the day of repentance [שוב]." The entire Psalm is to be taken as having been composed by Adam.¹

R. Levi taught that Adam had composed Psalm 92:1. This assertion was made following a description of Adam's discussion with Cain regarding repentance. Adam exclaimed this verse in recognition that his time to repent had arrived. R. Levi constructed his interpretation by switching שוב for שבת. The two roots were very similar. R. Levi's choice meant repentance, instead of Shabbat.

Midrash on Psalms observed that readers might mistakenly assume that Adam had written four Psalms.

R. Samuel taught: There are four Psalms which one would have expected Adam to compose, but which David composed. They are these: **The earth is the Lord's and the fullness therein** (Ps.24). And why would one have expected Adam to compose this? Because the earth and the fullness thereof were created for him. **The heavens declare the glory of God** (Ps.19). And why would one have expected Adam to compose this? Because he was the first to behold the heavens. **A Psalm, a song for Shabbat** (Ps.92). And why would one have expect Adam to compose this? Because the Sabbath saved him from immediate destruction. **For the leader; upon the Nehilot [inheritances]** (Ps.5). And why would one have

¹ PRK 24:11.

expected Adam to compose this? Because he was the first inheritor of the world.²

R. Samuel warned that readers might assume Psalms 24, 19, 92 and 5 were written by Adam. The rabbi restated the traditional assumption that the Psalms were written by David. However, those four selections stated praises that Adam might have exclaimed. When Adam was the sole human possessor of the world; he might have agreed with the sentiment of Psalm 24. He was the first to see the heavens, so a reader might assume that he wrote the heavenly praise found in Ps.19. Adam's connection with Shabbat has been discussed in earlier passages.³ Due to this important link, one could assume the first man sang praises for the seventh day. Similar to Psalm 24, Adam's initial sole human possession of the earth might lead one to think that he composed Psalm 5. R. Samuel cautioned against holding such thoughts.

Finally, this next passage did not claim Adam wrote a Psalm. It did assert that Psalm 1 was about the first man.

Another interpretation: The entire first Psalm speaks of Adam. **Happy is the man that walks not in the counsel of the wicked** (Ps.1:1). Adam said: "If I had not walked in the counsel of the serpent, how happy I would have been." **Nor stood in the way of sinners** (ibid.). Adam said: "If I had not stood in the way of the serpent, how happy I would have been." **Nor sat in the seat of the scornful** (ibid.). Adam said: "If I had not sat in the seat of the serpent, how happy I would have been."⁴

This passage connected Adam's heeding of the serpent with the first Psalm. Adam would have been happy if he had only obeyed God. This midrash was similar to numerous interpretations mentioned earlier. The Psalms

² Mid.Ps.5:3. Mid.Ps.19:5 referred to this midrash, but did not provide details.

³ See. pp.28-32.

⁴ Mid.Ps.1:9. The passage continued with a discussion of Eve, the serpent, and the tree of knowledge of good and bad.

were often used as prooftexts by the rabbis. Such applications were plentiful in the rabbinic material discussing Adam and Eve.

Relevant Material from Outside of Rabbinic Literature

The rabbinic passages presented in this thesis stem from Jewish sources compiled over several hundred years. Different rabbinic documents were created in different places and times. The earliest sources covered were the Tosefta and the Mishnah. The Babylonian Talmud was one of the latest set of documents mentioned. Some rabbinic interpretations may find their origins as early as the targumim (Aramaic translations of the Bible) and the Apocrypha (books outside of the Hebrew canon of the Bible). As cultural environments shifted, earlier rabbis were cited by later sages. An image included in Avot de Rabbi Nathan might be repeated in a talmudic tractate. The same aggadic narratives were used in many different rabbinic books. The passages might be altered slightly, or attributions might change, but the heart of the narrative would remain constant. At the same time, later rabbis would add their own insights to the growing body of interpretation of Adam and Eve.

