



DISCOVERING THE BIBLE & OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGES

Providing factual information about the Bibles, beliefs, movements, institutions, events and people of historical Christianity & Judaism.

2014 • NUMBER 12

Digging Deeper In the Garden

By Jim Myers

Modern readers are prone to project their beliefs and cultures on the characters and events recorded in their Bible *ó and aren't even aware of it*. Are you ready for a shock? The original Hebrew Scriptures were not written to be read by the public at large. The text of the Hebrew Bible was not part of the popular culture. To the public, the scrolls of the Hebrew Scriptures were icons of a body of knowledge accessible only through the oral instruction presented by religious experts *ó the Temple scribes*. Scribes wrote for scribes and studied it in the scribal workshop of the Temple.¹ They used special linguistic devices and techniques to make and highlight important points. Many of these were lost or became unrecognizable in modern English translations.

Today, we are going to attempt to take a trip back in time to the Temple in Jerusalem and the scribal workshop and take another look at one of the best known sections of the Hebrew text *ó the Garden in Eden*. When the scribes gathered to study this text they focused on what was written, how it was written, why it was written, as well as what was not written. So, turn your BS (belief system) off and tune in to the world of the Jewish scribes and get ready to dig much deeper in the events in the Garden. The words that consist of all capital letters are transliterations of Hebrew words.

*In the day Yahweh the ELOHIYM made the Earth and the Heavens.*²

This introduces the second account in the Torah -- *the day* Yahweh the ELOHIYM made the Earth and the Heavens. It will be a very different account from the first *ó in the beginning* ELOHIYM created the Heavens and the Earth. ELOHIYM is the Hebrew word that has the primary meaning of *ōgod* or *gods.ō*

*No plant of the field was in the Earth; no grass of the field had sprouted; because Yahweh the ELOHIYM had not sent rain upon the Earth; and there was no ADAM (man) to till the ADAMAH (ground).*³

This account opens by revealing what didn't exist *ó no plant, no grass, no rain, and no ADAM (man)*. Which of these will Yahweh create first?

*And a mist went up from the earth and watered all of the face of the ADAMAH (ground).*⁴

The text doesn't reveal what caused this mysterious mist to rise, but it is essential for the first task Yahweh undertakes.

*And Yahweh the ELOHIYM formed the ADAM (man) of dirt⁵ from the ADAMAH (ground).*⁶

The scribes use a number of Hebrew wordplays in this account to make their points, but they are usually lost in English translations. I will try to make you aware of them by using English transliterations⁷ of the Hebrew words. Keep in mind that the Hebrew text was written to be read out loud to the public, since most people couldn't read. The first wordplay involves the words **ADAM** and **ADAMAH**. **ADAM** is translated *man*, while **ADAMAH** is translated *ground*. The wordplay sounded something like this ó *"Yahweh formed the ADAM from the ADAMAH."* The point of the wordplay is to establish and stress the link of the man to the ground. The ancient audience would have understood the text to mean something like this ó *Yahweh formed the earthling from the earth.*

*And Yahweh the ELOHIYM breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living soul.*⁸

Until Yahweh breathed into his nostrils, there was simply a mound of dirt shaped like a man. But once the breath of Yahweh entered the mound of dirt, it was transformed into a living soul. In Hebrew, the word soul is *the center of appetites, desires and longings*. This breath of Yahweh reveals a link of the man to Yahweh. The man is a unique creature that is linked to both Yahweh and the earth with a soul that has appetites, desires and longings also linked to both. But, the text teaches a very important lesson here -- *mankind draws his existence directly from his ELOHIYM.*⁹

*And Yahweh the ELOHIYM planted a garden toward the east in Eden; and there He placed the ADAM (man) whom He had formed. And out of the ADAMAH (ground) Yahweh the ELOHIYM caused every tree to grow that is pleasing to the sight and TOV for food;*¹⁰

Pay close attention to what the text reveals.

- (1) *Yahweh planted a garden (He didn't speak and it magically appeared).*
- (2) *The garden was located east of where the man was made.*
- (3) *The garden was located in a place called "Eden."*
- (4) *The man wasn't there when Yahweh planted the garden.*
- (5) *Yahweh placed the man in the garden after it was created.*
- (6) *Yahweh caused every tree in the garden to grow.*
- (7) *The trees also came from the ADAMAH (ground).*
- (8) *Every tree that grew was pleasing to the sight and good for food.*

The man's journey began in a land that was west of Eden and he was taken to Eden by Yahweh and placed in the garden. Be sure to note that *Eden* was not the name of the garden. It was the name of the place where Yahweh chose to plant His garden. Nothing is revealed Eden -- *was it a country, a valley, or something else?* Who named it? One of the principles revealed in the first account of the Torah is - *mystery is an important part of life*. This is just another mystery we must add to the others we find in this ancient text. Something we do know are the meanings of the Hebrew word translated *Eden* -- *joy, rapture; ornaments, finery; luxuriate, enjoy, the good life.*¹¹ A point the scribes would recognize and stress is that Yahweh's garden was located in a land of luxury and that land was located east of the man's homeland.

