

Text 1

And the woman said unto the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, 'Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'"

And the serpent said unto the woman, "Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and your dæmons shall assume their true forms, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired, to reveal the true form of one's dæmon, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they saw the true form of their dæmons, and spoke with them. But when the man and the woman knew their own dæmons, they knew that a great change had come upon them, for until that moment it had seemed that they were at one with all the creatures of the earth and the air, and there was no difference between them.

And they saw the difference, and they knew good and evil; and they were ashamed, and they sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness.

One parallel universe's Genesis story, as told by Philip Pullman in *His Dark Materials: Northern Lights*, 1995

Discussion points on text 1

- What are the similarities and differences between this Genesis creation story and our own?
- What was the role of the snake? Is the snake a 'goodie' or a 'baddie'?
- What actually convinced Eve to eat the fruit? What convinced Adam?
- What are dæmons? [If you've read the book then put that knowledge to one side.]

Text 2

“Ever since we have had the sraf, we have had memory and wakefulness. Before that, we knew nothing.”

“What happened to give you the sraf?”

“We discovered how to use the wheels. One day a creature with no name discovered a seed-pod and began to play, and as she played she...

“She?”

“She, yes. She had no name before then. She saw a snake coiling itself through the hole in a seed-pod, and the snake said...”

“The snake spoke to her?”

“No! no! It is a make-like. The story tells that the snake said, ‘What do you know? What do you remember? What do you see ahead? And she said, ‘Nothing, nothing, nothing.’ So the snake said, ‘Put your foot through the hole in the seed-pod where I was playing, and you will become wise.’ So she put a foot in where the snake had been.

“And the oil entered her foot and made her see more clearly than before, and the first thing she saw was the sraf. It was so strange and pleasant that she wanted to share it at once with all her kindred. So she and her mate took the first ones, and they discovered that they knew who they were, they knew they were mulefa and not grazers. They gave each other names. They named themselves mulefa. They named the seed-tree, and all the creatures and plants.

A different parallel universe’s (non-human) Genesis story, as told by Philip Pullman in *His Dark Materials: The Amber Spyglass*, 2001

Discussion points on text 2

- What are the similarities and differences between this Genesis creation story and our own?
- What was the role of the snake? Is the snake a 'goodie' or a 'baddie'?
- What is sraf? [If you've read the book then put that knowledge to one side.]
- The mulefa explains that the story is "a make-like". What might this mean?

Text 3

The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, yet they felt no shame. Now the serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild beasts that God had made. It said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden’?”

The woman replied to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden. It is only about fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘You shall not eat of it or touch it, lest you die.’”

And the serpent said to the woman, “You are not going to die, but God knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like divine beings who know good and bad.”

When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they perceived that they were naked; and they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves loincloths.

Genesis 2:25-3:7

Discussion points on text 3

- What was the role of the snake? Is the snake a 'goodie' or a 'baddie'?
- What actually convinced Eve to eat the fruit? What convinced Adam?
- Is the serpent right to treat knowledge and divinity as similar/ the same?
- Did Eve actually have some idea of good and bad *before* she ate the fruit?

Text 4

What is the hedge which Adam made about his words? Lo, [Genesis 2:16-17] says, “And God commanded the man, saying: ‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’”

Adam, however, did not wish to speak to Eve the way the Holy One, ever to be blessed, had spoken to him. Rather, this is what he said to her [Genesis 3:3]:

“But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said: ‘Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.’”

At that time the wicked serpent thought in its heart as follows: “Since I cannot trip up Adam, I shall go and trip up Eve.” So it went and sat down beside her, and entered into a long conversation with her. It said to her, “If it is against touching the tree thou sayest the Holy One, ever to be blessed, commanded us, behold, I shall touch it and not die. Thou, too, if thou touch it, shalt not die!”

What did the wicked serpent do? It then arose and touched the tree with his hands and feet, and shook it until its fruits fell to the ground.

What did Eve think in her mind? “All the things about which my master admonished me at first are false!” (For at first Eve addressed Adam only as ‘my master’.)

Forthwith she took of the fruit and ate, and gave some to Adam and he ate.