Genesis Rabbah was the source for many of the later rabbinic commentaries. Almost every section in this thesis illustrates the massive influence of this fifth century midrash. Genesis Rabbah passages were commonly paralleled in later midrashim and talmudic tractates. Genesis Rabbah's midrashim were formed under the influence of, and in response to, many different factors. The rabbinic approach to biblical interpretation played a major role in the writing of Genesis Rabbah. The rabbis formed their ideas in response to events of their day. It is valuable to note that the fourth century marked Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity. Rome's improved relationship with Christianity had a major impact on

contemporary Judaism. The rabbis responded to this newly developing situation.

In Genesis Rabbah every word is to be read against the background of the world-historical change that had taken place in the time of the formation of the document... Genesis Rabbah in its final form emerges from that momentous first century in the history of the West as Christian, the century in which... Rome... passed from pagan to Christian rule, and, in which, in the aftermath of the Emperor Julian's abortive reversion to paganism in 360, Christianity adopted that policy of repression of paganism that rapidly engulfed Judaism as well.¹

Passages regarding Adam and Eve, and all of Genesis Rabbah, should be read in light of Christianity's dominant position. Different rabbis possessed varied knowledge of the principles and exegetical interpretations of Christianity. Every rabbinic sage responded to the surrounding culture and its beliefs.

Rabbinic interpretation was influenced by issues originating with groups other than mainstream Christianity. Other cultural trends and documents played a role in the development of rabbinic ideas. Scholars continue to study the bodies of interpretation, which played major roles in the contemporary culture. The Pseudepigrapha and Gnosticism may have both affected rabbinic interpretations. These terms refer to separate subjects. The Pseudepigrapha are a collection of extra-biblical books related to biblical topics and biblical figures. Some of these books deal specifically with Adam and Eve. Gnosticism is a belief system whose high point was during the first centuries of the Common Era. The rabbis responded to, and may have been influenced by, gnostic beliefs and gnostic biblical exegesis. These two fields are the focus of much current research,

¹ Jacob Neusner, Confronting Creation: How Judaism Reads Genesis (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), p.8.

most of it unrelated to rabbinic literature. This section will survey the pseudepigraphic and gnostic material relevant to rabbinic interpretation of Adam and Eve.

Pseudepigrapha

Technically, the term Pseudepigrapha refers to books whose authorship is attributed incorrectly to a famous figure. In the field of ancient literature, Pseudepigrapha are "a modern collection of ancient writings that are essential reading for an understanding of early Judaism and of Christian origins."² The pseudepigraphic books were written between the third century B.C.E. and the fifth century C.E.³ Such dating overlaps with the composition of many biblical, apocryphal and rabbinic works. The Pseudepigrapha, as a single collection, were not held sacred by any church. Recently, attention has been paid to the inter-relationship and authorship of these books.

Adam and Eve were the subject of several of the pseudepigraphic books. The most prominent of these books is the Latin Vita Adam et Evae. The Greek version of this book is known as the Apocalypse of Moses, a misnomer since the book deals primarily with Adam. Michael E. Stone's recent study, A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve, reviewed the issues relevant to these books.⁴ Stone identified parallel books of Adam and Eve in several languages, including: Slavonic, Armenian, Georgian and a partial Coptic version. The pseudepigraphic Adam books deal mainly with

² James H. Charlesworth in The Anchor Bible Dictionary (New York: Doubleday, 1992), Vol 5, p.537.

³ Ibid., p.538.

⁴ Michael E. Stone, A History of the Literature of Adam and Eve (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1992).

Adam's sin and penitence, Cain's birth, a revelation through Adam to Cain, and Adam's death.⁵ Some of these themes appear in the rabbinic treatment of Adam and Eve. This fact should not be surprising. Most of these issues could stem plausibly from any interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis.

Stone discussed the dating and nature of authorship of the Adam books. After surveying the competing arguments, Stone set the date of composition as "the first centuries C.E., probably before 400 C.E."⁶ These pseudepigraphic images of Adam were composed at the same time as early rabbinic interpretation was developing. Stone concluded that a final conclusion was not possible regarding the authorship of these books.⁷ Were they written by Jews, Christians, or by Christians rewriting Jewish originals? However, there do appear to be many similarities between the pseudepigraphic and rabbinic interpretations of Adam and Eve.

