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The Breath of Life: Speech, Gender, and Authority in the Garden of Eden

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In the garden of Eden, the man alone receives the direct infusion of the divine breath, a ritual act that not only renders him capable of speech but signifies also his commissioning as one who will speak with and for YHWH to the subsequently formed creatures. The man's failure to speak up during the woman's conversation with the serpent represents his failure to guard the garden and explains why YHWH finds him guilty of the crime of "listening to the voice of your woman."

What has become known in the Christian tradition as the "fall of man" is based in the reading and interpretation of a single verse in the Bible: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasing to the eyes and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and she ate, and she gave [some] also to her man who was with her and he ate" (Gen 3:6).[1] The entire event is over in what seems to be a matter of minutes. There is no dialogue, no spoken word at all. Instead, the reader enters the narrator's privileged view into the decision-making process of the woman and the actions that ensued following the decision: she took, she ate, she gave, and he ate. Even if we consider the lead-up to this one verse, the entire temptation scene is recounted in the course of six verses. The narrator introduces the serpent in 3:1 as "the craftiest of all the beasts of the field that YHWH Elohim had made." The serpent then engages the woman in conversation for five and a half verses (3:1b–5), at which point we arrive at the woman's decision to eat. While this prelude to transgression is characterized by dialogue between the woman and the serpent, one voice is conspicuously absent—that of the man. His absence is conspicuous because he alone is described explicitly as being brought to life by the breath of YHWH, and he alone was charged with

[1] All translations of the Hebrew text of the Bible are my own unless otherwise noted.

working and keeping guard over the garden.[2] Finally, he alone received the direct command from YHWH not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:7, 15–17). Given the lack of dialogue between the man and the woman at the moment of transgression, one further verse stands out as especially surprising.

> And to the man he [YHWH] said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your woman, and you have eaten from the tree that I commanded you saying, 'Do not eat of it,' cursed is the ground on account of you; through labor you shall eat of it all the days of your life." (3:17)

It is not surprising that the man is punished for eating from the tree that YHWH had forbidden to him. What is surprising is that he is punished first for the crime of listening to the voice of the woman. Since the woman never said anything to the man at the moment of transgression, readers are left to surmise that either there was an unrecorded conversation between the man and the woman in which she convinced him to eat,[3] or the man's crime of "listening" relates to his silence as he stood "with her" during her conversation with the serpent.

This study examines the interplay of dialogue and silences in the garden of Eden and provides evidence for a gender-based bifurcation of speech in the garden. Speech and dialogue repeatedly connect the man to YHWH in intimate and generative conversation such that the man becomes the divinely addressed and instructed creature charged with "guarding" the garden. Speech and dialogue tie the woman to the serpent in a dangerous and tricky conversation that challenges the divine command and endangers the man. When the man fails to speak with his divinely endowed authority and knowledge concerning the tree, YHWH charges him with the crime of "listening to the voice of his woman." When the woman decides to eat the fruit and offers some to her man as well, she is guilty of failing to serve as "helper" to the man. Once we recognize the gendered division of speech in the garden, we understand that the narrative as a whole serves as an etiology for male authority exercised through divinely aligned speech.

I. Scene 1: Installing the Man as YHWH's Appointed Ruler in the Garden (Genesis 2:4b–25)

Man: The Divinely Infused Being

The story of the garden of Eden begins with a well-watered earth that has no plant life or gardener. To rectify these deficiencies, YHWH plants a garden and

[2] In Gen 2–3, the deity is for the most part referred to as "YHWH Elohim." For the sake of brevity, I will abbreviate this to YHWH except in quoted citations of the biblical text and in those few verses where the deity is referred to simply as "Elohim."

[3] The idea that the woman spoke to the man and persuaded him to eat the fruit is found in several early interpretations and retellings; see, e.g., LAB 13:8; Sib. Or. 1:42–45; Greek LAE 21:2–6.

creates the first human, a man, in a two-step process: YHWH forms him out of the dust of the earth and then breathes into his nostrils the breath of life such that he becomes "a living being" (נפש חיה).[4] YHWH then places him in the garden "to work and guard it" (v. 15). The reason for the man's substance-based tie to the soil is explicit: his creation was prompted by the observation that "there was no man to till [לעבד] the earth" (v. 5). The earthman (האדם) was created to till the earth (האדמה) (vv. 8, 15).[5] The reasons for the man's animation through divine breath are more opaque, but the text provides a series of unfolding clues, each of which builds a case for understanding the directly infused divine breath as endowing the man with authoritative speech that he is intended to use to guard the garden. Just as his earthy substance links him to tilling the garden, his divinely aligned, authoritative speech enables him to guard it.

Directly inhaling the breath of YHWH makes the man unique among all the creatures; neither the animals nor the woman receive this direct infusion of divine breath.[6] YHWH's "breath" (נשמה) and "wind" (רוח) are frequently tied to the human capacity for speech and the power to create in the book of Psalms and the book of Job. The psalmist proclaims, "By the word of YHWH, the heavens were made; and all their host by the wind [רוח] of his mouth" (Ps 33:6; see also Pss 18:15, 147:18, 148:8). In his discourses against his friends, Job conflates his own breath with the wind of God and asserts that both give him the power to speak truthfully with integrity and righteousness: "As long as my breath [נשמתי] is in me, and the wind [רוח] of God is in my nostrils, my lips will not speak falsehood, and my tongue will not utter deceit" (Job 27:3–4). Elihu claims that wisdom does not come with age; rather, wisdom is the creative gift of the divine breath breathed into humanity: "Surely it is the wind [רוח] that is within humanity [אנוש]; the breath [נשמה] of the Most High that gives them understanding" (Job 32:8). Elihu then defends his right

[4] That *hāʾādām* is presented as male from the time of his forming has been amply demonstrated by several scholars over the last three decades: Susan S. Lancer, "(Feminist) Criticism in the Garden: Inferring Genesis 2–3," *Semeia* 41 (1988): 67–84; David J. A. Clines, "What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Irredeemably Androcentric Orientations in Gen 1–3," in *What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, JSOTSup 94 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 25–48; Julie Galambush, "*ʾādām* from *ʾădāmâ*, *ʾiššâ* from *ʾiš*," in *History and Interpretation: Essays in Honour of John H. Hayes*, ed. M. Patrick Graham, William P. Brown, and Jeffrey K. Kuan, JSOTSup 173 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 33–46; Jerome Gellman, "Gender and Sexuality in the Garden of Eden," *Theology and Sexuality* 12 (2006): 319–36; Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 70–72. These scholars dispute Phyllis Trible's argument that *hāʾādām* was androgynous until the formation of woman (Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, OBT 2 [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978], 72–143).

