

Book of Moses Essays #57: Moses Sees the Garden of Eden (Moses 3) God Instructs Adam and Eve (Moses 3:15–17)

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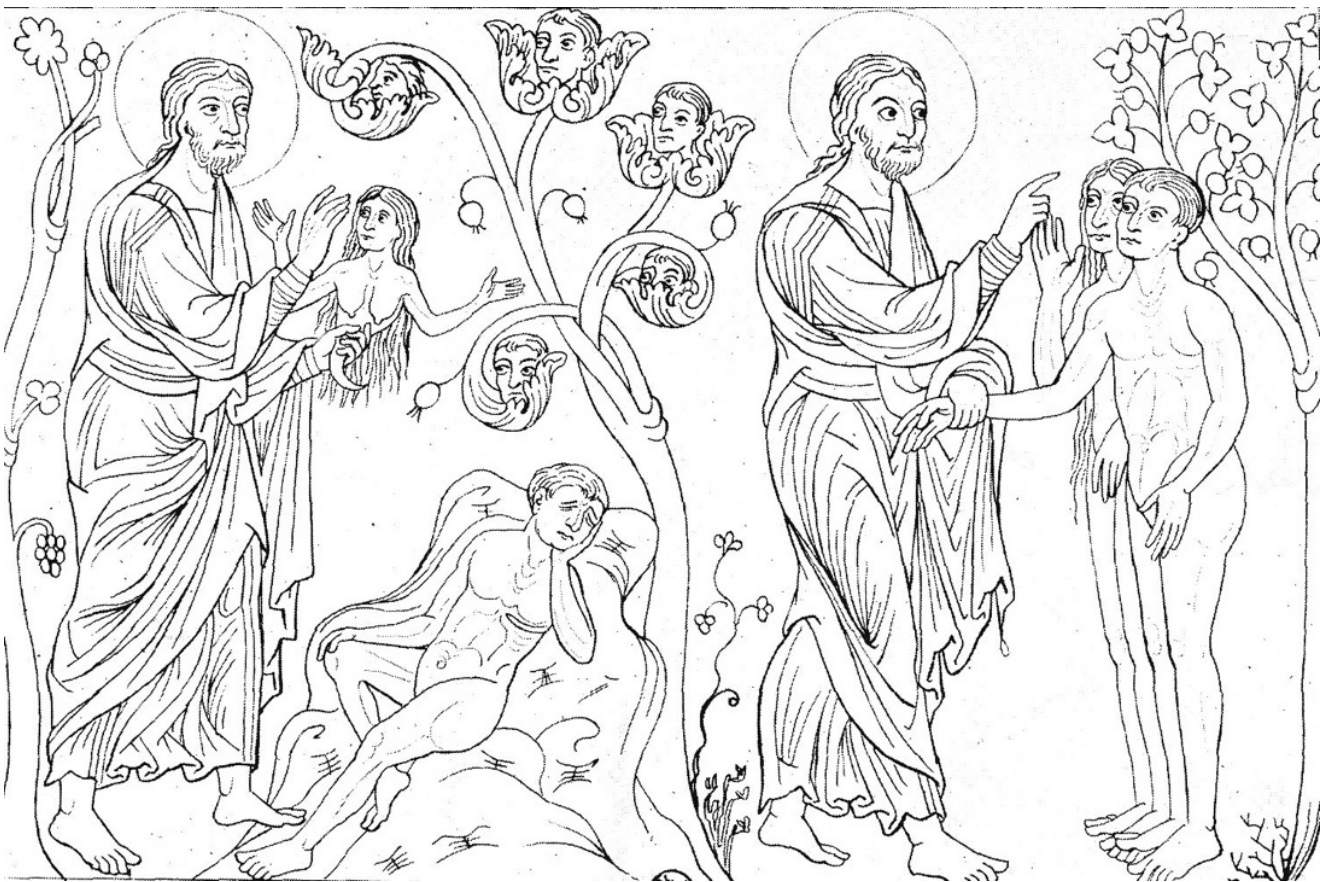


Figure 1. Left: God Creating Eve. Right: God Instructing Adam and Eve, late twelfth century.

In this Essay, we review the instructions given to Adam and Eve: the commandments to be fruitful and multiply and not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge; the instruction for Adam to cleave to Eve, the most unique of God’s creations; and the commandment for them to “dress” and “keep” the Garden. As with other parts of this rich story, there is far more than meets the eye when the details are fully appreciated.