Stone cited J. Kaufman's list of Jewish features found in the Greek, Latin, and Slavonic Adam books. Adam's superiority to the angels (San.38b and GR 17:5) and the forbidden fruit identified as a fig (GR 15:7) were among those details Kaufman identified as Jewish.⁸ Other common interpretations may be found in the different documents. The existence of similarities between rabbinic and pseudepigraphic interpretation leads to a question regarding their inter-relationship. Which set of documents influenced

⁵ G.W. Nickelsburg, "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded," in Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus, edited by Michael E. Stone, (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), pp.110-118.

⁶ Stone, 1992, p.53.

⁷ Ibid., pp.58-61.

⁸ J. Kaufman, "Adambuch," Encyclopedia Judaica [German] (Berlin: Eschkol, 1932), Vol.1, pp. 790-1 cited by Stone, 1992, p. 59.

which set of documents and how? One of theories, presented by Stone, stated that "there was an original (Hebrew or Aramaic) book from which the primary [pseudepigraphic] Adam books derive."⁹ The relationship of the Pseudepigrapha to rabbinic literature was not a primary goal of Stone's study.

Gary A. Anderson also discussed similarities between the pseudepigraphic Adam books and rabbinic interpretation of Genesis.¹⁰ Anderson did not attempt final decisions regarding the exact relationship between these different sources. He did, however, draw stronger conclusions than Stone's more general study. Anderson focused only on the penitence narratives found in Adam books. He concluded:

The origin of the major thematic concerns of the penitence narrative in a close reading of the Biblical text as well as the parallel of many of these exegetical features to well-known Jewish traditions suggests a Jewish origin for the entire sequence.¹¹

According to Anderson, the parts of the pseudepigraphic Adam books possess sufficient similarities to rabbinic interpretation as to identify Jewish origins. This conclusion was stronger than Stone's above-quoted statement.

Regardless of the scholarly conclusions of pseudepigraphic authorship, the debated issue has been the Jewish influence on the Pseudepigrapha. Pseudepigraphic influence in the reverse direction is not a large issue in the literature. The operating assumption appears to be that Jewish sources and converts out of Judaism influenced documents preserved

⁹ Stone, 1992, p.66.

¹⁰ Gary A. Anderson, "The Penitence Narrative in the Life of Adam and Eve," in Hebrew Union College Annual (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1992) Vol.63, pp.1-38.

¹¹ Ibid., p.37.

by various Christian churches. The authors of Genesis Rabbah and other rabbis are presumed to be responding to Christianity, but not greatly influenced by the new religion's exegesis and theology.

Of the rabbinic books mentioned in this thesis, only the Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar drew upon pseudepigraphic interpretation. This later midrash retold Genesis utilizing interpretations from rabbinic midrashim and the Pseudepigrapha.¹² The treatment of Adam's preparations for, and actual, death in Pirke de Rabbi Eleazar appears to be drawn from the earlier pseudepigraphic Adam books.

Research continues in the field of Pseudepigrapha. Further insights into its relationship with rabbinic literature may arise. Adam and Eve were discussed in pseudepigraphic works other than the various versions of Vita Adam et Evae. Other sources include the books of Enoch and Jubilees. During the centuries in question, many authors were interpreting the biblical narrative of Adam and Eve. The various sources, religions, and writers interacted with each other and responded to the same cultural and historical events. It is not surprising that similarities arose in their exegesis.

Gnosticism

The term Gnosticism refers to a complex set of beliefs. Hans Jonas explained:

The name "Gnosticism" which has come to serve as a collective heading for a manifoldness of sectarian doctrines appearing within and around Christianity during its critical first centuries, is derived from gnosis, the Greek word for

¹² This idea was discussed in Joseph Dan, Encyclopedia Judaica [English] Vol.3, col.186 and F.R. Tennant, The Sources of the Doctrines of Original Sin, (New York: Schocken Books, 1903, 1968 edition) p.159.

