

The Garden of Eden in the Modern World: Sexuality, Mortality, and the Meaning of Life

A Limmud *bet midrash* session

Aaron Koller

בבלי חגיגה טז ע"א

ששה דברים נאמרו בבני אדם, שלשה כמלאכי השרת שלשה כבהמה. שלשה כמלאכי השרת: (1) יש להם דעת כמלאכי השרת, (2) ומהלכין בקומה זקופה כמלאכי השרת, (3) ומספרים בלשון הקדש כמלאכי השרת. שלשה כבהמה: (4) אוכלין ושותין כבהמה, (5) ופרין ורבין כבהמה, (6) ומוציאין רעי כבהמה.

Bavli Haggiga 16a

There are three facts about humans; in three they are similar to angels, and in three they are similar to animals. Three like angels: (1) they have intelligence (*da'at*), like angels, (2) they walk upright, like angels, (3) they speak Hebrew, like angels. Three like animals: (4) they eat and drink, like animals, (5) they procreate, like animals, and (6) they pass gas like animals.

משנה כלאיים ח, ה

ואדני השדה – חיה. רבי יוסי אומר, מטמאות באוהל כאדם.

Mishnah Kil'ayim 8:5

“Wild humans” (literally, “people of the field”) – animals. R. Yose says, they cause tent impurity like humans.

Homer, *Odyssey*, excerpts from Books 5 and 11; *Iliad*, excerpts from Book 9

[When we meet Odysseus, he has been trapped on the island of Ogygia with the nymph Calypso for seven years, although he wants to go home to his wife Penelope, who waits in Ithaca. The gods have just decided that he must be freed, and the divine messenger Hermes brought that verdict to Calypso, who went to find Odysseus.]

She found him sitting on the shore, his eyes as ever wet with tears, life's sweetness ebbing from him in longing for his home, since Calypso did not make him happy. He was forced to sleep with her in the hollow cave at night, as she wished though he did not, but by day he sat among rocks or sand, tormenting himself with tears, groans and anguish, gazing with wet eyes at the restless sea.

The lovely goddess spoke as she approached him: 'Be sad no longer, unhappy man, don't waste your life in pining; I am ready and willing to send you on your way. Fell tall trees with the axe, make a substantial raft, and fasten planks across for decking, so it can carry you over the misty sea. And I will stock it with bread and water, and red wine to your heart's content, to stave off hunger and thirst, and I'll give you clothing too. And I'll raise a following wind, so you reach home safely, if that is the will of the gods who rule the wide heavens, since they have more power than I to fulfil their purpose.' ...

Man and goddess reached the hollow cave, and he sat down on the chair that Hermes had used. Then the nymph set all kinds of food and drink before him, those that mortals consume. But before her the maids set ambrosia and nectar, as she sat facing divine Odysseus. So they reached for the good things prepared for them. And when they had finished eating and drinking, Calypso, that lovely goddess, spoke first: 'Son of Laertes, scion of Zeus, Odysseus of many resources, must you leave, like this, so

soon? Still, let fortune go with you. Though if your heart knew the depths of anguish you are fated to suffer before you reach home, you would stay and make your home with me, and be immortal, no matter how much you long to see that wife you yearn for day after day. I am surely no less than her, I contend, in height or form, since no woman can reasonably compete with the gods in form or face.'

Then resourceful Odysseus replied to her: 'Great goddess, do not be angry at what I say. I know myself that wise Penelope is less than you, it's true, in looks and stature, being a mortal, while you are immortal and ever young. Even so I yearn day after day, longing to reach home, and see the hour of my return. And if some god should strike me, out on the wine-dark sea, I will endure it, owning a heart within inured to suffering. For I have suffered much, and laboured much, in war and on the seas: add this then to the sum.' As he spoke the sun dipped, and darkness fell. And the two of them found the deepest recess of the hollow cave, and delighted together in their lovemaking. ...

Odysseus made his raft as wide as a skilled shipwright makes the hull of a broad-beamed trading vessel. And he placed the decking, bolting the planks to the close-set timbers as he worked, completing the raft with long gunwales. He fixed up a mast and yardarm, and a steering oar for a rudder. Then he lined its sides from stem to stern with intertwined willows, as a defence against the sea, and covered the deck with brushwood. Meanwhile Calypso, the lovely goddess, had brought him the cloth for a sail, and he skilfully fashioned that too. Then he lashed the braces, halyards and sheets in place, and levered it down to the shining sea.

