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Before the Serpent Became Satan - Part 2

By Jim Myers

Continued from Issue Number 38.

What have we learned so far about the serpent from the biblical text?

- (1) a wild animal
- (2) most clever wild animal
- (3) He is able to speak to human beings.
- (4) He was named by the man.
- (5) He was made by Yahweh when Yahweh was attempting to create a mate for the man.
- (6) The root word for serpent has connotations of bewitchment & magic.
- (7) He is upright, not a crawling creature.
- (8) He possesses the power to reason.

Obviously, this being doesn't have much in common with serpents as we know them today. In addition, as a result of the way in which this story was interpreted by later theologians, the serpent became the symbol of evil.

For many cultures, the serpent represents spiritual wisdom, life and healing. The first symbols of serpents were attributed to **Enki** and then **Ninhursag** in ancient Mesopotamia. In India, the "nagas" were the **serpent gods and goddesses**. In the Americas there was **Quetzlcoatl** (or Thoth). Why was the snake chosen? For its cleverness, ability to survive in the harshest of environments, and again, its shape resembling the flow of

energy up the spine - to the crown chakra, and the third eye.

The **letter S** was one of the **oldest symbols of serpenhood**, both **in its shape and in its sibilant sound**; and the serpent was one of the oldest symbols of female power. **Woman and serpent together were considered holy in preclassic Aegean civilization**, since both seemed to embody the power of life. **Serpents were considered immortal** because they were believed to renew themselves indefinitely by shedding old skins.



In Arabic, the words for "snake", "life," and "teaching" are all related to the name of Eve.

Look at the picture above. Do you see the serpents? Is this a symbol of life or death in our modern culture? Isn't it funny how the serpent is a symbol of "life" in the medical profession and a symbol of "evil" in Christianity?

In the last issue the stage was set for a classic showdown between the human beings and the serpent. Both were clever, but as of yet, no one knew who would prove to be the most clever of them all. The serpent made the first move:

And he said unto the woman, "Ah, has **Elohim** said, You (2nd person masculine plural) shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1)

The woman cuts the serpent off in mid-sentence with her response (Genesis 3:2-3):

And the woman said unto the serpent, "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden you (2nd person masculine plural) may eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, Elohim said, 'You (2nd person masculine plural) shall not eat of it, neither shall you you (2nd person masculine plural) touch it, lest you (2nd person masculine plural) die.

Now let's see how accurate their quotes were? We need to go back to Genesis 2:16-17 to see what Yahweh Elohim actually said:

And Yahweh Elohim commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you (2nd person masc. singular) may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you (2nd person masc. singular) shall not eat of it: for in the day that you (2nd person masc. singular) eat thereof you (2nd person masc. singular) shall surely die."

Now let's compare what the serpent and woman said to the words Yahweh commanded the man concerning the fruit trees:

- (1) **Yahweh** -- Of every tree of the garden you (2nd person masc. singular) may freely eat.
- (2) **Serpent** -- You (2nd person masculine plural) shall not eat of any tree of the garden?
- (3) **Woman** -- Of the fruit of the trees of the garden you (2nd person masculine plural) may eat.

Next, let's see what they said about the prohibited tree:

- (1) **Yahweh** -- but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you (2nd person masc. singular) shall not eat of it.
- (2) **Serpent** -- You (2nd person masculine plural) shall not eat of any tree.

- (3) **Woman** -- but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, Elohim said, 'You (2nd person masculine plural) shall not eat of it.

Did you notice that neither Yahweh nor the serpent said anything about "not touching the fruit of the tree?"

Finally, how do they compare when it comes to the penalty?

- (1) **Yahweh** -- you (2nd person masc. singular) shall surely die.
- (2) **Serpent** -- you (2nd person masculine plural) shall not die (3:4).
- (3) **Woman** -- you (2nd person masculine plural) die.

Genesis 2:16 said that Yahweh gave the commandment to "the man." This raises three very important questions in my mind:

- (1) How did the serpent know what Yahweh Elohim said? He was created after Yahweh said it. Who told him?
- (2) How did the woman know what Yahweh Elohim said? She was created after Yahweh said it and after the serpent was created. Who told her?
- (3) Why did neither call Elohim "Yahweh?"

What answers do you have for the questions? Meanwhile, let's get back to the contest. The serpent diverts the focus from the potential death consequences of eating the fruit in Genesis 3:4-5:

And the serpent said unto the woman, You (2nd person masculine plural) shall not surely die: 5 for God doth know that in the day you (2nd person masculine plural) eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and **you** (2nd person masculine plural) **shall be as Elohim**, knowing good and evil.

One quick note – *In Hebrew when you have a two or more individuals of different genders the masculine plural is used. (To Be Continued)*

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