[5] Galambush, "*ʾādām* from *ʾădāmâ*," 37.

[6] Gen 7:22 describes women and animals as possessing "the breath of life," but we have no narrative that describes them ritually receiving this breath through a direct infusion from the deity.

to speak with authority to Job with the claim, "The wind [רוח] of God made me; the breath [נשמה] of the Most High brought me to life" (Job 33:4).[7]

The constellation of vocabulary that ties divine breath and wind to life, creation, speech, and authority is found also in Gen 1, where the wind of Elohim blows over the face of the deep, and Elohim creates the cosmos through a series of spoken pronouncements. Thus, biblical evidence suggests that YHWH's breathing into the man the breath of life is his gift of speech and, by extension, creative power and divinely aligned authority. This is precisely the understanding of the targumic translators of this text who rendered Gen 2:7, "and the Lord God created Adam (out of) dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and Adam became a living being *endowed with speech*."[8]

The mouth-to-nose animation also calls to mind the commissioning of a prophet. Moses's singular authority over Miriam and Aaron is reaffirmed when YHWH declares, "with him I speak mouth to mouth [פה אל-פה]" (Num 12:8, see also Deut 18:18). Before Isaiah is commissioned to speak on behalf of YHWH, a seraph takes a coal from the temple altar and touches Isaiah's mouth with it (Isa 6:1–9). Part of Jeremiah's call includes God's affirmation, "I have put my words in your mouth" (Jer 1:9–20). Finally, Ezekiel's commissioning to speak the words of YHWH to his people begins with YHWH's command, "open your mouth and eat what I give you" (Ezek 2:8–3:11). In each of these examples, physical, ritualized contact between YHWH's mouth, hand, or words and the prophet's mouth endows the prophet with divinely aligned speech such that he can stand before the people and proclaim, "Thus says YHWH." Ezekiel can even commandeer the wind of YHWH through prophetic speech and revivify the bones of slain Israelites such that the nation is brought back to life and stands as a mighty assembly (Ezek 37:9–14). In this case, the commissioned prophet uses his divinely commanded prophetic speech to direct the "wind" [רוח] of YHWH such that it reanimates the bones of both men and women. Therefore, while all human beings have the breath of life and the capacity for speech, the Bible marks select men with divinely aligned authoritative speech through call narratives that include ritualized, physical contact between the deity and the chosen spokesperson. The creation of the man in Gen 2:7 is yet another variation on this ritualized contact through which YHWH commissions an earthly representative, and, as we will see, the primordial man, like

[7] The book of Job also links speech with breath and wind in a more general sense in 6:26, 8:2, 15:2, and 16:3.

[8] Martin S. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis, Translated, with Apparatus and Notes*, ArBib 1A (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 57. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan reads, "and the breath became in the body of Adam a spirit capable of speech" (Michael Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis, Translated, with Introduction and Notes*, ArBib 1B [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992], 22). 4 Ezra also connects divine wind and breath to creative power and the power of speech (3:3–7).

Ezekiel, will be able to serve as a conduit for the divine breath, making all subsequently formed creatures into "living beings."[9]

Catherine McDowell has connected many of the details in Gen 2–3 to the mouth-opening and mouth-washing rituals that animated Mesopotamian and Egyptian cult statues. She describes the Mesopotamian rituals of mouth washing (*mīs pî*) and mouth opening (*pīt pî*) as acts that purified a cult statue and activated its sensory faculties, enabling the now-living statue to eat, see, hear, smell, and breathe.[10] Victor Hurowitz explains the *mīs pî* ritual as a two-day ritualized process that begins in the workshop where the statue is produced and culminates "in an orchard by the riverbank, where it is ritually purified, enlivened, and activated as a god."[11] YHWH creates the man in a similar two-step process of manufacture with the hands of a craftsmanlike god and animation involving mouth-to-nose contact and the infusion of divine breath. The deity's breathing into the nostrils of the clay figure animates the man, making him capable of movement, sight, eating, hearing, and speech.

McDowell highlights the use of the *hiphil* verb וינחהו ("to cause him to rest") in Gen 2:15 for YHWH's placement of the man in the garden and makes the compelling suggestion that we read this as YHWH "installing" the man as a cult statue in his garden sanctuary.[12] The orchard setting and the presentation of YHWH as the master gardener also match details from the *mīs pî* ritual.[13] McDowell argues that the charge or commissioning of the man as the creature responsible to "work and guard the garden" endows him with authority. The only other place where the verbs "work and guard" occur together is in Num 3:7–8, 8:26, and 18:5–6, where, she notes, "they describe the duty of the Levites in guarding and ministering at the tabernacle."[14] She concludes that the combination of these two verbs suggests that

[9] Several texts attest to the idea that all living beings possess the breath or wind of YHWH, but these texts do not describe the process through which creatures receive the divine breath, nor do they tie it to the exercise of authoritative speech (see Gen 7:22; Ps 104:24–30; Qoh 3:19, 21; 12:7). There is no text in the Bible that describes a woman being ritually commissioned as a prophet in a way that directly connects her physically to the deity. This does not mean that call stories for women prophets never existed; it means only that biblical writers chose not to preserve any.

[10] Catherine L. McDowell, *The Image of God in the Garden of Eden: The Creation of Humankind in Genesis 2:5–3:24 in Light of the mīs pî, pīt pî, and wpt-r Rituals of Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt*, Siphrut 15 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 48, 62, 86.

[11] Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, "The Mesopotamian God Image, from Womb to Tomb," *JAOS* 123 (2003): 147–57, here 149–50.

[12] McDowell, *Image of God*, 157–58.

[13] Dexter E. Callender Jr., *Adam in Myth and History: Ancient Israelite Perspectives on the Primal Human*, HSS 48 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 46–47, 61; McDowell, *Image of God*, 58–66; Hurowitz, "Mesopotamian God Image," 149–50.