The First Two Commandments to Adam and Eve

The illustration above shows God creating Eve and then instructing the couple. It was created under the direction of Herrad of Hohenbourg a twelfth-century abbess under who was responsible for assembling a comprehensive and copiously illustrated compendium of knowledge and salvation history, called *Hortus Deliciarum* (Garden of Delights).^[1] The details of the depiction draw on traditions from outside of Genesis:

- *The commandment to be fruitful and multiply (Moses 2:27)*. As was discussed in [Essay #50](#), an essential part of the plan was for Adam and Eve to have children. In the middle of the drawing above, a Tree of Life has sprouted human faces resembling Adam and Eve, attesting to ancient traditions about individual premortal existence.^[2] This “Tree of Souls”^[3] which, in Jewish legend, represented the heavenly Tree of Life, was thought to produce “new souls, which ripen and then fall from the tree into the *Guf*, the Treasury of Souls in Paradise. There the soul is stored until the angel Gabriel reaches into the treasury and takes out the first soul that comes into his hand” so it can be born into mortality.^[4]
- *The commandment to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Moses 3:16–17)*. Gary A. Anderson points out an interesting divergence between Genesis story and the drawing featured here: “Whereas Genesis 2 recounts that Adam was created first (2:4–7), given a commandment (2:16–17), and only then received a spouse (2:19–24), the *Hortus Deliciarum* has it that Adam was created, then Eve was drawn from his rib, and finally both were given a commandment.”^[5] At right, God gestures toward the Tree of Knowledge in warning as He takes Adam by the wrist. At the same time, Eve raises her arm in what seems a gesture of consent to God’s commandment.^[6]

Eve’s Fivefold Uniqueness

Donald W. Parry sees a “five-fold uniqueness” in the creation of Eve that is related in Moses 3:^[7]

1. *Creation as forming vs. building*. While the Hebrew verb used to describe Adam’s creation is *yṣr* — to form or fashion — the verb used for Eve is *bnh* — to build, “recall[ing] the building of temples and altars.” The term is also used “with regard to women bearing and delivering children.”^[8]

2. *Formed from the ground vs. built from a living creature.* Whereas Adam and the animals were formed from *'adamah*, the ground, Eve was built from a *ṣela*, traditionally translated as a “rib” but perhaps more accurately translating as a “side,” containing both flesh and bone. Hence, Adam’s exclamation of joy: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.”^[9] Richard Draper et al. observe that the expression “does not mean that Eve’s physical body was derived from Adam but rather that the bodies of Adam and Eve derive from a common source. ... This interpretation is supported by the account of Jacob’s initial meeting with Laban. When Laban learned that Jacob was his sister’s son, he said, ‘Surely thou art my bone and my flesh’ (Genesis 29:14).”^[10]
3. *Eve was created while Adam slept.* “Hebrew *tardemah* is used of abnormally heavy sleep, divinely induced.”^[11] The image is one of transition from a former state into a new one, a “sleep and a forgetting.”^[12] When the sleeping Adam lost the memory of his past, he also became ignorant of other things. The *Apocalypse of Adam* records Adam saying that “the first knowledge that breathed within us” left them and that “the eternal knowledge of the God of truth withdrew from me and your mother Eve.”^[13] The awakening of Adam represents the beginning of his recovery from his state of ignorance. In the *Apocalypse of Adam*, he is instructed by “three men” of surpassing “glory.” Although in Adam’s new state of ignorance he was at first “unable to recognize” them, they proceeded to reveal knowledge to him about his Creator.
4. *“It was not good that the man should be alone” (Moses 3:18).* Prior to this point, every step of Creation had been pronounced “good,” but “Eve’s absence from the Creation was ‘not good.’”
5. *‘Ezer.* “Of all God’s creative works, she is singularly called ‘ezer.”^[14] The Hebrew means “a helper or strength corresponding to him”—or, in other words, a completing counterpart. This term cannot be taken as demeaning because Hebrew *‘ezer*, employed here to describe the intended role of the woman, is often used of God in His relation to man.”^[15] President Howard W. Hunter said: “The Lord intended that the wife be ... a companion equal and necessary in full partnership.”^[16] Thus, in Moses 2, both man and woman are created in the image of God, and in Moses 3, they are described as corresponding strengths.^[17] *Targum Yerushalmi* captures the sense when it refers to the woman as the man’s “yoke-fellow.”^[18]

