GENESIS
A DEEP DIVE

ADAM TO NOAH

THE EDEN STORY - PART 2 (GENESIS 2:18-25)

GENESIS 2:18-25

- 18 The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”
- 19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

GENESIS 2:18-25

- But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

GENESIS 2:18-25

- 23 The man said,
- “This is now bone of my bones
- and flesh of my flesh;
- she shall be called ‘woman,’
- for she was taken out of man.”

GENESIS 2:18-25

- 24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.
- 25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

[18]*And Yahweh God said,* *"It is not good for* **the human** *to be alone (לבדו)* *I will make a help-counterpart for him."*		**Problem** A lone human + no help-counterpart
A	[19]*And Yahweh* **formed** *from the ground* *every living creature of the field* *and every bird of the skies.*	Yahweh acts
B	*And he brought them to the human to see what he would call it,* *and everything which the human would call it a living being,* *that was its name."*	Animals brought - no counterpart
A'	[20]*And the human called the names* *of every* **beast** *and bird of the skies* *and every living creature of the field,*	Human names
[20] *but for the human there was not found a help-counterpart.*		**Problem Not Solved** No help-counterpart
	[21]*And Yahweh caused to fall a deep sleep on the human, and he slept* *and he took one from his sides* *and he closed the flesh of its place.*	Yahweh acts
	[22]*And Yahweh* **built** *the side which he took from the human into woman* *and he brought her to the human,*	Woman brought - counterpart!
	[23]*And the human said,* *"This time, bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh.* *This one will be called (קרא)* **woman** *for from* **man** *this one was taken."*	Human names
[24]*For this reason,* *a* **man** *will leave his father and his mother,* *and he will cling to his* **woman**, *and they will become* **one** *flesh.* [25]*And the* **two** *of them were naked,* **the human** *and his* **woman**, *and they were not ashamed.*		**Problem Solved** Lone human is now two

18 *And Yahweh God said,*
"It is not good for **the human** *to be alone (לבדו)*
I will make a help-counterpart for him."

Problem

A lone human + no help-counterpart

A	[19]And Yahweh **formed** from the ground every living creature of the field and every bird of the skies.	Yahweh acts
B	And he brought them to the human to see what he would call it, and everything which the human would call it a living being, that was its name."	Animals brought - no counterpart
A'	[20]And the human called the names of every **beast** and bird of the skies and every living creature of the field,	Human names

20 *but for the human there was not found a help-counterpart.*

Problem Not Solved

No help-counterpart

[21] *And Yahweh caused to fall a deep sleep on the human, and he slept*
and he took one from his sides
and he closed the flesh of its place.
[22] *And Yahweh* **built** *the side which he took from the human into woman*
and he brought her to the human,
[23] *And the human said,*
"This time, bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh.
*This one will be called (קרא) **woman** for from **man** this one was taken."*

Yahweh acts

Woman brought - counterpart!

Human names

[24]*For this reason,*
a **man** *will leave his father and his mother,*
and he will cling to his **woman**,
and they will become **one** *flesh*.
[25]*And the* **two** *of them were naked,*
the human *and his* **woman**,
and they were not ashamed.

Problem Solved

Lone human is
now two

Two-Step Divine Provision

- This two-step divine provision of the “help” (עזרis) crucial.
- It mimics Genesis 1
- Days 1-3 are step one, days 4-6 are step two,
- and it creates a model/expectation.

INTERPRETIVE NOTES FOR GENESIS 2:18-25

- No-Good in the Garden: A Human Alone
- God is the first one to notice “no-good” in his creation.
- The lone human is apparently unable to fulfill his vocation without an other.

FROM “ALONE” TO “ONE FLESH”: GENESIS 2:24

- Genesis 2:24
- For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother,
- and clings to his wife;
- and they shall become one flesh

FROM “ALONE” TO “ONE FLESH”: GENESIS 2:24

- The narrative design of Genesis 2:18-25 goes from problem to solution. A solitary human cannot accomplish the calling placed upon “the image-statue of Elohim” in Genesis 1:26-28: to rule creation as God’s partners, to image God through gender difference, and to be fruitful and multiply.
- To fulfill this task, the human family must simultaneously become “many” and “one/unified,” and all of this as an image of God.

FROM “ALONE” TO “ONE FLESH”: GENESIS 2:24

- Genesis 2:24 addresses a foundational question about human relationships: Why would a person leave their closest biological relationship (a child to their parent) and join themselves to one who is not in their family?
- The claim of Genesis 2:24 is that marriage overcomes this biological divide and recovers an original, unified state of humanity.