"knowledge." The emphasis on knowledge as the means for the attainment of salvation, or even as the form of salvation itself, and the claim to the possession of this knowledge in one's own articulate doctrine, are common features of the numerous sects in which the gnostic movement historically expressed itself.¹³

Jonas' explanation clarified that Gnosticism refers to a number of different groups holding a varied set of beliefs. Scholars were limited for years to studying Gnosticism through the anti-heretical writings of the Church Fathers. Only in this century were original gnostic documents discovered at Nag Hammadi, Egypt. These documents allowed for a more detailed study of the gnostic belief-structure. This improved knowledge has allowed for a greater examination of the relation between Gnosticism and other contemporary world-views. The rise of gnostic ideas is hard to date precisely. Kurt Rudolph observed:

The beginning and the end of Gnosis in late antiquity cannot be pinpointed exactly. It makes its appearance at the beginning of the Christian era and disappears again at the latest in the sixth century, at least in as far as its western manifestations are concerned.¹⁴

Basically, the relative timing of Gnosticism is clear. Scholarly debate does continue regarding the nature of the earliest forms of Gnosticism.¹⁵

Gnosticism embraced a wide range of beliefs. Jonas summarized the central principle in this manner:

¹³ Hans Jonas, The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1958, 1991 edition), p.32.

¹⁴ Kurt Rudolph, Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism, translated by Robert McLachlan Wilson, (New York: Harper and Row, Pub., 1983), p.367.

¹⁵ Recent examples of this debate may be found in Charles Hedrick and Robert Hodgson, eds., Nag Hammadi, Gnosticism, and Early Christianity (Peabody, MA: Hedrickson Publishers, 1986) and R. Van Den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren, eds., Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions, (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1981).

The cardinal feature of gnostic thought is the radical dualism that governs the relation of God and world, and correspondingly that of man and world.¹⁶

Adam played a very large role in gnostic belief and exegesis. The dualistic nature of gnostic thought included a view of man as a combination of a positive soul and negative matter. Rudolph explained: "Adam or the first earthly man is for Gnosis the prototype of men in general."¹⁷ Not surprisingly, Adam's creation and downfall proved fertile ground for gnostic exegesis. The Apocalypse of Adam is one example of gnostic Adam writings. Questions arise regarding the relationship between gnostic biblical interpretation and the ideas found in rabbinic literature.

Gnosticism presented a world-view which competed with Judaism and mainstream Christianity. The authors of both groups responded differently to the gnostic challenge. Ithamar Gruenwald explained:

The Church Fathers used direct and open polemics against their gnostic adversaries. They even named some of them by name, while the rabbinic utterances are rather vague and too general to be used as a guide for a clear understanding of the nature of their polemic and its actual address. . . . There is hardly a saying in rabbinic literature which looks as an anti-gnostic polemic but which cannot at the same time be interpreted as entailing opposition to yet other heretical streams of thought and belief.¹⁸

The under-stated rabbinic response to Gnosticism can be explained a number of ways. The rabbis were more interested in countering Christian views than gnostic ones. Alternatively, the rabbinic sages may have hoped that omitting direct references would help lead to the end of Gnosticism.¹⁹

¹⁶ Jonas, p.42.

¹⁷ Rudolph, p.95.

¹⁸ Ithamar Gruenwald, "The Problem of the Anti-Gnostic Polemic in Rabbinic Literature," in Van Den Broek and Vermaseren, p.173-4.

¹⁹ Jonas suggested this second view in Jonas, p.38-9.

Gruenwald suggested that while gnostics drew upon Judaism, the rabbis may have been only indirectly aware of gnostic teachings.²⁰

This debate is relevant because it provides background for the comparison of rabbinic and gnostic interpretations of Adam and Eve. Alexander Altmann wrote a ground-breaking article on this issue, entitled "The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends."²¹ Altmann's article included both pseudepigraphic and gnostic sources. He claimed that rabbinic literature was influenced directly by the gnostics and indirectly through the gnostic influence found in the pseudepigraphic Adam books.²²

Altmann discussed the role of angels in the rabbinic midrashim and gnostic writings. He compared Genesis Rabbah 8:4-5 and gnostic images of the angels' opposing to Adam's creation.²³ Altmann concluded:

... there can be no doubt that behind these midrashim there is not just a very vague reminiscence of the gnostic origin, but a clear and, probably, direct influence.²⁴

Altmann took an uncommon position regarding the relationship of gnostic and rabbinic literature. He saw rabbinic interpretation as influenced closely by gnostic exegesis. He admitted that Louis Ginzberg disagreed with this analysis.²⁵ Ginzberg viewed the rabbis as responding to gnostic interpretations, not copying them. He stated:

This legend emphasizes the Jewish view as opposed to the ... gnostic opinion, according to which man was, wholly or partly,

²⁰ Gruenwald, p.188.

²¹ Alexander Altmann, "The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, (1944-5), New Series Volume 35.

²² Birger Pearson also noted a relationship between pseudepigraphic and gnostic literature in "Jewish Sources in Gnostic Literature," in Stone, 1984, p.471.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.375-9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.378-9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.379.

created by the lower powers, not by God Himself... the Jewish legend lays stress upon the fact that the angels had nothing to do with man's creation, which they tried to prevent.²⁶

Ginzberg focused upon the rabbinic denial of the gnostic view of creation. Altmann observed that the rabbis were aware of the gnostic view. Altmann further commented upon the midrashim which discuss the angels' eventual adoration of Adam (GR 8:10 and others).²⁷ Again, he saw gnostic influence on rabbinic interpretation.

Altmann commented upon the gnostic symbolism of sleep. He discussed Genesis Rabbah 8:10 in light of gnostic ideas.²⁸ This midrash commented upon God's causing Adam to sleep, during Eve's creation (Gen.2:21). Altmann claimed that this midrash presented Adam's sleep in a gnostic manner. He explained:

In Gnosis, sleep definitely becomes synonymous with the entanglement of man in the world of evil, his intoxication with the poison of darkness. The soul is sunk into sleep. Adam, the head and symbol of mankind, is asleep.²⁹

Rudolph clearly explained that this image of sleep was presented in the gnostic Apocryphon of John.³⁰ Altmann saw this idea present in the interpretation of Genesis Rabbah. A rebuttal, similar to Ginzberg's earlier view, can be made to Altmann's identification. Genesis Rabbah did not present Adam's sleep as a negative. The midrash viewed Adam's sleep as positive, merciful, or possibly value-neutral.³¹ Allowing for Genesis Rabbah's lack of a single, systematic view of Adam, Altmann's argument

²⁶ Louis Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews, (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1925), Vol.5, p.69, note 12.

²⁷ Altmann, pp.379-387.

²⁸ Ibid., pp.387-391.

²⁹ Ibid., p.389.

³⁰ Rudolph, p.104.

³¹ See GR 8:10 and 17:5-8.

appears to be overstated. The rabbis responded to gnostic ideas. The claim of gnostic influence upon the rabbis remains less convincing.

A firmer argument may be made that gnostic exegesis was influenced by Jewish ideas. Birger Pearson used the Apocryphon of John to illustrate this view.³² The image of Adam as a golem was found in many midrashim (GR 8:1 and 14:8 for example). Pearson observed that: "this colorful tradition concerning the creation of Adam is clearly to be seen in the background of [a] passage in The Apocryphon of John, as in fact is the case in a number of other gnostic texts.³³ Whatever the specific means of transmission may have been, an early Jewish idea was borrowed by the gnostics.

Pearson described other examples of Jewish influence in gnostic interpretation. In the gnostic Testimony of Truth, a word-play was used which matched a Genesis Rabbah interpretation. Genesis Rabbah 20:11 used the Aramaic חַיִּיָּא [serpent] to explain חַיָּה [Eve]. Pearson observed that this linguistic connection was duplicated in those two gnostic documents. He concluded that the gnostics based these interpretations on early Jewish exegesis.³⁴ Pearson drew other connections between gnostic passages discussing the serpent and rabbinic exegesis on Genesis 3. He found examples in the gnostic works: The Hypostasis of the Archons and On the Origin of the World.³⁵

One of the most convincing links between Jewish interpretation and a later gnostic document is found in a fairly minor detail. The identity of the

³² Birger Pearson, Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990).