What kind of garden did Yahweh plant? All that we know about this garden so far is that it contains fruit trees and a man. In the first account, we learned that fruit was the exclusive food of humans. It sounds like Yahweh actually planted an orchard to grow food exclusively designated for humans. How would an ancient audience view what Yahweh created? They would have understood it to be a garden of a god ó

Yahweh's Temple Garden. The idea of paradise and the garden of a god was a well-known motif in the Middle and Near East. Even though I don't have space here to explain this, it is important to know that the first account was also about the creation of a temple ó *the ELOHIYM's Temple*. This is a theme that has been completely lost today, but would have been very important to the Jewish scribes and their audiences.

*And the Tree of Life (was) in the middle of the garden –
and the Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA.¹²*

Nothing would have grabbed the attention of members of the ancient audience quicker than a reference to the *Tree of Life*. They were probably familiar with other stories about trees or plants that bestowed immortality on any human that could find and eat from them. In those stories, discovering where the tree was located and then getting to it involved difficult journeys with many dangers. But in this account, the *Tree of Life* is located in the middle of the Yahweh's Temple Garden ó *all one would have to do is simply walk up to it, pick a fruit, and take a bite.*

How much easier could it be? But, the audience encountered something in this account that is not found in any other account -- the *Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA*. Its appearance marks a remarkable break with Middle Eastern mythology and reveals a subtle, but very important shift of emphasis -- *from immortality to knowledge*. Why did Yahweh plant it and why did He plant it next to the *Tree of Life*? Let's take another look at the description of the three kinds of trees in Yahweh's Temple Garden:

- (1) *trees that are pleasing to the eyes and good for food*
- (2) *Tree of Life*
- (3) *Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA*

Keep in mind that above we learned -- *every tree that grew was pleasing to the sight and good for food*. This would mean that the *Tree of Life* and the *Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA* were also pleasing to the sight and good for food. Before we learn any more about the trees, the text has something else to reveal about Yahweh's Temple Garden:

And a river went out from Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became the four heads. The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. And the name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.¹³

Let's follow the flow of the water, so we can clearly understand where it came from and where it went:

- (1) *an unnamed river flowed out from Eden into the garden*
- (2) *in the garden the unnamed river divided and became the headwaters of four rivers*
- (3) *the first river was the **Pishon**.*
- (4) *the second river was the **Gihon***
- (5) *the third river was the **Tigris***
- (6) *the fourth river was the **Euphrates***

Isn't it interesting that the origin of the unnamed river that provided water to the garden was outside of it? The important point is that Yahweh's Temple Garden had an abundance of water, so much

water that it supplied the water for four major rivers. Now the account flashes back to the moment the man arrived at the Garden:

Yahweh the ELOHIYM took the man and settled him into the garden in Eden to serve her and guard her.¹⁴

The traditional translations have -- *the man was placed in the garden to tend and keep it*. However, since Hebrew words are either masculine or feminine, and the word *garden* is masculine, we felt that this was a reference to something feminine that wasn't the garden. So, we chose to translate the word her and let the context reveal who she is.

And Yahweh the ELOHIYM commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it dying you shall die."¹⁵

Determining the meaning of the word you can be a real challenge in English. *You* could be a reference to masculine, feminine, singular or plural. In Hebrew, each form is spelled differently, so there is no confusion. Every you in the above verse is masculine singular, which means they are all references to the man. This is the first commandment in the biblical text and understanding exactly what Yahweh commanded is essential to understanding the rest of this account.

- (1) *The man may eat freely from any tree of the garden, except from one.*
- (2) *The man is forbidden to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA.*
- (3) *In the day the man eats fruit from the forbidden tree, "dying he shall die."*

This is the first reference to *death* in the biblical text. Now put yourself in the man's shoes and consider what the commandment meant to him.

- (1) *he is forbidden to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of TOV and RA*
- (2) *if he eats from it he will die*
- (3) *he was created as full grown man*
- (4) *he has never seen any other living creatures*
- (5) *he has never seen anything die before*

He had no point of reference or personal experience with *death*, any more than he had with *birth*. The fact that Yahweh would give such a commandment raises other questions too.