- What is the choice that Calypso presents to Odysseus?
- In Odysseus's speech, how does Penelope compare to Calypso?
- What possibilities are there for why he compares them this way?
- Why does he want to go home?

[Later Odysseus tells an audience that at one point in his adventures, he had gone down to the underworld and there met Achilles. Achilles had died gloriously in the battle of Troy, choosing a short heroic life over a long and peaceful one. In this passage from the Iliad, Achilles tells Odysseus about the choice he made.]

My mother, divine silver-footed Thetis, spoke the alternative fates open to me on my way to death. Remain here and fight at the siege of Troy, forgo all home-coming, yet win endless renown; or sail home to my native land, lose fame and glory, but live a long life, and be spared an early end.

- What are the options? How would you weigh them against each other?
- Does it matter how long "long life" is? What if it's only 60 years? What if it's 100? 200? Do the numbers change the calculation?

[Since Achilles is speaking to Odysseus at a ship on the beach outside of Troy, where the Greeks have come to fight, it is clear what choice he made. But when Odysseus encounters him again in the underworld, Achilles tells him that it was a mistake.]

"Now the spirit of Achilles son of Peleus appeared.... And the ghost of swift-footed Achilles, grandson of Aeacus, knew me, and spoke through the tears: 'Odysseus of many resources, scion of Zeus, son of

Laertes, what could your resolute mind devise that exceeds this: to dare to descend to Hades, where live the heedless dead, the disembodied ghosts of men?’

So he spoke, and I replied: ‘Achilles, son of Peleus, greatest of Achaean warriors...no man has been more blessed than you, Achilles, nor will be in time to come, since we Argives considered you a god while you lived, and now you rule, a power, among the un-living. Do not grieve, then, Achilles, at your death.’

These words he answered, swiftly: ‘Glorious Odysseus: don’t try to reconcile me to my dying. I’d rather serve as another man’s labourer, as a poor peasant without land, and be alive on Earth, than be lord of all the lifeless dead. Give me news of my son, instead. Did he follow me to war, and become a leader?’”

- How does Achilles’s comment color the story’s thinking about life and death?
- Why does he ask about his son?

The Epic of Gilgamesh

He who saw the deep, the foundations of the land, who knew ... was wise in all things: Gilgamesh, who saw the deep, the foundations of the land, who knew ... was wise in all things. ... He saw what was secret and revealed what was hidden, he brought back news from before the flood, from a distant journey came home, weary, at peace, engraved all his hardships on a monument of stone.

He built the walls of ramparted Uruk, the lustrous treasury of hallowed Eanna!

See its upper wall, whose facing gleams like copper.
Gaze at the lower course, which nothing will equal.
Mount the stone stairway, there from days of old.
Approach Eanna, the dwelling of Ishtar, which no future king, no human will equal.
Go out, pace out the walls of Uruk.
Study the foundation terrace and examine the brickwork.
Is not its masonry kiln-fired brick?
Did not seven masters lay its foundations?
One square mile of city, one square mile of gardens;
one square mile of clay pits, a half square mile of Ishtar's dwelling.
Three and a half square miles is the measure of Uruk!

Search out the copper foundation box, release its lock of bronze;

Raise the lid upon its hidden contents, take up and read from the lapis tablet,
Of him, Gilgamesh, who underwent many hardships! ...

Gilgamesh was singled out from the day of his birth. Two-thirds of him was divine, one-third of him was human. The Lady of Birth drew his body's image, the God of Wisdom brought his stature to perfection. ...

In the enclosure of Uruk he strode back and forth, lording it like a wild bull, his head thrust high. The onslaught of his weapons had no equal. His teammates stood forth by his game stick. He was bothering the young men of Uruk beyond reason. Gilgamesh would leave no son to his father. Day and night he would rampage fiercely. This was the shepherd of ramparted Uruk, this was the people's shepherd, bold, superb, accomplished, and mature! Gilgamesh would leave no girl to her mother. The warrior's daughter, the young man's spouse, goddesses kept hearing their complaints. The gods of heaven, the lords who command, [said to Anu]:

"You created this headstrong wild bull in ramparted Uruk, the onslaught of his weapons has no equal. His teammates stand forth by his game stick. He is harrying the young men of Uruk beyond reason. Gilgamesh leaves no son to his father! ... Gilgamesh leaves no girl to her [mother]!"