³³ Ibid., p.37.

³⁴ Ibid., pp.44-6.

³⁵ Ibid., pp.41-6.

tree of knowledge of good and evil is not particularly theologically significant. The Testimony of Truth claimed the tree was a fig tree.

Pearson responded to this interpretation:

In fact, the identification of the tree of knowledge as a fig is a widespread tradition in early Jewish sources, apocryphal, rabbinic, and (derivatively) early patristic. . . Of course, the gnostic version does not regard the eating of the forbidden fig tree as a sin.³⁶

Pearson concluded that the Testimony of Truth was basing its interpretation on the same Jewish exegesis which was included in Genesis Rabbah 15:7. Naturally, the gnostics used the interpretation to support a radically, non-Jewish interpretation.

Gnosticism clearly drew upon Jewish material. The material was shaped by the gnostics to fit their different purposes. Jonas summarized:

The violently anti-Jewish bias of the more prominent gnostic systems is by itself not incompatible with Jewish heretical origin at some distance. . . The Jewish strain in Gnosticism is as little the orthodox Jewish as the Babylonian is the orthodox Babylonian, the Iranian the orthodox Iranian, and so on.³⁷

Gnostic and pseudepigraphic writers shared a general cultural environment with the early rabbis. It is not surprising that there were common interpretations amongst these various literatures. Similar readings are found therefore in material dealing with Adam and Eve. Rabbinic literature portrayed Adam and Eve differently than gnostic and pseudepigraphic documents. This fact remains true, despite the overlap between the different bodies of interpretation. The rabbis did not compose in a vacuum. They responded to, and were influenced by, the surrounding

³⁶ Ibid., pp.46-7.

³⁷ Jonas, pp.33-4.

culture and its trends. The rabbinic image of Adam and Eve was not uniform. It was constructed from a rich number of sources and creative Jewish imaginations.

Didactic Applications of Rabbinic Interpretations of Adam and Eve

Aggadot found in midrashim and the Talmud have modern applications. Rabbinic views can be used to teach practical lessons regarding ethics, theology and human behavior. The biblical narrative of Adam and Eve was the source of many rabbinic interpretations and additions. Many of these passages can be used in contemporary sermons and lesson plans. Practical applications for several rabbinic interpretations will be suggested in this section. These are only examples of the many didactic possibilities for aggadot related to Adam and Eve. Each entry in this section will present a specific rabbinic passage and discuss its potential application.

Complete explanations of the aggadot can be found in the preceding sections of this thesis. Parallel passages are cited only in the preceding sections. Some examples will only repeat a portion of the original aggadah.

A. Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5:

Therefore was only a single man created to teach you that if anyone destroys a single human soul, Scripture charges him as though he had destroyed a whole world, and whosoever rescues a single human soul, Scripture credits him as though he had saved a whole world.

This rabbinic interpretation was one of many based upon the creation of one human ancestor (Gen.1:27). This passage is the best known example presented in this section. Every human being is equal in worth to the entire world, according to this mishnah. That idea has many possible applications. It can be used when teaching respect for people of different ethnic, national, or religious groups. The high priority of *Pikuah Nefesh*, the saving of a human life, can be supported with this teaching. Adolescent self-

esteem can be boasted by including this idea in a lesson regarding the value of the individual.

B. Yerushalmi Berakot Chapter 9, Halakah 1 (12d)

The heretics asked R. Simlai: ... What is this which is written: **Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness** (Gen.1:26)? He said to them: "It does not say: 'The gods created man in their own images.' But it says: **So God created man in His own image** (Gen.1:27)."

This same question still arises today. Why do many Hebrew references to God appear to be plural (for example: אֱלֹהִים)? A person who inquires regarding this point is often confused or searching for biblical support for a Trinitarian view of God. R. Simlai's answer fits easily into a classroom answer to this question. We should not look only at the name of God, which the questioner assumes to be plural. Look at the verbs and the entire biblical structure. The Bible does not present God as plural. Individual words should not be taken out of context to prove theological arguments.