[14] McDowell, *Image of God*, 140–41.

the man "functioned not only as an administrator of the kingdom but also, on some level, as a royal priest of Yhwh's 'sanctuary' in Eden."[15]

The idea that האדם might fulfill both royal and priestly functions in a garden that is imagined as both a royal garden and the primordial temple need not be contradictory. As Dexter Callender has argued, "Kingship is not a notion that may be easily separated from other offices of mediation, and a parallel to Adam's role as servant in the garden may be found in the Israelite priest serving in the temple."[16] For Callender, the luxuriant trees and the image of YHWH as a gardener all participate in a symbolic world of ancient Near Eastern royal gardens.[17] For Nicolas Wyatt, placing the man in the garden is "a royal ideological motif." YHWH as a gardener is "a royal title of ancient pedigree." The duties of the man to till and care for the garden evoke "the king's general duty to care for his realm." His performance of service (עבודה) in YHWH's garden gives him the royal title "servant of YHWH" [עבד יהוה].[18] McDowell, Callender, and Wyatt all see האדם as one who is installed as and takes on the functions of a priestly king or royal priest, serving as YHWH's earthly administrator in his garden sanctuary.[19]

Man: The Divinely Addressed and Educated Being

The very first act of YHWH upon completion of the man is verbally to address him: "You may freely eat from every tree of the garden; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you may not eat, for on the day that you eat of it, you will surely die" (Gen 2:16–17). This is a creature who is capable of understanding speech and who merits the divine address. YHWH's verbal command provides the man with guidelines for garden living: which trees to eat and which to avoid. One part of a *mīs pî* incantation includes the following words spoken to a cult statue: "grant him the destiny that his mouth may eat that his ears might hear."[20] It is therefore interesting that, once the man becomes a living being, his hearing faculties allow him to become the divinely addressed, instructed, and commanded creature. It is equally of note that the first topic of discussion is food. While the man has not yet eaten of the tree of knowledge, his creator god has nonetheless provided

[15] McDowell's work builds on that of Callender, who understands Adam's role as gardener to confer royal status; Adam, like God, will be responsible for maintaining fertility (*Adam in Myth and History*, 62–65).

[16] Callender, *Adam in Myth and History*, 65.

[17] Ibid., 60–65.

[18] Nicolas Wyatt, "A Royal Garden: The Ideology of Eden," *SJOT* 28 (2014): 1–35, here 24.

[19] Given that the Hebrew Bible presents royal and priestly offices in ancient Israel and Judah as hereditary male offices, the representation of האדם in ways that evoke the symbolic worlds of priests and kings provides further evidence for the maleness of האדם.

[20] Christopher Walker and Michael B. Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian* Mīs Pî *Ritual*, SAALT 1 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2001), 134, 139, lines 36–37, cited in McDowell, *Image of God*, 62.

him with essential garden knowledge aimed at preserving his life.[21] YHWH is preparing the man to take on the role as his royal priest, his earthly ruler in the garden.

Man: Cocreator with YHWH through Speech and Naming

Divine attention remains focused on the man when YHWH observes, "it is not good for the man to be by himself," and resolves, "I will make for him a helper suited to him" (Gen 2:18).[22] This time, however, YHWH invites the man into the creative process. In a sense, YHWH provides his deputy with a garden apprenticeship; he will partner with the man in the effort to find a suitable helper for him. In this new partnership, creation remains a two-step process, but now the second step, the one that results in an earth-formed creature becoming a living being (נפש חיה) is outsourced to the man.

We can see the creative partnering of YHWH and the man when we compare YHWH's forming of the man with the forming of the animals, where the parallel phrasing of the creative acts shows how the man's enunciation of a name replaces YHWH's direct breathing:

Creation of the Man Gen 2:7	Creation of the Animals Gen 2:19
Then YHWH Elohim formed [ויצר] the man, dust from the earth [האדמה],	Then YHWH Elohim formed [ויצר] from the earth [האדמה] every beast of the field and every bird of the sky
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,	and he brought [each one] to the man to see what he might call it and everything that the man called it,
and the man became a living being [נפש חיה].	a living being [נפש חיה], that was its name.

The interjection of the phrase "a living being" precisely at the moment of the man's naming, at the breath-filled enunciation of a name, implies that it is his naming that completes the creature's animation so that it becomes a living being.[23] Thus, the

[21] Second Enoch emphasizes that Adam receives wisdom from God that is independent of the tree of knowledge. Second Enoch 30:11–13 describes God assigning the man to be a "second angel" and "a king, to reign on the earth" because he is endowed with God's "wisdom."

[22] While Trible correctly noted that the Hebrew עזר most frequently describes a role that God plays, her translation of עזר as "companion," together with her assertion that the relationship between the man and the woman is characterized by "unity, solidarity, mutuality, and equality," is not supported by the text (Trible, *God and the Rhetoric*, 90, 99). I follow and build on Clines's counterargument, which retains the English translation "helper" and understands the Hebrew to connote a position of subordination (Clines, "What Does Eve Do?," 27–32).

[23] In Gen 1, God's creative activity is also a two-step process. First, God makes a verbal

first form of speech ascribed to the man is creatively generative and aligned with YHWH's creative power and authority; he names the subsequently formed creatures into life. Ultimately, the divine–man creative partnership is successful in populating the garden with all manner of living creatures, but it fails in its intended goal of creating a helper specifically suited to the man. Nonetheless, through this apprenticeship, the man has once again gained essential garden knowledge. He not only knows but has established the names and, by extension, the natures of all the animals. He has learned to exercise his capacity for authoritative, divinely sourced, generative speech.

Man: The Substance of Woman

In the final episode of the first scene, YHWH takes over the project of creating a helper suitable for the man. In a divinely induced sleep, the man becomes the passive substance required for the building of woman. One of his ribs, or bones, becomes the building material.[24] Julie Galambush has shown how the different substances used for creating the man and then the woman "reflect the couple's underlying ontologies."[25] The man was created because of a lack in the earth: there was no one to till it, so he was created to work the earth. Likewise, the woman was created because of a lack in the man: he was alone, and she was created to fill that lack and to serve as helper and companion to him.[26] While Galambush is correct in highlighting these substance-based differences between "the man and his woman," the role of the divine breath in the creation of the man and its absence in the

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proclamation such as "let there be light," and, second, God names what has been called into being: "Elohim called the light 'day'" (Gen 1:3, 5). The verb associated with the man's naming in Gen 2:19, 20 and 3:20, קרא followed by the preposition ל, is the same verb with preposition used to describe Elohim's naming of the various elements of the created universe in Gen 1 (Gen 1:5, 8, 10). Both divine creation through speech and naming in Gen 1 and the man's partnering with the divine in creating through naming in Gen 2 suggest that the man is singled out within the creaturely realm through his godlike power of speech.

[24]The Hebrew צלע can be translated "rib," "side," or "side chambers" (BDB, 854c). Given that the man recognizes the woman as "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh," I retain the translation "rib" as a bone from the man's side. Nahum Sarna supports the translation "rib," noting the singular use of the verb "build" to describe the creation of the woman from one of the man's ribs. In this context, Sarna reminds us that צלע is "a frequent architectonic term in building texts" (*Genesis* בראשית*: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, JPSTC [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 22). Ziony Zevit has put forward a creative but complicated proposal to translate צלע as "a rare synonym" for "bone," suggesting that "bone" in this text signifies the man's penis (*What Really Happened in the Garden of Eden?* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013] 140–50). There is not space here to respond to Zevit's suggested translation, but I note that he maintains that woman was taken and built from a bone of the man's body.