FROM “ALONE” TO “ONE FLESH”: GENESIS 2:24

- The woman is not a “helper” or simply a mating partner in Genesis 2. She is half of him and he is half of her; only together can they become the unified humanity that God has called us to be.

FROM “ALONE” TO “ONE FLESH”: GENESIS 2:24

- The “one flesh” of Genesis 2:24 transcends the union of the sexual act (thought it is one way the “one flesh” unity may be experienced). It is a prime example of how two humans who are genuine others to one another may experience unity and oneness.

FROM “ALONE” TO “ONE FLESH”: GENESIS 2:24

- Notice the highly surprising roles of man and woman in Genesis 2:24: It is the man who leaves his family to join a biological stranger, his wife, to create a new family.
- This formulation is the opposite of every marriage in the Old Testament, where the woman leaves her family to join the man (e.g. Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, etc.).

FROM “ALONE” TO “ONE FLESH”: GENESIS 2:24

- The words “abandon” (‘azab / עזב) and “cling” (dabaq / דקב) are covenantal terms that speak to the forsaking of previous bonds and “clinging” to one’s covenant partner (Deut 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 22:5; 23:8).

FRACTURING OF THE MARRIAGE IDEAL

- Genesis 1-11 will go on to explore the fracturing of this ideal unity on all levels of the human family, setting up the reader's expectation that God will solve again this "no good" situation of a humanity unable to do what God has called them to do.

FRACTURED HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

- Genesis 2-3: Fracturing the unity between a man and a woman (marriage)
- Genesis 4a: Fracturing the unity between two siblings (family)
- Genesis 4b: Fracturing the unity of a city (community)
- Genesis 6:1-4: Distorting the unity of Heaven and Earth (cosmos)
- Genesis 9:18-27: Fracturing the unity of the extended family (tribes)
- Genesis 11: Distorting the unity of the human family (nations)

COVENANT HEALING OF THE FRACTURES

- To repair these many-layered distortions of the ideal unified humanity, future narratives will explore how the fractured human family becomes one again: through covenant commitment.

WHY THE TWO-STEP SOLUTION—ANIMALS FIRST THEN THE MATCHING HUMAN?

- This scene first allows the human to come to their own awareness of the solitude. When God “brings” the animals to the human, we can infer that he observed that they come in pairs.
- The next repetitions of this motif, when God brings the animals to Noah and the ark, emphasizes that animals come “two by two” (Gen 6:19-20; 7:2-3).

THE NAMING OF THE ANIMALS IN GENESIS 2:19-20

- In Genesis 1:1-2:3, God's creative activity involves naming entities, that is, separating them out and conferring upon them a distinct identity and purpose.
- God invites the human to imitate the divine creative act by naming the animals.
- The portrait of God in this scene is of a Creator who wants to share responsibility with his creation, so that it can become what it is made to be.

REFLECTION

- Summarize how the two becoming one flesh in Genesis 2:24 is a picture of God's ultimate plan for humanity.
- "When you get those many, who realize that they are also one, not in spite of their difference but because of their difference, their oneness images God in a way much more richly than one could do."

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF "HELP-COUNTERPART" IN GENESIS 2:18, 20?

- The phrase 'ezer kenegdo (עזר כנגדו) has been translated in different ways through the history of the English versions: "help meet" (KJV), "helper suitable" (NIV, NAS), "helper fit" (NRSV), "a helper to bear him company" (Tyndale).
- The earliest translations show a variety of interpretations:

ANCIENT TRANSLATIONS OF “HELP”

- Old Greek: “a help according to him” (βοηθὸν κατ᾽ αὐτόν)
- Targum Neofiti: “a partner who comes as one with him” = “a partner similar to him” (ביה זוג כד נפק)
- Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Onkelos: “a support according to him” (סמך כקבליה)
- Latin Vulgate: “a helper similar to him” (adiutorium similem sui)

DEFINITION OF “HELP”

- The word “help” (עזר) does not mean “assistant” or “helper,” rather, it describes someone who plays the role of the indispensable other, without whom the desired good cannot happen.
- The noun is masculine in grammatical gender, which means the word is a kind of title or role descriptor, not an adjective (female assistant).