C. Genesis Rabbah 14:4

וַיֵּצֶר (Gen.2:7) meaning two formations, the good inclination [**יצר טוב**] and the evil inclination [**יצר רע**]. For if an animal possessed these two formations, it would die of fright on seeing a man holding a knife to slaughter it. But surely a man possesses these two inclinations. Said R. Hanina b. Idi: **He bound up the spirit of man [וַיִּבְרָא רוּחַ אָדָם] within him** (Zech 12:1); for if that were not so, whenever a trouble came upon him he would remove it and cast it from him.

This midrash taught that humans were different than other animals. We possess both good and evil inclinations. We can survive in the world

because of the balance of our **יצר טוב** and our **יצר רע**. This rabbinic idea could be applied to the realistic use of human knowledge. Unlike the animal in the midrash, we are aware of the dangerous uses of knives. We hope that our good impulses will balance our knowledge of evil. In a sermon, a rabbi could develop the idea that our knowledge of the world's evil is necessary to improve the world. Our good inclination is powerful because of the complexity of human beings.

D. Genesis Rabbah 15:7

And the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen.2:9).
What was the tree from which Adam and Eve ate? ...

Genesis Rabbah 15:7 offered multiple solutions to this question.¹

Wheat, grapes, etrog, and figs were all suggested by the rabbis. This passage would be wonderful as an example of the midrashic process. In a course on midrash, Genesis Rabbah 15:7 would be a fruitful explanatory example. Most students are familiar with the biblical image of Adam and Eve eating from a forbidden tree. Therefore, the teacher can focus directly on the midrashic process. The rabbis desired to identify this tree as a recognizable, contemporary species. Different techniques were used to complete this detail. Wheat was identified through a colloquial Aramaic saying. The etrog was related through the use of another biblical verse and an accepted view of that type of tree. The grape's identity was linked to the dangerous effects of wine. This view was supported through prooftexts. Figs were identified through a parable intertwined with prooftexts. Finally, the midrash explained why the Bible avoided identifying the specific tree.

¹ See pp.46-50

This passage presents a clear opportunity for explaining the midrashic process.

E. Genesis Rabbah 8:13

R. Abbahu said: The Holy One, blessed be He, took a cup of blessing and blessed them. . . . R. Simlai said: We find that the Holy One, blessed be He, blesses bridegrooms, adorns brides, visits the sick, and buries the dead.

This passage portrayed God as caring for grooms, brides, the sick, and the dead. This rabbinic image could be used in a number of life-cycle ceremonies and sermons. The connection to the holiness of the wedding ceremony is fairly obvious. Other applications might emphasize the value of humans imitating God's caring actions. Thus, Genesis Rabbah 8:13 could be used in combination with Leviticus 19:2: **You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.** Also, this midrash might be used in a eulogy for a congregant who visited hospital patients and elderly shut-ins. A congregant involved in the Hevra Kaddisha (burial society) or in leading Shiva services might be praised with this rabbinic image. The passage illustrates ways humans can fulfill the obligation for gemilut chasidim. Students might be asked to add to this list of God-like human acts of kindness.

F. Erubin 18b

He brought her to the man (Gen.2:22) teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, acted as a groomsman for the first man. From here [we learn] that a great man should act as a groomsman for a lesser man and not feel bad about it.

This aggadic passage built upon the rabbinic image of God's role at the wedding of Adam and Eve. God was willing to serve in a supporting role for

Adam, a simple human. This talmudic passage could be used in teaching human equality. Individual socio-economic standing should play no role when one person considers aiding another person. In a society torn by class and race divisions, this midrash could be included in a lesson regarding activism focused upon bringing people together.

6. Genesis Rabbah 19:3

Thus it is written, **Add not to His words, lest He reprove you, and you are found to be a liar** (Prov.30:6). R. Hiyya taught: That means that you must not make the fence more than the principal thing, lest it fall and destroy the plants. Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, had said: **For as soon as you eat of it, you shall die** (Gen.2:17); whereas she did not say that, rather: **God said: "You shall not eat of it or touch it, lest you die** (Gen.3:3)." When he [the serpent] saw her thus lying, he took and thrust her against it. He said to her: "Have you died? Just as you did not die because of touching, so you will not die because of eating, **but God knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like Divine beings who know good and evil** (Gen.3:5)."