Anu speaks:

"Let them summon Aruru, the great one. She created the boundless human race. Let her create a partner for Gilgamesh, mighty in strength. Let them content with each other, that Uruk may have peace!"

They summoned the birth goddess, Aruru.

“You, Aruru, created the boundless human race. Now create what Anu commanded! To his stormy heart, let that one be equal. Let them contend with each other, that Uruk may have peace.”

When Aruru heard this, she conceived within her what Anu commanded. Aruru wet her hands, she pinched off clay, she tossed it upon the steppe, she created valiant Enkidu in the steppe. Offspring of potter’s clay, with the force of the hero Ninurta.

- What is the solution to Gilgamesh’s loneliness?

Shaggy with hair was his whole body, he was made lush with head hair like a woman, the locks of his hair grew thick as a grainfield. He knew neither people nor inhabited land. He dressed as animals do. He fed on grass with gazelles, with beasts he jostled at the water hole, with wildlife he drank his fill of water. ...

[*A hunter tells Gilgamesh about Enkidu:*]

There is a certain fellow who has come from the uplands. He is mightiest in the land, strength is his.

Like the force of heaven, so mighty is his strength. He constantly ranges over the uplands, constantly feeding on grass with his beasts, constantly making his way to the edge of the water hole. I am too frightened to approach him. He has filled in the pits I dug. He has torn out my traps I set, he has helped the beasts, wildlife of the steppe, slip from my hands, he will now allow me to work the steppe.

- How does Enkidu straddle the line between human and animal? Pay attention both to physical features and behaviors.

Gilgamesh said to him, to the hunter:

Go, hunter, take with you Shamhat the harlot. When the wild beasts draw near the water hole, let her strip off her clothing, laying bare her charms. When he sees her, he will approach her. His beasts that grew up with him on the steppe will deny him. ...

Shamhat loosened her garments. She exposed her loins, he took her charms. She was not bashful, she took his vitality. She tossed aside her clothing and he lay upon her. She treated him, a human, to woman’s work, as in his ardor he caressed her. Six days, seven nights was Enkidu aroused, flowing into Shamhat.

After he had his fill of her delights, he set off towards his beasts. When they saw Enkidu, the gazelles shied away, the wild beasts of the steppe shunned his person. Enkidu had spent himself, his body was limp, his knees stood still, while his beasts went away. Enkidu was too slow, he could not run as before, but he had gained reason and expanded his understanding.

- After his time with Shamhat, Enkidu is no longer welcome among the animals. What is the logic in this development?

He returned, he sat at the harlot's feet. The harlot gazed upon his face. While he listened to what the harlot was saying, the harlot said to him, to Enkidu:

You are handsome, Enkidu, you are become like a god. Why roam the steppe with wild beasts? Come, let me lead you to ramparted Uruk, to the holy temple, abode of Anu and Ishtar, the place of Gilgamesh, who is perfect on strength, and so like a wild bull he lords it over the young men. ...

[Enkidu] heard what was said, accepted her words. He was yearning for one to know his heart, a friend. The counsel of Shamhat touched his heart. ... Clasp[ing] his hand, like a guardian deity she led him to the shepherd's huts, where a sheepfold was. The shepherd crowded around him, they murmured their opinions among themselves: "This fellow, how like Gilgamesh in stature! In stature tall, proud as a battlement. No doubt he was born in the steppe, like the force of heaven, mighty is his strength!"

They set bread before him, they set beer before him. He looked uncertainly, then stared. Enkidu did not know how to eat bread, nor had he ever learned to drink beer!

The harlot made ready to speak, saying to Enkidu: "Eat the bread, Enkidu, the staff of life! Drink the beer, the custom of the land." Enkidu ate the bread until he was sated, he drank seven juglets of beer. His mood became relaxed, he was singing joyously. He felt lighthearted and his features glowed. He treated his hairy body with water, he anointed himself with oil. He turned into a man. He put on clothing, became like a warrior. He took his weapon, hunted lions. The shepherds lay down to rest at night. He slew wolves, defeated lions, the herdsmen, the great gods, lay down to sleep. Enkidu was their watchman, a wakeful man.

- How do the bread and beer continue the education of Enkidu? What do these foods exemplify about humanity?

...

Enkidu said to the harlot: "Shamhat, bring that man here! Why has he come? I will ask him to account for himself!"