OTHER USES OF “HELP”

- The noun “help” occurs 21 times in the Hebrew Bible, and outside of Genesis 2, it is only used to describe Yahweh as a deliverer of his people, or of useless humans who provide “no help” compared to Yahweh.

EXODUS 18:4 (NIV)

- 4And the other was named Eliezer, for he said, “My father’s God was my ‘ezer; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh.”

DEUTERONOMY 33:7 (NIV)

- 7And this he said about Judah: “Hear, Lord, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his ‘ezer against his foes!”

DEUTERONOMY 33:26-27 (NIV)

- 26There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides across the heavens as your ‘ezer and on the clouds in his majesty. 27The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemies before you, saying, “Destroy them!”

DEUTERONOMY 33:29 (NIV)

- 29Blessed are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord? He is your shield and ‘ezer and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will tread on their heights.

HOSEA 13:9 (NIV)

- 9You are destroyed, Israel, because you are against me, against your ‘ezer

PSALM 20:1-2 (NIV)

- 1May the Lord answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. 2May he send you ‘ezer from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion.

PSALM 33:18-20 (NIV)

- 18But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, 19to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. 20We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our ‘ezer and our shield.

PSALM 121:1-2 (NIV)

- 1I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my ‘ezer come from? 2My ‘ezer comes from the Lord, the Maker of Heaven and Earth.

PSALM 146:5-6 (NIV)

- 5Blessed are those whose ‘ezer is the God of Ja cob, whose hope is in the Lord their God. 6He is the Maker of Heaven and Earth, the sea, and everything in them—he remains faithful forever.

OTHER USES OF “HELP”

- It is used to describe military backup, though in context it always portrays such military power as pow erless compared to Yahweh’s ‘ezer.

ISAIAH 30:3-5 (NIV)

- 3But Pharaoh’s protection will be to your shame,
  Egypt’s shade will bring you disgrace. 4Though they
  have officials in Zoan and their envoys have arrived
  in Hanes, 5everyone will be put to shame because
  of a people useless to them, who bring neither ‘ezer
  nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace.

EZEKIEL 12:13-14 (NIV)

- 13…I will bring [Zedekiah] to Babylonia, the land of the Chaldeans, but he will not see it, and there he will die. 14I will scatter to the winds all those around him—his staff and all his ‘ezer—and I will pursue them with drawn sword.

“CORRESPONDING TO HIM” (כנגדו)

- This is a compound word ke- (כ) “like, as, according to” + neged “in front of, opposite” (נגד)
- The word neged means most basically “in front of, before”

EXODUS 19:2

- …And Israel camped there in the desert in front of (neged) the mountain.

EXODUS 34:10

- Before (neged) all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world.

NEGED - MIRRORING

- Genesis 2:18 and 20 are the only occurrences of this preposition with neged, though the preposition's meaning of "like, as" indicates similarity. Given the spatial imagery of "in front of," the meaning seems to be "similar to what would face him." We might use a metaphor of "mirroring" to get the core idea.

PARAPHRASING GENESIS 2:18

- If we combine our study of these two words, we produce the following paraphrase of Genesis 2:18:
- **It is not good for the human to be solitary. I will make one who can deliver** him from his inability to fulfill the divine commission alone, **one who mirrors him**.

THE HUMAN'S "DEEP SLEEP" (TARDEMAH) (תרדמה)

- This uncommon word appears only a handful of times in the Bible, and it is not the normal word for "sleep" (yashan / ישן)
- There is both a noun, deep sleep, and a verb, to fall into a deep sleep (radam). Both refer to a comatose state of helplessness and vulnerability that is attributed to God's power.

THE HUMAN'S "DEEP SLEEP" (TARDEMAH) (תרדמה)

- Adam's tardemah begins an important design pattern in the Hebrew Bible connected to this word. God causes tardemah to fall upon either
- (a) his partners, to demonstrate their inability to "help" themselves and bring about God's plan and blessing, or
- (b) his enemies, so that they are reduced to helplessness.