The general rabbinic principle of building a "fence around the law" has its limits. If the protective boundary of rules extends too far, the primary law might be transgressed. Reform Judaism struggles with many issues regarding rules and their limits. This midrash could be used as an example of the dangers of building too large a fence around an important principle. Some issues where this idea might be relevant are: the role of non-Jewish spouses in the synagogue; rules regarding qualification for Confirmation; and activities allowed in the synagogue on Shabbat. Limits are needed in each of these cases. However, overgrown limits might dampen Jewish observance, identification, and celebration. This midrash could be one part of a balanced presentation to a board of trustees or a group of parents.

H. Genesis Rabbah 11:2

When the sun sank at the end of Shabbat, darkness began to set in. Adam was terrified: **Surely, the darkness shall envelop me** (Ps.139:11). . . What did the Lord do for him? He made him find two flints which he struck against each other; light came forth and he uttered a blessing over it. . . This agrees with Samuel, for Samuel said: Why do we recite a blessing over a fire at the end of Shabbat? Because it was then created for the first time.

This passage is often utilized at Havdallah services. Adam's fear of the darkness might relieve the embarrassment of some small children. They might share a fear with the first human on earth. This midrash offers one of many rabbinic explanations for the Havdallah service. Another application of this midrash would be in a lesson on comparative ancient religions. This rabbinic etymology of fire could be compared to explanations from other cultures. Specifically, it would be interesting to study the Greek myth of Prometheus stealing fire for humanity. Students could compare the rabbinic view of a providential God with the various personalities of the Greek pantheon of gods.

I. Genesis Rabbah 22:13

R. Hama said in the name of R. Hanina b. Isaac: He [Adam] went forth rejoicing, as you read: **He goes forth to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart** (Ex.4:14). Adam met him [Cain] and asked him: "How did your case go?" He replied: "I repented and am reconciled." Thereupon, Adam began beating his face, crying: "So great is the power of repentance, and I did not know." Immediately, he arose and exclaimed: **A Psalm, a song for Shabbat, it is a good thing to give thanks [to make confession] unto the Lord** (Ps.92:1-2).

Every year, rabbis search for texts to use in Yom Kippur sermons. There are a multitude of Jewish sayings and images regarding repentance. Adam and Cain would be wonderful examples of the possibility of repentance, even following severe transgressions. This passage described a meeting between the first sinner, Adam, and the first murderer, Cain. According to this midrash, both of them repented following their misdeeds. A powerful, emotional repentance experience was attributed to Adam in this selection. The first man turned to the Psalms for comfort and the words of confession. This final detail could be used in a sermon discussing the contemporary use of ancient words as a means to self-evaluation and repentance.

Conclusion

The Bible has been a powerful influence upon Western thought and culture. Adam and Eve, the first humans according to the Bible, have been utilized in the presentation of many ideas over the centuries. These progenitors of humanity have been presented as both the ideal man and woman and as the paradigmatic sinners. The teachings collected in rabbinic literature spanned this spectrum. Adam was presented as possessing great wisdom and, at least initially, god-like proportions. Eve was described as the epitome of beauty and the perfect partner. At the same time, the rabbis described Adam as transgressing God's command and Eve as deceiving her husband. Original Sin was not mentioned in rabbinic literature, but the rabbis did accuse Eve of bringing death into the world.

It is not possible to present a single, systematic rabbinic view of Adam and Eve. Rabbinic interpretation did not intend to present such a unified set of ideas. Instead, the rabbis have left us with a rich tapestry of images. The Bible described Adam and Eve in very terse language. The rabbis added color and complexity to that mysterious biblical narrative. Human creation, good and evil, sin, and repentance were all discussed in the rabbinic Adam and Eve material. The passages analyzed in this thesis present a complex image of the first humans. This very complexity enhances the centrality of Adam and Eve to the religious sensibilities of Western civilization.

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