The harlot summoned the man. He came over, and Enkidu said to him, "Fellow, where are you rushing? What is this, your burdensome errand?"

The man made ready to speak, and said to Enkidu, "They have invited me to a wedding! Is it not people's custom to get married? I have heaped the fancy dishes for the wedding high on the festival tray. People's loins are open for the taking. For Gilgamesh, king of ramparted Uruk, people's loins are open for the taking! He mates with the lawful wife, he first, the groom after. By pronounced divine decree, she has been his due since the cutting of her umbilical cord."

At the man's account, Enkidu's face went pale.

- What have we now learned about Gilgamesh? What does Enkidu's reaction show about his current state?

[In the ensuing scene, Enkidu arrives in Uruk and blocks Gilgamesh from entering the house of the bride. The two wrestle to a draw, and then become fast friends.]

Gilgamesh made ready to speak, saying to Enkidu: “There dwells in the forest the fierce monster Humbaba. You and I shall kill him, and wipe something evil from the land!”

[Gilgamesh and Enkidu travel to the Cedar Forest and fight Humbaba. Eventually – although this is a scene worth reading – they kill the monster. The goddess Ishtar is impressed with Gilgamesh’s feats and looks, and proposes marriage. He spurns her repeatedly. In vengeance, she decrees Enkidu’s death. Having seen his fate in a dream, Enkidu’s end comes near quickly.]

The day he had the dream, his strength ran out.

Enkidu lay there one day, a second day he was ill. Enkidu lay in his bed, his illness grew worse. A fifth, a sixth, a seventh, an eighth, a ninth, a tenth – Enkidu’s illness grew worse. An eleventh, a twelfth day, Enkidu lay in his bed. He called for Gilgamesh... [Enkidu dies and Gilgamesh laments him publicly.]

Gilgamesh was weeping bitterly for Enkidu, his friend, as he roamed the steppe:

“Shall I not die, too? Am I not like Enkidu? Oh woe has entered my vitals! I have grown afraid of death, so I roam the steppe. Having come this far, I will go on swiftly towards Utnapishtim, son of Ubar-Tutu!”

[Utnapishtim is the hero of the flood story, who was granted immortality by the gods because of the torture they put him through with the flood. Gilgamesh wants to ask him how he, too, can become immortal.]

In his quest to find Utnapishtim, Gilgamesh gives the same speech to anyone who asks him why he is undertaking this quest. The first is a tavern keeper, who asks, “Why are you clad in a lion skin, roaming the steppe?”]

Gilgamesh said to her, the tavern keeper:

“My cheeks would not be emaciated, my face not downcast, nor my heart wretched or my features wasted, now would there be woe in my vitals, now would my face be like a traveler’s from afar, nor would my features be weathered by cold and sun, now would I be clad in a lion skin, roaming the steppe, but for my friend, swift wild donkey, mountain onager, panther of the steppe – but for *Enkidu*, swift wild donkey, mountain onager, panther of the steppe! My friend, whom I so loved, who went with me through every hardship – *Enkidu*, whom I so loved, who went with me through every hardship – the fate of mankind has overtaken him. Six days and seven nights I wept for him. I would not give him up for burial until a worm fell out of his nose. ... I have grown afraid of death, so I roam the steppe. My friend’s case weighs heavy upon me. A distant road I roam over the steppe: my friend *Enkidu’s* case weighs heavy upon me! A distant road I roam the steppe: how can I be silent? How can I hold my peace? My friend whom I loved is turned into clay – *Enkidu*, my friend whom I loved, is turned into clay! Shall I too not lie down like him and never get up forever and ever?”

- How does this speech balance Gilgamesh’s care for Enkidu with his concern for his own fate?
- Notice the lines that are repeated, where Enkidu’s name is added the second time. What does the addition of the name do for those lines?

Genesis 2-3

The Lord God formed the Earth Creature, dust from the earth, and blew into his nose the breath of life. The Earth Creature became a living soul. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed the Earth Creature He had formed there. The Lord God made every attractive tree grow from the earth, beautiful and tasty, as well as the Tree of Life in the middle of the garden, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

וַיִּצְרֶה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם
 עֹפֵר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפַּח בְּאַפִּיו
 נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ
 חַיָּה. וַיִּטַּע ה' אֶל-הַיַּם גֶּן-בְּעֵדֶן
 מִקֶּדֶם וַיִּשֶׂם שֵׁם אֶת-הָאָדָם
 אֲשֶׁר יִצְרָה. וַיִּצְמַח ה' אֶל-הַיַּם
 מִן-הָאֲדָמָה כָּל-עֵץ נֹחַמֵד
 לְמִרְאָה וְטוֹב לְמֵאֲכָל וְעֵץ
 הַחַיִּים בְּתוֹךְ הָגֶן וְעֵץ הַדַּעַת
 טוֹב וְרָע.