[25]Galambush, "*ʾādām* from *ʾădāmâ*," 36.

[26]Ibid., 37.

creation of the woman are equally important for distinguishing their created purposes.

As was the case in the creation of the man, YHWH acts alone in building the woman, but once he has completed her form, he does not breathe into her nostrils the breath of life. Instead, he brings her to the man just as he had done with the animals. The man provides a name or classificatory label for the new creature, a label that recognizes her substance-based tie to him: "This time, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called woman [אשה], for out of man [איש] this one was taken" (Gen 2:23). This is the man's first directly quoted speech. Robert Alter has pointed out that "the initial words spoken by a personage will be revelatory ... constituting an important moment in the exposition of character."[27] Infused with the breath of YHWH, the man not only has the capacity for speech, but speech ties him to his god in received instruction, generative naming, and the ability to offer praise.

Following the man's exclamatory praising of his god and his naming of the woman, the narrator enters the story to provide further clarity on the woman's created purpose: "Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his woman, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). The man's lack that the woman's creation addresses is here clarified as a sexual and reproductive lack. Her created purpose is to join with the man as one flesh and to serve as his "helper" by bearing children.[28]

The sequencing of the created creatures is important here because the man, being formed first, has a period of independent existence with YHWH in the garden prior to the creation of animals and the woman. Being created last deprives the woman of essential garden knowledge. She was not present when the command was given concerning which trees were good for food and which single tree was to be avoided. She was not afforded the opportunity to serve as a divine apprentice during the creation of animals. She is, therefore, by definition more naïve than the man about the workings of the garden; she does not know the animals' names. Finally, the woman does not receive the direct infusion of the divine breath, and, possibly as a result, she does not merit instruction from YHWH at the completion of her forming. Unlike the man, the woman is not the divinely animated, the divinely addressed and commanded, or the divinely instructed. She and YHWH are not partners, not in speech and not in the creative process of the garden.

At the close of scene 1, the man has been installed in YHWH's sacred garden. He will serve as YHWH's royal priest, charged with working and guarding the garden. YHWH has provided him with valuable instructions about what to eat and what not to eat. YHWH has invited the man into a garden apprenticeship focused on exercising authority through naming. Finally, YHWH has procured appropriate

[27] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, rev. ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 94.

[28] Clines, "What Does Eve Do?," 35–36; Gellman, "Gender and Sexuality," 330; Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve*, 69–71.

help for the man in the form of a woman with whom he will repeatedly join as one flesh. This is what is signified when the chapter closes not with "the man and the woman" (האיש והאישה), which might signify gender balance or mutuality, but with "the man and his woman" (האדם ואשתו).[29] This is a story primarily about the primordial man, and at the end of scene 1 he is trained and ready to carry out his duties as YHWH's royal priest. YHWH can and does retreat into the background.

II. Speech, Dialogue, and Narration

Before turning to scene 2 (Gen 3:1–7), the transgression, we need to examine the role of speech and, specifically, dialogue in the Bible as a whole and in scene 1 of the Eden narrative. Alter refers to "spoken language" as "the substratum of everything human and divine that transpires in the Bible." In the world of the Bible, he argues, "words underlie reality," and "the capacity for using language from the start sets man apart from the other creatures."[30] Carol Newsom begins her analysis of the speech world of Proverbs 1–9 with the assertion that "discourse embodies and generates a symbolic world."[31]

In the story of the garden of Eden, speech takes the form of a series of two-person dialogues that drive the development of both plot and character. Alter understands the biblical use of dialogue to be "a principle for differentiating character," and in his discussion of "contrastive dialogue," he notes the Bible's tendency to "limit scenes to two characters at a time."[32] He outlines several features of two-character dialogue in the Bible that I find important for the analysis of Gen 2–3. First, the length of a character's speech serves as a vehicle to communicate his or her importance to the story. Second, when the narrator informs us "that a character has refrained from speech," this avoidance of speech should be considered

[29] The continuation of the man as האדם after the formation of the woman from his rib argues against reading האדם as androgynous. Trible argued that the surgery that was performed on האדם in order to build the woman "radically transformed" the androgynous earth creature (האדם) into a man (איש) (Trible, *God and the Rhetoric*, 97–98, 107). The fact that the character that is carried forward in the narrative is האדם and that he will remain the character associated with the soil and with working the soil makes it difficult to argue for a radically transformed earth creature (see Galambush, "*ʾādām* from *ʾădāmâ*," 36; Gellman, "Gender and Sexuality," 323; Lancer, "(Feminist) Criticism in the Garden," 72–74).

[30] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 87.

[31] Carol A. Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse of Patriarchal Wisdom: A Study of Proverbs 1–9," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 142–60, here 142.

[32] Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 90–91.

"significant to the plot."[33] Finally, a narrative's "avoidance of verbal exchange" between two characters signals a conflict.[34]

I would add that the counterpart to Alter's "avoidance of verbal exchange" is the pairing of two characters in conversation. In a multicharacter narrative that nonetheless proceeds through a series of two-person dialogues, the two characters paired together in dialogue have a relationship that is important to the plot. The more words they exchange, the deeper their relationship. For example, in Gen 16, Sarai and Abram speak to each other, and Hagar and an angel of YHWH speak to each other. These pairings carry meaning: Sarah and Abraham will ultimately be the parents of Isaac, who will receive the promises of the Abrahamic covenant. Hagar receives her own covenant from YHWH that she will bestow upon her son Ishmael. In a clear case of what Alter terms "the avoidance of verbal exchange," Sarah and Hagar, rival mothers, never converse.[35] In the story of Jacob stealing Esau's birthright, Isaac is first paired with his favored son Esau in a dialogue concerning the blessing that Isaac plans to bestow upon him (Gen 27:1–4). The narrative then shifts to a pairing of Rebekah and her favored son Jacob in a dialogue concerning how Jacob will trick his father Isaac (27:5–13). The result is that speech pairing, the two-person structure of biblical dialogue, establishes an Isaac–Esau team that is in an adversarial relationship with a Rebekah–Jacob team, a structure that reinforces the earlier verse where the narrator noted, "Isaac loved Esau because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob" (Gen 25:28). The next dialogue pairing is between Isaac and Jacob, who is pretending to be Esau (Gen 27:18–29). In no place in the Bible does Rebekah speak with Esau. One additional example is found in the story of the rape of Tamar, in which there are two-person dialogues between Amnon and Tamar, Absalom and Tamar, and Absalom and David. Absalom and Amnon, rivals to David's throne, never have a conversation (2 Sam 13).