Avot de-Rabbi Natan (c. 700CE)

Discussion points on text 4

- Why the Chinese whispers with the command?
- Was Eve justified in breaking a commandment which she honestly believed had a false basis? Would we be today?
- Would it have been better if Eve had stuck to Adam's original instruction? Is there a case for enlarging rules like this?
- What might this episode tell us about gender roles?

Text 5

Very different in almost every imaginable respect from Adam was his attractive lady, Grandmother Eve. Indeed, so radically different from each other were this rather ill-assorted pair that it was always difficult for us to believe that they were related even by marriage, and I hesitate to say what I think would have been the outcome of their little romance had there been any competition for the lady's hand when Adam set out to win it. I have personally always had a feeling that this first of marital experiments was rather a marriage of convenience than anything else, and I have heard my great-great-great-grandmother say that in the old pioneer days there was very little for a woman to choose from in the matter of men's society.

"For a long time," she remarked, "Adam was the only man in sight, and I was a young thing entirely without experience in worldly matters. He seemed to my girlish fancy to be all that a man should be. His habits were good. He neither smoked nor drank, cared apparently nothing for cards, and barring an interest in dinosaur racing, had very few sporting proclivities. We were thrown together a great deal, and inasmuch as the life in the Garden was a somewhat lonely one, we took considerable pleasure in each other's society.

"For myself, I was not particularly anxious to be married, preferring the free and independent life of the spinster, but as time went on and we came to realise that the people of future generations might misunderstand us and, as people will do, talk about us, we decided that the best way to avoid all gossip was to announce our engagement."

As told by John Kendrick Bangs in *The Autobiography of Methuselah*, 1909



Discussion points on text 5

- What does this text tell us about the nature of Eve's relationship with Adam?
- What does this tell us about the nature of life in the Garden of Eden? Was it really paradise?

Texts 6 & 7

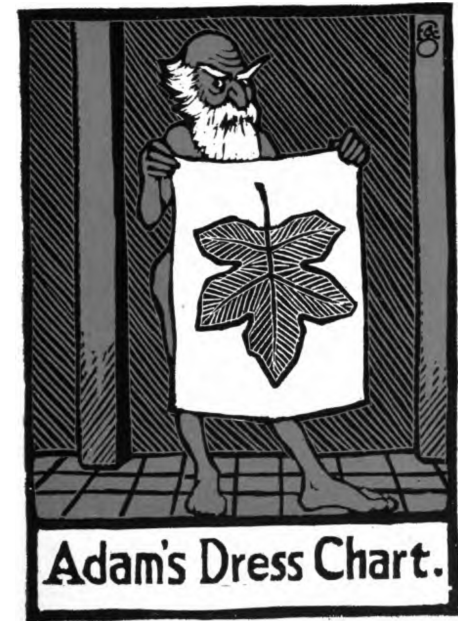
I am disposed to give Grandfather Adam the credit that is his due for making so few mistakes [when naming the animals]. That the old fellow should instantly be able to tell the difference between a dromedary and a camel without any previous instruction, strikes me as evidence of a more or less remarkable intuition, the like of which we do not often find to-day, and his dubbing that long-eared, four-footed piece of resistant uselessness the ass an ass, always seemed to me to be a masterstroke, although my father Enoch used to say that his greatest achievement lay in correctly designating the pig at first sight.

“If there is any animal in the whole category of four-legged creatures that more thoroughly deserves to be called a pig than the pig, I don’t know what it is. He looks like a pig, he behaves like a pig, and he eats like a pig – in fact he is a pig, and Adam never did anything better than when he invented that name and applied it.”

As told by John Kendrick Bangs in *The Autobiography of Methuselah*, 1909

“Adam, do you want another apple?” *“I think the last one got us into enough trouble.”* “This one’s a Granny Smith.” *“What’s a ‘granny’?!”* “I don’t know.” *“Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m working on a new outfit. I’m going to try these... OUCH!”* “What’s happened?” *“Whatever you do, stick with fig leaves, Eve. Don’t try nettles!”*

Another Case of Milton Jones, series 5, episode 3: 2011



Discussion points on texts 6 & 7

- Newness is a big theme in the story of the Creation. What do these texts tell us about the issues and challenges faced by the first humans?
- Adam and Eve came into the world *ex nihilo* – from nothing – with no background, family history, culture, traditions, scientific knowledge etc. What role do these things play in our lives, and what would life be like if we didn't have them?
- Were such things needed in the paradise of Eden anyway?