The Marriage of Adam and Eve

In Moses 3:22, God specifically says: “I ... brought [Eve] unto the man.” “As noted in a midrash, the image may well be that of God playing the role of the attendant who leads the bride to the groom. Without doubt, the verse conveys the idea that the institution of marriage is established by God Himself.”^[19]

God declared that a husband “shall cleave unto his wife.”^[20] “The underlying meaning of the [idea of two distinct entities becoming attached to one another while preserving their separate identities] becomes clear, if it is noted that the verb *d-v-k* [cleave] is often used to

describe human yearning for and devotion to God.”^[21] “Sexual relations between husband and wife do not rise above the level of animality unless they be informed by and imbued with spiritual, emotional, and mental affinity.”^[22]

When Moses 3:25 states that Adam and Eve “were both naked,” it means that they were no longer “clothed” with the memory and glory of their earlier state. The verse attests to the couple’s innocence, their lack of awareness of the initial change that had come over them at this point of the story — and of the greater change that was yet to come after the Fall, a greater change that they would try to correct at that later time with the putting on of the fig leaf apron.

Note that the verse is meant to prepare us for Moses 4:13.^[23] It “forms the transition to the next episode by means of a word play on ‘naked’ (Hebrew *’arom*, plural *’arummim*) and ‘shrewd’ (Hebrew *’arum*). It also conveys an anticipatory hint at [how the two concepts are going to be related].”^[24] Approximating the Hebrew word-play in English, we might say (with Gordon Wenham) that the couple aspired to be “shrewd” (like the serpent), they ended up “nude.”^[25]

The fact that Adam and Eve “were not ashamed” expresses the idea that while the two partners were as yet free from transgression they could stand “naked” in God’s presence without shame,^[26] being “clothed with purity”^[27] in what early commentators called “garments of light.”^[28]

The Work of Adam and Eve

Given the picture of the naturally growing, life-sustaining yields of the Garden of Eden, coupled with the absence of any troublesome weeds, students of the Bible have made various attempts to understand how Adam and Eve managed to stave off the “curse of idleness”^[29] during their sojourn in that happy place. For example, supposing that the daily labors of the first parents must have closely mirrored our own, Matthew Henry imagined that the man and the woman were placed in Eden to improve on God’s arrangements for the beauty and productivity of the fruit trees placed there. He reasoned that: “Nature, even in its primitive state, left room for the improvements of art and industry.”^[30] Supposing that the “husbandman’s calling ... was needed even in Paradise,” he drew out the lesson from God’s instructions to Adam and Eve to “dress” and “keep” the Garden that “[s]ecular employments will very well consist with a state of innocency and a life of communion with God.”^[31]

However, in contrast to attempts to draw parallels between “secular employments” and the work of the first couple in Paradise, it is important to realize that the very point of the scriptural injunction in Moses 3:15 is to inform Adam and Eve that no labor of the ordinary kind was required so long as they qualified to remain in that place. In this view, any conception that they were to focus their energies on digging and pruning the trees of Eden is surely mistaken, since the account makes clear that “man’s food was ever ready at hand.”^[32]

Instead, a different, and even more strenuous and demanding kind of work was required of Adam and Eve while they lived in the Garden of Eden. Consistent with the temple symbolism of Eden in Essay #55, we can conclude that Adam and Eve's occupation in Paradise was "temple work."

Moses 3:15 states that Adam and Eve were put in the Garden of Eden "to dress it, and to keep it." The Hebrew terms in Genesis for "to dress" (*abad*) and "to keep" (*shamar*) respectively connote to "work, serve, till"^[33] and "keep, watch (guard), preserve."^[34] Of course, these meanings are not, on the face of it, inconsistent with the practice of husbandry. However, when we recall the temple-like layout of the Garden of Eden^[35] and the fact that these are the very words that are used to describe the tabernacle duties of the Levites^[36] the phrase takes on deeper significance. Wenham remarked that "if Eden is seen then as an ideal sanctuary, then perhaps Adam should be described as an archetypal Levite."^[37] John Sailhamer similarly comments:^[38]

Man's life in the garden was to be characterized by worship and obedience; he was a priest, not merely a worker and keeper of the Garden. ... Throughout [Moses 3] the author has consistently and consciously developed the idea of man's "likeness" to God along the same lines as the major themes of the Pentateuch as a whole, namely, the theme of worship and Sabbath rest.