- (1) *Why would He give a commandment with a death penalty when the man wouldn't understand what that meant?*
- (2) *Why would Yahweh plant a tree that was deadly to the man in His garden?*
- (3) *Why didn't Yahweh give the man a commandment to eat from the Tree of Life?*

One other point needs to be made before we continue *the meanings of TOV and RA*. These are very common Hebrew words. **TOV** is usually translated *good*, and **RA** is translated *evil*. Keep in mind however, that this account is related to the first account and in it **TOV** appeared seven times. The scribes would have immediately recognized this and understood that it revealed something that is very important. **TOV** is the standard the ELOHIYM used to measure His work and it will be the standard He will use to measure the acts of humans later. Understanding the contextual meaning of **TOV** is essential.

*For an act to be **TOV** it must be observable and protect life, preserve life, make life more functional, and/or increase the quality of life.*

The word RA did not appear in the first account, but it is linked to and the opposite of TOV.

*For an act to be **RA** it must be observable and destroy life, threaten life, make life less functional, and/or decrease the quality of life.*

This standard removes a great deal of the subjectivity linked to the words *ōgoodō* and *ōevil.ō* This standard is seen in many books of the Hebrew Scriptures and is the standard Jesus taught his followers to use. Now let's continue with the account.

*And Yahweh the ELOHIYM said, "It is **not TOV** that the man should be alone; I will make a helpmeet for him."¹⁶*

This marks a significant difference between the first and second accounts. In the first, the acts of the ELOHIYM were all **TOV** and He created the man and woman together at the same time. In this account, Yahweh created something that was not **TOV**. In order to correct this situation, Yahweh reveals that the man must have a *helpmeet*. What is a *helpmeet*? Many people assume it means *ōa helper" – women were created to be helpers for men*. At least that's the way many men have interpreted it. The Hebrew word, however, means something very different:

A helpmeet is one who corresponds to; is a counterpart of; intellectually equal; capable of satisfying; and adequate in every way.¹⁷

In other words, *a helpmeet a person that is equal to and adequate to another person in every way*. This repeats the principle revealed in the first account -- *male and female were created as equals to be co-ELOHIYMs and co-rulers (shepherds)*.

And out of the ground Yahweh the ELOHIYM formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them; and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for the man there was not found a helpmeet for him."¹⁸

What was Yahweh doing? Above He said that He was going to create the man a helpmeet, but what He did was create beast of the field, flying creatures and cattle. Did he think that one of them was equal to and adequate for the man? (*This may have been a little scribal humor!*) After He made the new creatures He took them to the man and he named them. This was very different from the first account in which the ELOHIYM named everything. Anyway, after Yahweh brought all of these creatures to the man, no helpmeet was found.

*And Yahweh the ELOHIYM caused a deep sleep to fall upon the **ADAM** (man), and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and the flesh closed up beneath. And Yahweh the ELOHIYM built the rib He had taken from the **ADAM** (man) into a **ISHAH** (woman), and brought her to the **ADAM** (man).¹⁹*

This give a new meaning to the phrase, *“Wow, she is really built!”* In this case, she really was -- *built by Yahweh*. This is setting the stage for another very important wordplay. Pay close attention to the Hebrew words translated man and woman. Now let’s take a moment to look at what took place from the man’s point of view. He went to sleep, woke up, and Yahweh arrived again with another creature for him to name.

*And the ADAM (man) said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called ISHAH (woman), because from ISH (man) this was taken.”*²⁰

“Bone of my bones” and *“flesh of my flesh”* meant *“just like me.”* He knew the other creatures were very different from him, but this was very much like him. Keep in mind that Yahweh brought the creatures to the man for him to name them. This wordplay reveals that he did something else too. Let’s look at the Hebrew words translated *man* and *woman* again.

- (1) The narrator’s word for *man* is **ADAM**.
- (2) The man’s word for *woman* is **ISHAH**.
- (3) The man’s word for *man* is **ISH**.

The man not only named her **ISHAH**, he named himself **ISH**. This recalls the earlier wordplay used at the creation of the man **ADAM** and **ADAMAH** ó *ADAM was created from the ADAMAH*. Here, **ISHAH** is created from the **ISH**. The point is that just as the man and the ground are linked together, so are the woman and man linked together.

*Therefore a ISH (man) shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his ISHAH (woman); and they shall be one flesh. And they were both ARUMIYM, the ADAM (man) and his ISHAH (woman); and they had not shamed themselves. And the NACHASH was more ARUM than any beast of the field which Yahweh the ELOHIYM had made.*²¹

Who spoke these words? The use of the words *“father and mother”* would seem to indicate that these are the words of the narrator, not the man. He had no father and mother. This sets the stage for one of the most important events in the biblical text. Therefore, let’s take a moment to take another look at it:

- (1) **ISH** (a man) shall leave his father and mother
- (2) **ISH** (a man) shall cleave (literally “be glued to”) his **ISHAH** (woman)
- (3) they shall be one flesh
- (4) the **ADAM** (man) and his **ISHAH** (woman) were both **ARUMIYM**
- (5) they had not shamed themselves
- (6) the **NACHASH** was more **ARUM** than any beast of the field
- (7) the **NACHASH** was one of the beast of the field that Yahweh made and the man named