God Causes Deep Sleep to Fall on His Partners

Adam in Genesis 2:21: God prevents Adam from providing his own "help"
Abraham in Genesis 15:12: God prevents Abram from walking down the aisle of animal pieces
Daniel in Daniel 8:18 and 10:9: Daniel goes into a deep sleep as he experiences his visions of the coming of God's Kingdom

God Causes Deep Sleep to Fall on His Enemies

Sisera in Judges 4:21: He is in a deep sleep in Jael's tent when the kills him
Saul and his soldiers in 1 Samuel 26:12: Saul is prevented from waking a capturing David
Judah's leaders in Isaiah 29:10: God cuts off all communication through prophets to Judah's leaders
Jonah in Jonah 1:5-6: Jonah runs from God and tries to escape to his self-made Eden
Psalm 76:6: God rebukes enemy warriors and reduces them to deep sleep

DREAMS AND VISIONS

- People often experience tardemah when they are having a dream or vision (see Daniel 8:18 and 10:9; Job 4:13 and 33:15; Isa 29:10).

A RIB OR A SIDE? THE HEBREW WORD TSELA’ (צלע)

- The word [tsela’] is used about forty times in the Hebrew Bible but is not an anatomical term in any other passage. Outside of Genesis 2, with the exception of 2 Samuel 16:13 (referring to the other side of the hill), the word is only used architecturally in the tabernacle/temple passages (Ex 25–38; 1 Kings 6–7; Ezek 41).

A RIB OR A SIDE? THE HEBREW WORD TSELA’ (צלע)

- It can refer to planks or beams in these passages, but more often it refers to one side or the other, typically when there are two sides (rings along two sides of the ark; rooms on two sides of the temple, the north or south side; etc.).

A RIB OR A SIDE? THE HEBREW WORD TSELA’’ (צלע)

- On the basis of Adam’s statement, combined with these data on usage, we would have to conclude that God took one of Adam’s sides—likely meaning he cut Adam in half and from one side built the woman. — JOHN H. WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF ADAM AND EVE: GENESIS 2–3 AND THE HUMAN ORIGINS DEBATE (DOWNERS GROVE, IL: IVP ACADEMIC: AN IMPRINT OF INTERVARSITY PRESS, 2015), 78.

A RIB OR A SIDE? THE HEBREW WORD TSELA’’ (צלע)

- “[T]he text says that God took one of the ṣēlāʿ of man. Almost without exception this word has been translated as “rib” (hence even today the many puns on “Adam’s rib” and “women’s lib”). A better translation of ṣēlāʿ is side.

A RIB OR A SIDE? THE HEBREW WORD TSELA” (צלע)

- The word designates a side or the shell of the ark of the covenant (Exod. 25:12, 14; 37:3, 5), the side of a building (Exod. 26:20; 36:25) or even a whole room (“side chamber, arcade, cell,” Ezek. 41:5–8), or a ridge or terrace on a hill (2 Sam. 16:13).

A RIB OR A SIDE? THE HEBREW WORD TSELA’’ (צלע)

- Gen. 2:21 is the only place in the OT where the modern versions render this word as “rib” … the passage states that woman was created from an undesignated part of man’s body rather than from one of his organs or from a portion of bony tissue.” — VICTOR P. HAMILTON, THE BOOK OF GENESIS, CHAPTERS 1–17, 178

GOD "BUILDS" THE SIDE INTO A WOMAN

- Interpreters have long noticed the architectural vocabulary of Genesis 2:21-22:
- And [God] took one from [the human's] **sides**, and he **closed** flesh in its place, and he **built** the **side…into** a woman.
- All of these terms are used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to describe the construction of building a sacred space where he will meet with his people and deliver them.

The ark of Noah: Genesis 6:14-22 and 7:15-16
The tabernacle and the ark of the covenant: Exodus 25:10-22
The temple: 1 Kings 6:1-38
The new temple and the new Jerusalem (a.k.a. “lady Zion”): Isaiah 54 and 60

BUILDING WOMAN DESIGN PATTERN

- The “building” of the woman deliverer begins a design pattern that is fundamental to the biblical narrative: God’s provision of a blessing or deliverance or sacred gift that is meant to bring the protagonist into closer union with God.

BUILDING WOMAN DESIGN PATTERN

- But tragically, God's provision ends up being abused or distorted in some way and thus causes a downfall.
- As a result, the future deliverance becomes bound up with the hope of a future seed who will be born from the "woman/ building" (the ark, the tabernacle, temple, house of David, etc.).

HELP = EZER = 

SEED = ZERA' = 

QUESTION AND REFLECTION

- Did any of these word studies unlock a new way to read Genesis 2:18-25 for you?
- “In Genesis 2, you have one who, if they remain alone, cannot bring about the thing that God called them to. So God causes them to pass out, and God, as ezer, provides an ezer through which the divine promise can come into existence.”