Between and within these two-person dialogues is the figure of the narrator. Meir Sternberg describes the Bible's narrator as "omniscient" and credits this figure with, among other powers, the "manipulation" of the reader through "staging a dialogue."[36] The biblical narrator has full access to the mind of each character, including God, and chooses what to share and what not to share with the reader.[37] Adele Berlin notes that one role of the narrator is to provide "narrated confirmation

[33] Ibid., 94–101.

[34] Ibid., 153–54.

[35] Ibid. In Gen 21, Sarah speaks to Abraham, God speaks to Abraham, God and Hagar are paired in dialogue. Sarah also never addresses Ishmael or speaks his name.

[36] Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading*, ISBL (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 87.

[37] Ibid., 84–87.

of direct speech" in order to "maximize characterization and the presentation of multiple points of view."[38]

Returning to Gen 2, we find three instances of direct speech. YHWH addresses the man immediately after creating him and provides him with instructions on which trees are good for food and which one tree he should avoid. YHWH also informs the man of the consequences of not following this command (2:16–17). YHWH then addresses an unnamed entity, noting, "It is not good for the man to be alone." Finally, the man addresses YHWH in praise for the creation of the woman. Between these speeches, the narrator reports on the verbal collaboration of YHWH and the man in creating and naming the animals. In scene 1 (2:4–25), neither YHWH nor the man addresses the woman, and she does not speak with either of them. It is therefore fair to conclude that the creation of woman in Gen 2:18–25 is not so much the beginning of her story as it is the culmination of act 1 of the man's story.

III. Scene 2: Speech Partnering and Silences in the Transgression Narrative (Genesis 3:1–7)

Woman: The Serpent-Addressed Being

While the man becomes the divinely addressed being immediately upon the completion of his forming, the woman becomes the serpent-addressed being at the completion of her creation. The subject matter of both the divine address and the serpent's address is the same: the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Instead of providing the woman with valuable information in the form of a directive, however, the serpent approaches the woman with a misleading question: "Did Elohim say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (3:1). The serpent's question is misleading in that it misquotes the deity and draws the wrong inferences from YHWH's directive to the man. The woman responds, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but Elohim said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die'" (3:2–3). The serpent then informs the woman, "You will not die," a statement that directly contradicts YHWH's directive to the man.

The woman's and the serpent's ability to recite and discuss some form of the prohibition shows that they have the capacity for speech and have somehow received instructions concerning the forbidden tree. Still, the narrator has chosen not to inform the reader how she gained this knowledge, perhaps signaling that she has second-hand knowledge, knowledge mediated through the man. At the very

[38] Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, BLS 9 (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), 65–66. See also Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 94; and Hugh White, "Direct and Third Person Discourse in the Narrative of the 'Fall,'" *Semeia* 18 (1980): 91–106.

least, it is significant that there is no narrated description of the woman receiving a direct infusion of the divine breath, nor is there any report of YHWH informing her of the prohibition against eating from the tree of knowledge. The most direct information that she receives concerning the forbidden tree comes from the serpent when he announces, "You will not die."

The dialogue between two creatures who were not direct recipients of the divine breath or the divine command creates a speech world unique to the woman and the serpent, what Hugh White has referred to as "an independent counter world of discourse."[39] Their conversation operates on a shared set of assumptions and makes use of a specialized vocabulary. The woman and the serpent begin their conversation showing their incomplete understanding of the prohibition against eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In the serpent's question to the woman, "Did Elohim say, you [pl.] shall not eat ...?," he changes all the second-person masculine singular pronouns from YHWH's direct command to the plural. In the woman's response, "We may eat ...," she too answers in the plural, and when she quotes the divine prohibition, she renders it in the plural: "From the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, you [pl.] may not eat, nor may you [pl.] touch it, for on the day that you [pl.] eat from it, you [pl.] shall die." YHWH, on the other hand, remains consistent in his pronouncement of the prohibition as a command he directs at the man alone, using the second-person masculine singular pronoun both before and after the creation of the woman (Gen 2:16–17; 3:11, 17). Thus, in the God–man speech world, YHWH seems to have a singular focus on the man not eating from the tree of knowledge. The woman and the serpent have determined through their own inference or possibly through the man's directive that the woman also should not eat from the tree of knowledge.[40]

Another feature unique to the speech world of the woman and the serpent is the two characters' shared terminology for the deity and the forbidden tree. When the woman and the serpent speak to each other, they refer to the deity simply as Elohim (Gen 3:1, 3, 4). In all other places in the Eden narrative, the deity is referred to as "YHWH Elohim" (Gen 3:4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22; 3:1, 8, 9, 14, 21, 22, 23). It is not known whether the man knew the name YHWH because he is never given a speech in which he needs to refer to the deity in the third person. When the man speaks, he is always addressing YHWH directly; conversationally, he is part of the God–man team. The woman and the serpent also share vague labels for the forbidden tree, never specifically identifying it as "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" as it is when YHWH instructs the man (Gen 2:17; 3:3, 6). Finally, the woman cites a unique version of the prohibition, adding the phrase "neither may

[39] White, "Direct and Third Person Discourse," 97.

[40] The need to figure out a way to adapt divine law and determine which parts of it apply to women is inferred already from the Decalogue, which clearly addresses men. When YHWH commands "you shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exod 20:17; Deut 5:21), one is left to determine through inference whether a woman should also not covet her neighbor's husband.

you touch it," again indicating her different understanding of the rules of the garden.[41]

Because YHWH is never reported speaking with the woman prior to the transgression, one could argue that she seems unaware of her god's personal name and is not fully informed concerning the precise nature of the forbidden tree. This change in terminology from the specific and personal with the man to the generic and vague with the woman and the serpent corresponds to their one-step-removed status from the deity. Speech is not withheld from the woman or the serpent; instead, they lack authoritative, divinely sourced, creatively generative speech. They lack accurate and informed speech. The woman becomes the serpent-addressed and the serpent-informed creature; conversationally, they form a team.[42]

The Woman's Thoughtfulness and the Man's Silence at the Time of Transgression

At the moment of transgression, a moment free of dialogue, neither the man nor the woman speaks. Instead, it is the narrator who shares his privileged access to the decision-making process of the woman.