Text 8

The main creation of the third day was the realm of plants, the terrestrial plants as well as the plants of Paradise. First of all the cedars of Lebanon and the other great trees were made. In their pride at having been put first, they shot up high in the air. They considered themselves the favoured among plants. Then God said, "I hate arrogance and pride, for I alone am exalted, and none beside," and God created iron on the same day, the substance with which trees are felled.

The trees began to weep, and when God asked the reason of their tears, they said: "We cry because You have created iron to uproot us therewith. All the while we had thought ourselves the highest of the earth, and now iron, our destroyer, has been called into existence."

God replied: "You yourselves will furnish the axe with a handle. Without your assistance the iron will not be able to do anything against you."

As told by Louis Ginzberg in *Legends of the Jews*, 1909 (but drawing on ancient Jewish texts)

Discussion points on text 8

- God ordained that trees should be authors of their own destruction. What does this text tell us about free will and determinism?
- Were Adam and Eve the authors of their downfall?
- Why did the trees become arrogant?
- This story took place on the third day. Why might God have structured the process Creation in such detail?

Text 9

When Adam, on the day of his creation, saw the setting of the sun he said, “Alas, it is because I have sinned that the world around me is becoming dark; the universe will now become again void and without form: this is the death to which I have been sentenced from Heaven!”

So he sat up all night fasting and weeping, and Eve was weeping opposite him.

However, when dawn broke, he realised: “This is the usual course of the world!” He then arose and sacrificed a unicorn.

But then, when primitive Adam saw the days getting gradually shorter as the autumn went on, he said, “Woe is me, perhaps because I have sinned, the world around me is being darkened and returning to its state of chaos and confusion; *this* then is the kind of death to which I have been sentenced from Heaven!”

So he began keeping eight days’ fast. But as he observed the winter equinox and noted the days getting longer again, he said, “This is the world’s course,” and he set forth to keep eight days’ festivity. In the following year he appointed both as festivals.

Talmud: Avodah Zarah 8a (c. 500CE)

Discussion points on text 9

- What does this text tell us about facing the unknown, and 'firsts'?
- Did Adam react sensibly? How would we have reacted?
- Why don't we still celebrate the festival of the winter equinox?

Texts 10, 11 & 12

Adam and Eve enjoyed the splendours of paradise but a few hours. It was in the first hour of the sixth day of creation that God conceived the idea of creating man; in the second hour, God consulted the angels; in the third, God gathered the dust for the body of man; in the fourth, God formed Adam; in the fifth, God clothed him with skin; in the sixth, the soulless shape was complete; in the seventh, a soul was breathed into it; in the eighth, man was led into Paradise; in the ninth, the Divine command prohibiting the fruit was issued; in the 10th, he transgressed the command; in the 11th, he was judged; and in the 12th hour of the day, he was cast out of paradise.

As told by Louis Ginzberg in *Legends of the Jews*, 1909 (but drawing on ancient Jewish texts)

Planet earth is 4,600 million years old. If we condense this inconceivable time-span into an understandable concept we can liken the earth to a person of 46 years of age.

Nothing is known about the first seven years of this person's life. Only scattered information exists about the middle span. Dinosaurs and the great reptiles did not appear until one year ago, when the planet was 45. Mammals arrived only eight months ago. In the middle of last week, human-like apes evolved into ape-like humans. At the weekend, the last ice-age enveloped the earth.

Modern humans have been around for four hours. During the last hour we discovered agriculture. The industrial revolution began a minute ago, and during those 60 seconds of biological time, we have made a rubbish tip of paradise.

A human life in this timespan lasts a mere 18 seconds. Let's not waste any more precious time.

Greenpeace

After creating Adam, God took him round all the trees of the Garden of Eden and said to him: "See how lovely and excellent My works are. I have created them all for you. Take care not to spoil and destroy My world, for if you spoil it there will be no-one to repair it after you."

Ecclesiastes Rabbah (c. 600CE)

Discussion points on texts 10, 11 & 12

- Look how quickly the paradise phase of the creation story came to an end; what does this tell us about the progress of humankind?
- Did God know, or predict, that Adam and Eve would eat the fruit?
- What messages for today might come out of these texts?