In considering what occupied Adam and Eve's time during their stay in the Paradise, remember that God had not yet declared an end to the period of sanctification He had purposed for the seventh day of Creation.^[39] The first couple was no doubt meant to "imitate the divine pattern"^[40] of sacred "rest," paralleling in a general way mankind's later weekly Sabbath-keeping.^[41]

Conclusions

The idyllic setting of Eden, the commandments of a loving Father, and the companionship and strength afforded by a marriage partner set up what would seem to be the ideal conditions for happiness. However, so long as Adam and Eve remained in the Garden, their opportunities for progression were limited. In the next Essay #58 we will discuss the symbolism of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. In a later Essay, we will examine the temple layout of the Garden of Eden in more detail. In this way we will better appreciate the opportunities provided by God and exploited by Satan.

This essay is adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw. *Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*. 2014 Updated ed. In *God's Image and Likeness* 1. Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014. <https://archive.org/details/140123IGIL12014ReadingS>, pp. 180–186, 228.

Further Reading

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Notes on Figures

Figure 1. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Add. 144.a. Fol., with the assistance of Mme Zerkane and Ingrid Appert, as well as the help of Elizabeth Witchell of the Warburg Institute. From R. Green, *et al.*, *Hortus*, Vol. 1, Original fol. HD 17r. (Figure 21); see also Vol. 2, p. 31, Figures 17-18, from the Bastard Calques plate 12, tracings of the original made ca. 1840.

Endnotes

[1] Preserved for centuries at the Augustinian monastery of St. Odile at Hohenbourg, it was placed in the municipal library of Strasbourg about the time of the French Revolution. Though it was tragically destroyed during the siege of Strasbourg in 1870, portions of the text

and illustrations had been previously copied, enabling the later partial reconstruction and publication of the work.

[2] See *Essay #47*.

[3] In support of this idea, Jewish tradition cites Hosea 14:9: “I am like a cypress tree in bloom; your fruit issues froth from Me” (H. Schwartz, *Tree*, 199, p. 165).

[4] See Schwartz, 2004 #1235}, 199, p. 165. For descriptions of similar Gnostic and Mandaean concepts, see J. O. Ryen, *Mandaean Vine*, pp. 217, 223–224. In the New World, Mayans had an analogous teaching (A. J. Christenson, *Sacred Tree*, p. 11). As to the Tree of Life as a symbol of divine motherhood, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, 3-9g, p. 163; R. Green *et al.*, *Hortus*, vol. 1, Figure 21; see also 2:31.

[5] G. A. Anderson, *Perfection*, p. 83. Cf. G. A. Anderson, *Original Form*, pp. 216–217 n. 6; J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, 49b, p. 252.

[6] S. D. Ricks, *Oaths*, pp. 49–50. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, Figure 5-3, p. 330.

[7] D. W. Parry, *Eve’s Role*, pp. 204–207.

[8] Genesis 16:2; 30:3; Deuteronomy 25:9.

[9] Moses 3:23.

[10] R. D. Draper *et al.*, *Commentary*, p. 234.

[11] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 22.

[12] William Wordsworth in L. Richards, *Marvelous*, p. 290.

[13] G. W. MacRae *et al.*, *Paul*, 64:24-29, 65:10-11, p. 279; cf. S. E. Robinson, *Apocalypse of Adam*, pp. 10-11.

[14] See D. W. Parry, *Eve’s Role* for an in-depth discussion of this term.

[15] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 21.

[16] H. W. Hunter, *Teachings 1997*, November 1994, p. 152.

[17] R. E. Friedman, *Commentary*, p. 19. Thomas L. Brodie contrasts the positive picture of Woman at her creation with the highly negative Greek account of Hesiod (T. L. Brodie, *Dialogue*, p. 141).

[18] J. W. Etheridge, *Onkelos*.

[19] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 23.

[20] Moses 3:24.

[21] A. J. Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, pp. 190–193.

[22] Sarna, 1989 #296}, p. 23.