> When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and she ate, and she gave [some] also to her man with her, and he ate. (Gen 3:6)

The woman's sensory and intellectual faculties are fully engaged as she discerns the tree's value. The tree, she concludes, is beautiful and good for food. Finally, she notes, the tree is desirable because it could make her wise. At no point in her decision-making process does she focus on YHWH, the serpent, or the man. She chooses to eat in order to satisfy her own desires. As the creature that was designed and introduced into the garden for the purpose of serving as "a helper" to the man, this self-focused decision based on her own desire to be wise represents the woman's failure to fulfill her divinely intended role.

In this moment of disobedience, the narrator subtly signals another unique feature of the speech world of the woman and the serpent: a reversal of agency. Aside from the dialogue between the woman and the serpent, the narrator and

[41] For a discussion of the change in terminology in the conversation between the serpent and the woman, see Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Eden Narrative: A Literary and Religio-historical Study of Genesis 2–3* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 14; Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 85; Ellen Van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1–11*, BibInt 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 15, 37–39; Trible, *God and the Rhetoric*, 109.

[42] According to Van Wolde (*Words Become Worlds*, 7–12) and Carol L. Meyers (*Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1988], 88–91) in the ancient Near East the serpent was associated with wisdom, knowledge, and life. Both suggest that the author of Gen 2–3 was consciously playing with these associations in order to condemn a human desire to be like God.

YHWH refer to the man with the definite article. "The man" (האדם) appears as the direct object of divine activity (Gen 2:7, 8, 15, 21; 3:24) and divine address (2:16; 3:9, 17, 22). "The man" also serves as the subject of a series of active verbs (2:19, 20) and declarations (2:23; 3:12, 20). When the woman is referred to, she is most often paired with the man through a possessive pronoun: "the man and his woman" (האדם ואשתו) (Gen 2:25; cf. 2:24, 3:21). She is not the subject of any active verbs. Only in the speech world of the woman and the serpent does the woman become the subject of a series of active verbs, while the man becomes "her man": "she gave [some] also to *her man with her*" (3:6) (לאישה עמה). Grammatically, the man makes his debut in the woman–serpent speech world as an indirect object modified by a possessive pronoun. In a verse that narrates the primordial human couple's disobedience against YHWH, the man's grammatical demotion speaks volumes.[43]

The phrase "with her" (עמה) in 3:6 also informs readers that the man was present with the woman during her conversation with the serpent.[44] This comes as a surprise because the man said nothing, and the narrator has waited six verses before providing this information. By adding the tiny phrase "with her," the narrator signals an important aspect of the man's culpability in the transgression—his silence, his failure to speak with his divinely endowed breath, authority, and knowledge. Standing "with her" in silence is as much a part of the man's transgression as is his eating. If the man simply listened while the woman and the serpent engaged in a conversation that he alone was positioned to judge as spurious, then he failed to live up to his created purpose as "guarder" of the garden and YHWH's designated authority figure. While the immediate consequences of the transgression are the same for both the man and the woman, "the eyes of the two of them were opened, and they saw that they were naked" (3:7), we soon learn that they will be found guilty of different crimes.

IV. Adding Gender to the Study of Speech and Dialogue

Newsom's study of the discourse of patriarchal wisdom in Prov 1–9 finds a "triple association between sexuality, speech and authority."[45] Referring to Prov 1–9

[43] Alter draws similar conclusions concerning the story of King David and Palti, who compete for Michal (2 Sam 3:14–16). After David demands, "Give me my wife Michal," Alter notes, Palti "is called twice in close sequence Michal's man or husband" (*Art of Biblical Narrative*, 152–53).

[44] Several early interpreters of this story used the ambiguity of the phrase "with her" to suggest that the man was not present during the conversation between the woman and the serpent and, as a latecomer to the scene, possibly did not even know that the fruit had come from the forbidden tree. See, e.g., Sib. Or. 1:42–43, where Eve is said to "persuade" Adam to sin "in his ignorance" and the Greek Life of Adam and Eve, where only after her conversation with the serpent does Eve call out to Adam "in a loud voice" in order to bring him to her (21:1–6). For a detailed analysis of the history of translating the phrase "with her," see Julie Faith Parker, "Blaming Eve Alone: Translation, Omission, and Implications of עמה in Genesis 3:6b," *JBL* 132 (2013): 729–47, https://doi.org/10.2307/42912464.

[45] Newsom, "Woman and the Discourse," 153.

as "a group of the father's discourse," Newsom observes "the astonishing amount of text" that features "men, preoccupied with speech, talking about women and women's speech."[46] In Prov 1–9, the father addresses his son with an authority rooted in God. Newsom's analysis of Prov 3 is especially pertinent to the present study given Proverbs' designation of a personified Woman Wisdom as "a tree of life" (3:18). The first verse of chapter 3 ascribes תורה and מצוה to the father in a way that "subtly positions the father in association with divine authority": "My son do not forget my teaching [תורתי] and let your heart guard my command [מצותי]" (Prov 3:1).[47] The father instructs his son to seek out Woman Wisdom because "she is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her" (3:18). Proverbs presents "the strange woman" whose paths lead a man to death (2:18) as a consciously constructed rival to Woman Wisdom and the teaching of the father, both of which offer a man riches, peace, and long life (3:16–17). Newsom notes that the strange woman's "sexuality is repeatedly associated with speech"; she has a "smooth tongue" (6:24), "smooth words" (7:15), and "her lips drip with honey."[48] She is able to sway the young man with her eloquence and turn him aside with her flattery (7:21).

At this point, we can make several observations that build on Alter's discussion of dialogue and Newsom's analysis of gendered discourse. First, Gen 2:4–3:7 is structured as two sequential, two-character dialogues, the first between the man and YHWH, the second between the woman and the serpent. Up to this point in the narrative (3:7), YHWH has spoken only to the man and to the divine council, and the man has spoken only to YHWH. The serpent has spoken only to the woman, and the woman has spoken only to the serpent. God and the woman have not spoken; the serpent and the man have not spoken; and the woman and the man have not spoken. If, as Newsom suggests, discourse embodies and generates a symbolic world,[49] then the symbolic world of the serpent and the woman is distinct from that of YHWH and the man. The speech world generated by the dialogue of the man and YHWH resembles Newsom's description of the "father's discourse" in Proverbs in that it is "straight," "right," and "true." YHWH addresses the man using the imperfect sometimes coupled with the infinitive absolute for emphasis. The speech world of the woman and the serpent, on the other hand, aligns with that of the strange woman, being "twisted" or "crooked." The serpent begins the conversation with a question rather than a statement, and, when he later tells the woman "you will not die," he contradicts the teaching of YHWH as delivered to his earthly representative, the man.[50]

[46] Ibid., 142, 148.