Make sure to note that the man is to go to the woman, not the woman to the man. He is to be glued to her, not her to him. Instead of two individuals, they are to become one flesh and act together as one. Now let’s turn our attention to the next wordplay ó **ARUMIYM** and **ARUM**. **ARUMIYM** consist of the root word **ARUM** + the masculine plural suffix ó **IYM**. **ARUM** has the following meanings: *subtle, shrewd, clever, crafty, and cunning*.²² Now let’s update our translation:

Both the ADAM (man) and his ISHAH (woman) were ARUMIYM (subtle, shrewd, clever, crafty, and cunning) and they had not shamed themselves. The NACHASH was the more ARUM (subtle, shrewd, clever, crafty, and cunning) than any beast of the field.

What is a NACHASH? It has been translated by the following English words: *snake, crocodile, dragon*;²³ *a divination, bewitchment or magic curse*.²⁴ It is important to understand that even though a Hebrew word may have more than one meaning those meanings usually share a common idea. In the ancient world, a NACHASH was viewed as a dangerous creature, often believed to have mysterious or magical powers. They could bewitch or use magic on their victims. Let's take a moment to consider what the ancient text reveals about this creature:

- (1) *it is a beast of the field*
- (2) *it was created by Yahweh when He was looking for a helpmeet for the man*
- (3) *it was named by the man*
- (4) *it could speak and understand human language*
- (5) *it was an upright creature*
- (6) *it had come face-to-face with the man before*

Had NACHASH and the man had any discussions since they first met? After all, they both lived in Yahweh's garden. How did the creature take being rejected as an equal to the man? It is a big mistake to view this creature as a snake, but it is a bigger mistake to view it as Satan. The text clearly states that it is beast of the field.

The author has set the stage for the event that will follow. If this encounter took place in Las Vegas today, it would be an HBO special and the headline would be:

ISH & ISHAH vs. NACHASH!
Which will be the most subtle, shrewd, clever, crafty or cunning?

Sadly, we have run out of space in this issue. If you would like to continue this study in the next issue *please let me know by checking the enclosed form.* **BHC**

Please Help by Sending an End of Year Donation*

We are coming to the end of the year and asking those who consider BHC's work valuable and benefit from it to help by making a generous end of the year donation -- \$5,000, \$2,500, \$2,000, \$1,500, \$1,000, \$750, \$500, \$250, \$100, \$75, \$50 – more or less. Your donation is important, no matter what the amount, because it lets us know that you are benefiting from our work – and you care about helping us continue. At the bottom of the page you will find our mailing address and a link to our website where you can make an online donation.

Please take time to donate today!

Biblical Heritage Center, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit corporation. Donations are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law. Check with your tax professional or the IRS for more information.

December Memorials

In Their Remembrance

In Loving Memory

**MARJORIE
ANN
STEWART**

**b. 1927
December 21, 2009**

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

*May their memories inspire us to seek
those qualities of mind and heart which
they shared when we walked life's
journey together. May we help to bring
closer to fulfillment their highest ideals
and noblest strivings.*

*May their memories deepen our loyalty
to those things which we valued and
shared --
faith, love, peace and devotion and our
biblical heritage. As long as we live,
they too will live; for they are now a
part of us, as we remember them.*

(Inspired from prayers found in Yitzhor
Reflections - The New Mahzor - The Prayer
Book Press)

שָׁלוֹם

¹ *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* by Karel Van Der Toorn © 2007; Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA; pp. 1-2.

² Genesis 2:4b

³ Genesis 2:5

⁴ Genesis 2:6

⁵ Many translate this as "dust of the ground," but "clouds & fine soil" are also options.

⁶ Genesis 2:7

⁷ A transliteration is when the letters of the Hebrew word are replaced by their English equivalents.

⁸ Genesis 2:7

⁹ *Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* by Nahum M. Sarna; (© 1966 by the Melton Research Center of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America; Schocken Book, New York, NY); p. 14.

¹⁰ Genesis 2:8-9a

¹¹ *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay; p. 266.

¹² Genesis 2:9b

¹³ Genesis 2:10-14

¹⁴ Genesis 2:15

¹⁵ Genesis 2:16-17

¹⁶ Genesis 2:18

¹⁷ *The Book of Genesis* by S. R. Driver; Ninth Edition 6 April 1913; Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, England; p. 41.

¹⁸ Genesis 2:19-20

¹⁹ Genesis 2:21-22

²⁰ Genesis 2:23

²¹ Genesis 2:24-3:1a

²² A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerrushalmi, and Midrahic Literature: Volume I; compiled by Marcus Jastrow; Printed in Israel; p. 1115a.

²³ *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay; p. 235a.

²⁴ *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay; p. 235a.