[Rivers in Eden]

...

The Lord God took the Earth Creature and placed him in the garden of Eden, to work it and to guard it.

וַיִּקַּח ה' אֶל-הַיַּם אֶת-הָאָדָם
 וַיִּנְחֵהוּ בְּגֶן-עֵדֶן לְעִבְדָהּ
 וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ. *2

The Lord God commanded the Earth Creature, “By all means eat of every tree in the garden, but do not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; on the day you eat from it, you will surely die.”

וַיִּצַו ה' אֶל-הַיַּם עַל-הָאָדָם
 לֵאמֹר מִכָּל עֵץ-הַגֶּן אָכַל תֹּאכַל.
 וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרָע לֹא תֹאכַל
 מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכַלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת
 תָּמוּת. *3

- This is the first stage of the divine plan. According to this plan, what is off-limits to the Earth Creature, and what may he eat?
- Assuming the trees do more or less what their names imply, what then will be the state of the Earth Creature, and for how long?

The Lord God said, “It is not good for the Earth Creature to be alone. I will make a fitting counterpart for him.” The Lord God formed from the earth all the wild animals, and all the birds of the sky, and brought them to the Earth Creature to see what he would call them. Any that he would call ‘living soul’ – that would be its name. The Earth Creature named all the animals and the birds and the wild animals, but for the Earth Creature he found no fitting counterpart.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים לֹא-טוֹב הַיּוֹת
 הָאָדָם לְבָדוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה-לוֹ עֵזֶר
 כְּנֶגְדּוֹ. וַיִּצְרֶה ה' אֶל-הַיַּם מִן-
 הָאֲדָמָה כָּל-חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת
 כָּל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיָּבֵא אֶל-הָאָדָם
 לְרֹאוֹת מֶה-יִקְרָא-לוֹ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר
 יִקְרָא-לוֹ הָאָדָם נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה הוּא
 שְׁמוֹ. וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת לְכָל-
 הַבְּהֵמָה וְלְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל-
 חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וּלְאָדָם לֹא-מָצָא
 עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ. *4

- Throughout Chapter 1, God issued the same verdict on each day’s creation: “good.” Here we read for the first time that something is “not good.” What is it?
- What is the suggested solution for that problem? How do the animals fit in to this?
- The Talmud comments: — “זאת הפעם עצם מעצמי וּבִשָׂר מִבִּשְׂרִי” — and Rabbi Elazar said: “and Rabbi Elazar said: מִלְּמַד שֶׁבָּא אָדָם עַל כָּל בְּהֵמָה וְחַיָּה, וְלֹא נִתְקַרְרָה דַּעְתּוֹ עַד שֶׁבָּא עַל חַוָּה. What is that which is written: ‘This time! Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh’ (Genesis 2:23)? This teaches that Adam slept with each animal and beast but his mind was not cooled until he slept with Eve.”

This seems like a very graphic addition to the story. What do you think Rabbi Elazar is trying to say by spinning this midrash?

- Based on your understanding of the problem and the attempt at a solution, why did the attempted solution fail?
- Who learned what lesson from this failure?

The Lord God brought slumber on the Earth Creature, and he slept; he took one of his ribs, and closed the flesh beneath it. The Lord God built, from the rib He had taken from the Earth Creature, a Woman, and He brought her to the Earth Creature.

וַיִּפַּל ה' אֶל־הַיָּמִים תַּרְדֵּמָה עַל־
הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת
מִצְלָעָתָיו וַיִּסְגֹר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָה.
וַיְבֹן ה' אֶל־הַיָּמִים אֶת־הַצֶּלַע
אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח מִן־הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה
וַיְבִאֶהָ אֶל־הָאָדָם.

5

The Earth Creature said, "This is the time! Bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh! This one shall be called 'Woman,' for she is taken from 'Man!'" (This is why man must leave his father and mother, and cleave to his woman, so they become one flesh.)