[47] Ibid., 150.

[48] Ibid., 153.

[49] Ibid., 142.

[50] Newsom uses these words to distinguish between the father and God, on the one side, and the strange woman, on the other, in Proverbs ("Woman and the Discourse," 156). The application of these terms to the dialogues in the Eden narrative is my own.

V. Scene 3: Garden Hierarchy Restored through Punishment (Genesis 3:8–19)

The crimes and punishments specified in Gen 3:8–19 confirm the gender hierarchy present in the creation and transgression scenes. Each punishment corresponds to the created or intended purpose of each creature and the intended hierarchical relationships within the garden.

The Charges

Following the transgression, YHWH returns to the scene and "calls to the man" (האדם), asking, "Where are you?" The two-person dialogue thus shifts back to the God–man team as the man explains how he was afraid because he was naked, so he hid. God asks him, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree, which I commanded you not to eat?" Again, it is האדם and not האיש who is addressed here with a series of second-person masculine singular verbs and pronouns. The woman will be addressed separately. The man responds to YHWH casting blame on him and the woman in equal measure: "The woman whom you gave to be *with me*, she gave to me from the tree, and I ate" (v. 11). It is the man's turn to be vague. He does not specify the tree, and he refrains from saying the word *fruit*.[51] He also engages in a clever reversal when he describes the woman as the one YHWH gave to be "with him," rather than admitting to being "with her" at the scene of the crime.

YHWH then turns to the woman and for the first time verbally addresses her. In this first YHWH–woman dialogue, the deity presumes the woman's guilt: "What is this you have done?" (v. 13). The reader is left to intuit the woman's crime because no specific charges are leveled against her. If we turn to the verse preceding this one, the sentence to which the undefined "this" in verse 13 refers, we find the man saying, "The woman, whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit and I ate." The man's statement suggests that her crime was giving the man fruit from the tree from which YHWH had commanded him not to eat. If, on the other hand, we turn to the verse just following YHWH's question, we see that the woman understands her crime to be eating: "The serpent tricked me, and I ate" (v. 13). The woman's understanding of her transgression matches her version of the prohibition, which renders it in the plural. YHWH begins his sentencing of the serpent with a charge that is almost identical to the woman's in its vagueness: "Because you

[51] The narrator also proved reticent in explicitly stating that the man ate of "the fruit." He retreats into vagaries when describing the man's transgression: "she gave also to her man with her, and he ate." This is one of the places where the narrator seems to be deliberately vague to avoid actually stating the crime. Another example of this reticence can be found in the story of Jephthah's sacrificing of his daughter where the text reads, "he did to her as he had vowed" (Judg 11:39).

have done this ..." (v. 14). Again, if we look at the woman's statement that precedes this charge, the serpent is guilty of tricking the woman: "The serpent tricked me and I ate."

The Punishments

With added force, labor, and suffering, the individualized punishments reinscribe the intended role for each creature and the intended hierarchical relationships among the creatures. Each creature's punishment has two parts. The first part attempts to correct the creature's failure to act in accordance with his or her created purpose, which is related to the creature's source material, its created substance. The second part clarifies and makes explicit garden hierarchies, enforcing divinely ordered relationships.[52]

The first part (the source material portion) of the serpent's punishment reads: "More cursed are you than any beast or wild animal. On your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life" (3:14). Given that the serpent was introduced as "the craftiest of all the creatures of the earth," this punishment suggests a crime of arrogance. The one who presumed to be higher than all the other creatures, high enough to dare to enter a conversation with the woman, will be forced to live lower than most animals, on its belly in the dirt.

The relational portion of the serpent's punishment reads, "I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and hers; he will strike your head and you will strike his heel" (v. 15). Once again, in the articulation of punishment, the serpent is tied to the woman and not to the man. The punishment severs the relationship between the woman and the serpent and the descendants of each for all time, suggesting once again that the serpent's crime was conversing with and tricking the woman. Instead of being filled with clever words, the serpent's mouth will be filled with dust.

The source material portion of the woman's punishment reads, "I will greatly

[52] There are many biblical examples where divine punishments are meant to reinstate with added clarity and force the appropriate relationships that YHWH expects the Israelites to uphold with him and with each other. One instructive example is found in Hos 2, where Hosea's wife, Gomer, metaphorically represents the Israelite people, and the marriage of Hosea and Gomer represents the relationship between YHWH and his chosen, covenanted people. Thus, this example speaks simultaneously to divine–human and husband–wife relationships, the same relationships that are described and prescribed in Gen 2–3. It is also a chapter replete with creation and garden imagery. Gomer's crimes are that she has independently chosen to follow "baals," and she mistakenly credits these baals with supplying her food, clothing, and protection. YHWH's punishment is to "hedge her in," namely, forcibly prevent independent movement, and to "remove the names of the baals from her mouth." In this text, YHWH is not instituting new hierarchies or new types of relationships; he is enforcing what he views to be proper relationships for covenant partners and for husbands and wives.

increase your pangs and your pregnancies. In pain, you will give birth to children."[53] This punishment has clear ties to her created purpose as one with whom the man will repeatedly join as "one flesh." Her crime seems to be that she took her focus off her man and placed it on herself. She failed to act as "helper" to her man in charge of conception, gestation, and birthing.

The relational portion of her punishment forcibly returns her focus to the man, "your *desire* [תשוקה] shall be for your man," and makes explicit the authority that YHWH has given the man over her: "he will rule over you" (v. 16). Several scholars have questioned the traditional translation of תשוקה as "desire" with the specific connotation of sexual desire. Joel Lohr conducted an exhaustive analysis of the occurrence of the word תשוקה in various ancient translations, retellings, and commentaries. His study concludes that the Hebrew תשוקה had an overlapping meaning with the LXX translation "return" or "turning" based on a presumed Hebrew version with תשובה. He argues that תשוקה and תשובה have "overlapping semantic range." Both words connote a return, but תשוקה may connote a "strong movement toward, perhaps of an impelling nature, returning someone (or thing) to where he or she (or it) belonged."[54] Andrew Macintosh has argued similarly that the Hebrew תשוקה should not be understood as connoting physical and sexual desire. Analyzing a similar range of texts, he concludes that תשוקה is best understood as "devoted and concentrated attention."[55] Either of these translations coheres nicely with the understanding of the woman's crime as acting independently of the man in a self-serving way. Her punishment either impels her back to him as her source or it redirects her attention back onto him. This punishment places her, as one created to be a helper to the man, under the intended authority of the man and demands that either she or at least her attention return to the task of helping the man rather than pursuing wisdom for herself.