[23] CC. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p. 234.

[24] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 23.

[25] G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 72; B. T. Arnold, *Genesis 2009*, p. 63.

[26] See *Doctrine and Covenants* 121:45.

[27] 2 Nephi 9:14.

[28] G. A. Anderson, *Perfection*, p. 215.

[29] This expression has become well-known because of the First Presidency statement on the Welfare Program in the October 1936 General Conference wherein it was said that “the curse of idleness would be done away with” (H. J. Grant, *Teachings 2002*, p. 115). However,

it seems to have originated with Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the Victorian preacher and advocate of the British Charity Organization Society. He characterized this society as “a charity to which the curse of idleness is subjected to the rule of the under-magistrate of earthly society: work.” By providing jobs to the poor, the society would fulfill what he saw as the biblical mandate “to rid the impoverished of the curse of idleness” and to “rebuild self-reliance and productivity.” The phrase “curse of idleness” was further popularized in O. S. Marden, *Architects*—see esp. pp. 463ff.

Though idleness is not a virtue, neither is much of the world’s work, especially when fueled by greed, inequity, careerism, dishonesty, or when it fosters neglect of the higher purposes of life.

[30] M. Henry, *Commentary*, Genesis 2:8-15, p. 9.

[31] *Ibid.*, Genesis 2:8-15, p. 9.

[32] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 18. But see the interesting discussion in N. Wyatt, *When Adam*.

[33] F. Brown *et al.*, *Lexicon*, pp. 712b-713c. Wyatt notes that the various shades of meaning in the Hebrew word *‘bd* are an analogue to the common etymology in English of the terms “cultivate,” “cult,” and “culture” (N. Wyatt, *When Adam*, p. 56).

[34] F. Brown *et al.*, *Lexicon*, p. 1036b.

[35] J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, pp. 146-149.

[36] G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 67; cf. U. Cassuto, *Adam to Noah*, pp. 122-123; D. W. Parry, *Service*, p. 45. For example, Numbers 3:8 says that the Levites “shall keep (*shamar*) all the instruments of the Tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the children of Israel, to do the service (*abad*) of the Tabernacle.” Consistent with a general tendency to downplay or omit temple imagery, Islamic sources do not mention the duty of Adam and Eve to care for the Garden (D. C. Peterson, *Qur’anic tree of life*).

[37] Cited in M. B. Brown, *Gate*, p. 33.

[38] J. H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, p. 45; cf. Deuteronomy 30:16, 1 Nephi 2:20.

[39] Moses 3:2-3. Sailhamer observes: “Unlike the other days of Creation, ... the seventh day stands apart from the other six days in not having an account of its conclusion. It is this feature of the narrative that has suggested a picture of an eternal, divine ‘Sabbath’... Consequently, immediately after the narrative of the Fall (Moses 4:27), ...the verb *asah* points to an interruption of God’s ‘Sabbath’” when, as a final act of Creation, He made coats of skin for Adam and Eve” (*ibid.*, pp. 38-39).

[40] N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 15. Note that the words borrowed from Sarna were written in a context describing mankind’s weekly Sabbath, not the seventh day of Creation.

[41] Like other events in the story of Genesis, the scriptural account also portrays the past as harbinger of the future. Writes Sailhamer: “At important points along the way, the author will return to the theme of God’s ‘rest’ as a reminder of what yet lies ahead (Moses 3:15; 8:9; Genesis 8:4; Exodus 20:11; Deuteronomy 5:14; 12:10; 25:19). Later biblical writers continued to see a parallel between God’s ‘rest’ in Creation and the future ‘rest’ that awaits the faithful” (J. H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, p. 39. See Psalm 95:11; Hebrews 3:11).

In the book of Hebrews, readers are urged to enter into the “Lord’s rest” (Hebrews 4:3, 10).

Explains Catherine Thomas: “They had tarried too long in the foothills of spiritual experience. Having ‘tasted of the heavenly gift,... the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come’ (Hebrews 6:4-6), they could no longer delay resuming the climb lest they lose the promise.... The promise that Paul refers to repeatedly is that same promise explained in Doctrine and Covenants 88:68-69: ‘Therefore, sanctify yourselves... and the days will come that you shall see [God]; for he will unveil his face unto you’” (M. C. Thomas, Hebrews, pp. 479-480).