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הַפֶּעַם עֵצִים
מֵעֵצָי וּבָשָׂר מִבָּשָׂרִי לְזֹאת
יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לָקַחָהּ־
זֹאת. עַל־כֵּן יַעֲזֹב אִישׁ אֶת־אָבִיו
וְאֶת־אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ
לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד.

*6

- What went right this time?
- Compare the companionship described here to that created in Gilgamesh.
- Ancient Israel was a *patriarchal* society, in the economic sense (rather than the moral sense). This means that when a couple was married, they went to live in the *patriarchal* estate. How does this last verse fit into that context?

The snake was craftier than all the other wild animals which the Lord God made, and it said to the woman, "Indeed, God said 'Don't eat from any of the trees of the garden!'" But the woman said to the snake, "From the trees of the garden we can eat; but from the tree that it is in the middle of the garden God said 'Don't eat from it and don't touch it, lest you die.'"

וַיִּנְחַשׁ הָיָה עָרוֹם מִכָּל חַיַּת
הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' אֱלֹהִים
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה אַף כִּי־אָמַר
אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִכָּל עֵץ הַגֶּן.
וַתֹּאמֶר הָאִשָּׁה אֶל־הַנָּחַשׁ מִפְּרִי
עֵץ־הַגֶּן נֹאכָל. וּמִפְּרִי הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר
בְּתוֹךְ־הַגֶּן אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לֹא
תֹאכְלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ וְלֹא תִגְעוּ בוֹ פֶּן־
תָּמוּתוּ.

7

The snake said to the Woman, "You will surely *not* die! It is just that God knows that the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like the divine, knowing good and evil!"

וַיֹּאמֶר הַנָּחַשׁ אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה לֹא־
מוֹת תָּמוּתוּן. כִּי יָדַע אֱלֹהִים כִּי
בַיּוֹם אֲכַלְכֶם מִמֶּנּוּ וְנִפְקַחוּ
עֵינֵיכֶם וְהָיִיתֶם כְּאֱלֹהִים יָדְעֵי
טוֹב וָרָע.

8

The Woman saw that the tree looked good to eat, and it was attractive to the eyes and desirable for wisdom, so she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her Man with her, and he ate.

וַתִּרְאֵהָ הָאִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ
לְמֹאכָל וְכִי תְאֹה־הוּא לְעֵינַיִם
וְנִחְמַד הָעֵץ לְהַשְׂכִּיל וַתִּקַּח
מִפְּרִיו וַתֹּאכַל וַתִּתֵּן גַּם־לְאִישָׁהּ
עִמָּהּ וַיֹּאכַל.

9

- After a story about how humans are different from other animals, what goes wrong here?

- Is the snake wrong in its assessment of God's intentions? (Compare the last lines of the story, below.)
- Based on a careful reading of this last verse, where was the Man when the Woman first ate the fruit?

The eyes of both of them opened, and they knew that they were naked, so they sewed fig leaves and made belts for themselves.

10 ותִּפְקַחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי עִירְמָם הֵם וַיִּתְּפוּרוּ עָלֶיהָ תְּאֵנָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם חֲגָרֹת.

- This is our best clue as to what sort of knowledge the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” bestows upon its eater. What do you see here?

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking around in the garden at the breeze-time of the day, and the Earth Creature and his woman hid themselves from the face of the Lord God amidst the trees of the garden. The Lord God called to the Earth Creature and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was fearful, because I am nude, so I hid.”

11 וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת-קוֹל ה' אֱלֹהִים מֵתְהַלֵּךְ בְּגֵן לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם וַיִּתְחַבְּאוּ הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ מִפְּנֵי ה' אֱלֹהִים בְּתוֹךְ עֵץ הַגֵּן. וַיִּקְרָא ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶל-הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אַיֶּכָּה. וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת-קוֹלְךָ שָׁמַעְתִּי בְּגֵן וַאֲיָרָא כִּי-עָרִים אָנֹכִי וְאִתְּחַבֵּא.

He said, “Who told you that you are nude? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The Earth Creature said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me – she gave to me from the tree, and I ate.”

12 וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הֲגִיד לְךָ כִּי עָרִים אַתָּה הִמּוֹן-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לִבְלֹתִי אֶכֶל-מִמֶּנּוּ אֲכַלְתָּ. וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם הַאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה עִמָּדִי הִוא נָתַתָּה-לִּי מִן-הָעֵץ וְאֲכַל.

The Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The snake tricked me, and I ate!”

13 וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים לְאִשָּׁה מַה-זֹּאת עָשִׂית וְתֹאמְרִי הַאִשָּׁה הִנְחַשׁ הַשֵּׂיִאֲנִי וְאֲכַל.

The Lord God said to the snake, “Because you did this, cursed be you more than all the animals and all the wild beasts! You shall walk on your belly and eat dust for all the days of your life. I will put hatred between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed: it will bruise you on the head, and you will bruise it on the heel!”

14 וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶל-הַנְּחָשׁ כִּי עָשִׂית זֹאת אֲרוּר אַתָּה מִכָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה עַל-גִּרְוֹנְךָ תֵּלֵךְ וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל כָּל-יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ. וְאִיבָה אִשִּׁית בֵּינְךָ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה וּבֵין זַרְעֶךָ וּבֵין זַרְעֶיהָ הִוא יִשׁוּפֶךָ רֹאשׁ וְאַתָּה תִּשׁוּפֶנּוּ עִקְבֵּי.

To the Woman he said: “I will greatly increase your toil and your pregnancies; with hardship shall you have children. Your desire shall be for your Man, and he shall rule over you.”

15 אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה אָמַר הַרְבֵּה אַרְבֵּה עֲצָבוֹנְךָ וְהִרְבֵּה בְּעֲצָב תֵּלְדִי בָנִים וְאֶל-אִישׁךָ תִּשְׁקָתְךָ וְהִוא מִשְׁלֵל-בְּךָ.

- The punishment of the woman is troubling on ethical grounds. This translation (based on that by Professor Carol Meyers) differs from many others. How does it change the import of the line?

- Consider the original plan for the humans in the garden. How will life now differ from that plan, based on what was just said to the Woman?
- The original threat had been that eating from the tree of knowledge would lead to death. How does that tally with this line?

To the Earth Creature he said, “Because you obeyed the voice of your Woman, and ate from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from, the earth is cursed because of you. With pain shall you eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the wild grass. By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the earth, for from it you were taken – for you are dust, and you will return to dust!”

וְלֹאדָם אָמַר כִּי-שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל
אִשְׁתְּךָ וְתֹאכַל מִן-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר
צִוִּיתִיךָ לֵאמֹר לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ
אֲרוּרָה הָאֲדָמָה בְּעִבּוּרְךָ
בְּעֵצְבוֹן תֹּאכְלֶנָּה כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ.
וְקוֹץ וְדַרְדַּר תִּצְמִיחַ לָךְ וְאָכַלְתָּ
אֶת-עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה. בְּזַעַת אִפְיֶיךָ
תֹּאכַל לֶחֶם עַד שׁוֹבֶךְ אֶל-
הָאֲדָמָה כִּי מִמֶּנָּה לָקַחְתָּ כִּי-
עָפָר אַתָּה וְאֶל-עָפָר תָּשׁוּב.

- What is the labor now imposed on the Earth Creature?
- There's a silver lining: what will he now eat? How does that compare to the original plan in the garden?
- What do childbirth and agriculture have in common?

The Earth Creature called his Woman ‘Eve,’ for she was the moth of all the living. The Lord God made the Earth Creature and his Woman garments of skin, and clothed them.

וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ חַוָּה
כִּי הוּא הִיְתָה אִם כָּל-חַי. וַיַּעַשׂ
ה' אֱלֹהִים לָאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ
כִּתְנוֹת עוֹר וַיִּלְבָּשֵׂם.

The Lord God said, “Now the Earth Creature has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Now what if he stretches out his hand and takes also from the Tree of Life, and eats, and lives forever?!”
The Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to work the earth from which he had been taken. He banished the Earth Creature, and had the cherubim and the fiery rotating sword east of Eden, to guard the path to the Tree of Life.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים הֵן הָאָדָם
הֵיךָ כְּאֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ לָדַעַת טוֹב
וָרָע וְעַתָּה פֶּן-יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וְלָקַח
גַּם מִעֵץ הַחַיִּים וְאָכַל וְחַי
לְעֹלָם. וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ ה' אֱלֹהִים
מִגֶּן-עֵדֶן לַעֲבֹד אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה
אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִשָּׁם. וַיִּגְרַשׂ אֶת-
הָאָדָם וַיִּשְׁכֵּן מִקֶּדֶם לְגֶן-עֵדֶן
אֶת-הַכְּרֻבִים וְאֶת לֵהַט הַחֶרֶב
הַמַּתְהַפֶּכֶת לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת-דֶּרֶךְ עֵץ
הַחַיִּים.