The man's punishment is much more extensively described, as YHWH spends much more time talking to the man, listing his failures, and describing the punishments YHWH will mete out against him. We first note that only the man has specific charges leveled against him: "Because you have listened to the voice of your woman, and you have eaten from the tree that I commanded you saying, 'Do not eat from it'" (v. 17a). All the verbs and pronouns are masculine singular: *you*

[53] Carol Meyers translates this verse, "I will greatly increase your toil and pregnancies [along] with travail shall you beget children" ("The Family in Early Israel," in *Families in Ancient Israel*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Family, Religion, and Culture [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997], 1–47, here 29). She argues that what is increased is the woman's "toil," a general word for labor and the same word that is used for the man's labor, and the number of her pregnancies. She thus interprets the verse to mean, "women will have to work hard and bear many children." I largely agree with Meyers's reading, but I would add that the only specified labor for the woman in this story is bearing children.

[54] Joel N. Lohr, "Sexual Desire? Eve, Genesis 3:16, and תשוקה," *JBL* 130 (2011): 227–46, here 244–45, https://doi.org/10.2307/41304198.

[55] A. A. Macintosh, "The Meaning of Hebrew תשוקה," *JSS* 61 (2016): 365–87.

listened, *you* ate, I commanded *you*, saying *you* shall not eat of it. His crime is twofold: listening and eating.

We begin with the man's second crime, which is the crime related to his source material: "you have eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat." The punishment corresponding to this crime is that the ground from which the man was taken will now be cursed and will require toil in order to coax a harvest from a recalcitrant earth. As the woman's time will be consumed with endless pregnancies and births, the man's time will be consumed with eking out a meager harvest from cursed soil.

The relational part of his punishment is tied up with the woman's punishment: "he will rule over you." The man must take up his responsibility for ruling over his woman as he was specially equipped by YHWH to do. Only this punishment fits the crime of "listening to the voice of your woman." As the creature animated by a direct infusion of divine breath, a creature "endowed with speech," the man is found guilty of failing to "guard" the garden. He failed to exercise his divinely sanctioned authority to enforce YHWH's edict. He "listened" when he should have spoken; he stood with her when he should have intervened.

VI. Scene 4: Man, a Threat to YHWH

Following the announcement of divine punishments, the man immediately rectifies his relationship with the woman when he once again speaks with authority and names her. This name is different from the first; it is not a label, but her proper name: "Eve, because she was the mother of all living" (3:20). The meaning of the name serves as a reminder of her created purpose: childbearing and child rearing.[56]

At this point, the narrator informs us that YHWH fears that "the man" and only the man has "become like one of us," namely, like a god. Having eaten from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the man has achieved a status that is godlike enough to threaten YHWH. YHWH fears that the man might also eat from the tree of life, rendering him fully divine (3:22). As a result of this fear, YHWH expels the man from the garden and sets up cherubim with flaming swords as guards charged with keeping the man away from the tree of life.

Apparently the woman lacks the capacity to threaten YHWH; she can only threaten the man. While she also ate from the tree of knowledge, she did not gain

[56] Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve*, 69–71. This understanding of the ontology of "woman" is legislated in the Deuteronomic family laws where, according to Cheryl B. Anderson, these laws "construct the female body as a body that (1) submits to male authority, (2) is meant for sex with men, and (3) is meant for maternity" (Anderson, *Women, Ideology, and Violence: Critical Theory and the Construction of Gender in the Book of the Covenant and the Deuteronomic Law*, JSOTSup 394 [London: T&T Clark, 2004], 8).

knowledge at a level that induced fear in YHWH. Again, the divinely sourced breath of YHWH makes the man the type of living being who can threaten gods. That is why he especially was not allowed to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. YHWH "drove out the man" (וירגש את־האדם), we are told. The narrator chooses not to inform us when and how the woman ended up outside the garden with the man. Instead, in the opening verses of the following chapter, we learn that Eve is with Adam, and we are witnesses to each of them living out their intended roles and relationships: "The man [האדם] knew Eve, his woman [אשתו] and she conceived and bore Cain" (4:1a).

VII. Conclusions

In the chapters that follow the Eden narrative, YHWH makes a series of overtures, seeking time and again to partner with select men. Noah, "a man of the earth" (איש האדמה), finds favor in the eyes of YHWH and becomes the divinely addressed and divinely instructed creature (Gen 6:8, 13–17; 9:20). YHWH establishes a covenant with him and charges him with guarding the other creatures, including his sons, his wife, and the wives of his sons. YHWH later selects and instructs Abram to depart for a new land. When Abram obeys, he brings along "his wife Sarai" and "his brother's son Lot" (12:1–5). The pattern of divinely blessed and instructed men continues with Lot (19: 1, 12–14), Isaac (26:2–5), Jacob (28:13–15, 32:24–30), and Moses (Exod 3:1–12), until finally, all Israelite men are instructed by Moses to separate themselves from women and stand at the foot of Sinai to receive the quintessential divine instruction in the form of YHWH's torah (Exod 19:15).

Women are included in these divine overtures to men only as extensions or dependents of their husbands in a way that replicates "the man and his woman" (האדם ואשתו) of Gen 2–3. When women are addressed by the deity, the subject matter is childbearing and child rearing (Hagar, Gen 16:7–12; Rebekah, Gen 21:15–19, 25:23), or they are at the receiving end of divine judgment (Sarah, Gen 18:15; Lot's wife, Gen 19:26). Women characters do grapple with weighty issues as they seek to secure their futures, but they do so largely in the absence of directly imparted divine instruction. Sarai makes the decision to offer her slave girl Hagar to Abram, and she later decides to banish Hagar and Ishmael to secure Isaac's and, by extension, her place in Abraham's household (Gen 16:3, 21:10). Rebekah uses the knowledge she gained directly from YHWH concerning the children in her womb to develop her own plans for protecting and promoting Jacob (Gen 25:23). Rachel and Leah decide to leave their homeland with Jacob based on their own assessment of their father's stinginess (Gen 31:14–16). Finally, we can point to the much-noted absence of divine address in the books of Ruth and Esther, books in which women cobble together plans for survival and are ultimately forced to depend on men to succeed.

The Eden narrative has long been recognized as an etiology for why men are farmers and women experience pain in childbirth. The story of YHWH's breathing into the nostrils of the man is an etiology for male authority; it explains how it came to be that select biblical men speak with and for YHWH while biblical women are for the most part left either to trust their men or to work things out for themselves. The first woman's decision to eat the fruit forbidden to her man in order to gain wisdom for herself foreshadows all the crooked paths that biblical women will be forced to take in order to be "in the know" in YHWH's created universe.