- The garments of skin mark an important transformation in the relationship between people and animals. What is now different?
- What is the concern God has if the humans remain in the garden and eat the fruit of the tree of life? What would be wrong with them being/remaining immortal?

Word banks

Passage 2:

וַיִּקַּח ה' אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם וַיְנַחֲהוּ בְּגֶן-עֵדֶן לְעַבְדָּהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ.

the Lord God	ה' אֱלֹהִים	(he) took	וַיִּקַּח
he placed him	וַיְנַחֲהוּ	the Earth Creature	אֶת-הָאָדָם
		in the garden of Eden	בְּגֶן-עֵדֶן
to guard it	וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ (= וּלְשָׁמֹר אותה)	to work it	לְעַבְדָּהּ (לְעַבֹּד אותה)

Passage 3:

וַיֹּצֵא ה' אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל עֵץ-הַגֶּן אָכַל תֹּאכַל. וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרַע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי בַיּוֹם אֲכַלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת.

the Lord God	ה' אֱלֹהִים	(he) commanded	וַיֹּצֵא
saying	לֵאמֹר	the Earth Creature	עַל-הָאָדָם
you may certainly eat	אָכַל תֹּאכַל	from every tree of the garden	מִכָּל עֵץ-הַגֶּן
you may not eat from it	לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ	but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil	וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת טוֹב וְרַע
on the day of	בַּיּוֹם	because	כִּי
you will surely die	מוֹת תָּמוּת	you eating from it	אֲכַלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ

Passage 6:

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם זֹאת הַפֶּעַם עָצָם מְעַצְמֵי וּבִשָׂר מִבִּשְׂרֵי לְזֹאת יִקְרָא אִשָּׁה כִּי מֵאִישׁ לָקַחָהּ-זֹאת. עַל-כֵּן יַעֲזֹב-אִישׁ אֶת-אָבִיו וְאֶת-אִמּוֹ וְדָבַק בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ וְהָיוּ לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד.

the Earth Creature	הָאָדָם	he said	וַיֹּאמֶר
bone of my bones	עָצָם מְעַצְמֵי	this time	זֹאת הַפֶּעַם
		flesh of my flesh!	וּבִשָׂר מִבִּשְׂרֵי
woman	אִשָּׁה	this one shall be called	לְזֹאת יִקְרָא
this one was taken	לָקַחָהּ זֹאת	for from a man	כִּי מֵאִישׁ
shall abandon	יַעֲזֹב	therefore	עַל כֵּן
and his mother	וְאֶת אִמּוֹ	his father	אֶת אָבִיו
to his wife/woman	בְּאִשְׁתּוֹ	and cling	וְדָבַק
one flesh	לְבָשָׂר אֶחָד	and they shall become	וְהָיוּ

Passage 16:

ולאדם אמר כי-שמעת לקול אשתך ותאכל מן-העץ אשר צויתך לאמר לא תאכל ממנו ארוה האדמה בעבורך בעצבון תאכלנה כל ימי חייד. וקוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך ואכלת את-עשב השדה. בזעת אפיד תאכל לחם עד שובך אל-האדמה כי ממנה לקחת כי-עפר אתה ואל-עפר תשוב.

he said	אמר	and to the Earth Creature	ולאדם
to the voice of your wife	לקול אשתך	because you listened	כי-שמעת
from	מן	and you ate	ותאכל
which I commanded you	אשר צויתך	the tree	העץ
“do not eat from it”	לא תאכל ממנו	saying	לאמר
the land	האדמה	cursed [passive]	ארוה
with pain	בעצבון	because of you	בעבורך
all the days of your life	כל ימי חייד	you shall eat it	תאכלנה
and thistle	ודרדר	and thorn	וקוץ
and you shall eat	ואכלת	shall grown for you	תצמיח לך
by the sweat of your brow	בזעת אפיד	the wild grass	את עשב השדה
bread	לחם	you shall eat	תאכל
to the earth	אל האדמה	until your return	עד שובך
because dust	כי עפר	for from it you were taken	כי ממנה לקחת
and to	ואל	you	אתה
you shall return	תשוב	dust	עפר