GENESIS
A DEEP DIVE

ADAM TO NOAH

THE EDEN STORY - PART 1 (GENESIS 2:4-17)

GENESIS 2: 4-17

- This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created.
- When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens— and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the lord god had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, But streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground— The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

GENESIS 2: 4-17

- Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

GENESIS 2: 4-17

- A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

GENESIS 2: 4-17

- The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, “you are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

QUESTIONS

- Genesis 2:5 says, “Now no shrub of the field was yet on the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.” How do these details compare to the account in Genesis 1?
- How does the narrative that follows—the creation of the human and the creation of the garden—relate to the literary unit you just finished reading?

The Macro-Design of the Eden Narrative in 2:4-3:24

2:4-17	**Humanity is Created and Placed in the Garden** *Characters:* Yahweh, the human *Setting:* From outside the garden to inside the garden	
2:18-25	**Man and Woman Created and Unified** *Characters:* Yahweh, the human, animals, woman *Setting:* Inside the garden	
3:1-5	**Dialogue Between the Snake and the Woman** *Characters:* Snake, woman *Setting:* Inside the garden	
3:6-7	**The Woman and Man Eat from the Forbidden Tree** *Characters:* Snake, woman, man *Setting:* The center of the garden	
	A	And the woman saw that **the tree** was good for eating
	B	and desirable to ***the eyes*** and desirable for becoming ***wise***
	C	and she took from its fruit and she ate
	C′	and she gave also to her husband and he ate
	B′	and ***the eyes*** of the two of them were opened and they knew they were ***naked***
	A′	and the leaves of a **fig tree** and made garments
3:8-13	**Dialogue Between God and the Humans** *Characters:* Yahweh, man, woman *Setting:* Inside the garden	
3:14-21	**Consequences for the Snake, Man and Woman Divided** *Characters:* Yahweh, the man, woman, snake *Setting:* Inside the garden	
3:22-24	**Humanity is Banished from the Garden** *Characters:* YHWH (active), the human (passive) *Setting:* Inside the garden, moves to the land outside the garden	

2:4-17	**Humanity is Created and Placed in the Garden** *Characters*: Yahweh, the human *Setting*: From outside the garden to inside the garden	
2:18-25	**Man and Woman Created and Unified** *Characters*: Yahweh, the human, animals, woman *Setting*: Inside the garden	
3:1-5	**Dialogue Between the Snake and the Woman** *Characters:* Snake, woman *Setting:* Inside the garden	

The Woman and Man Eat from the Forbidden Tree

Characters: Snake, woman, man

Setting: The center of the garden

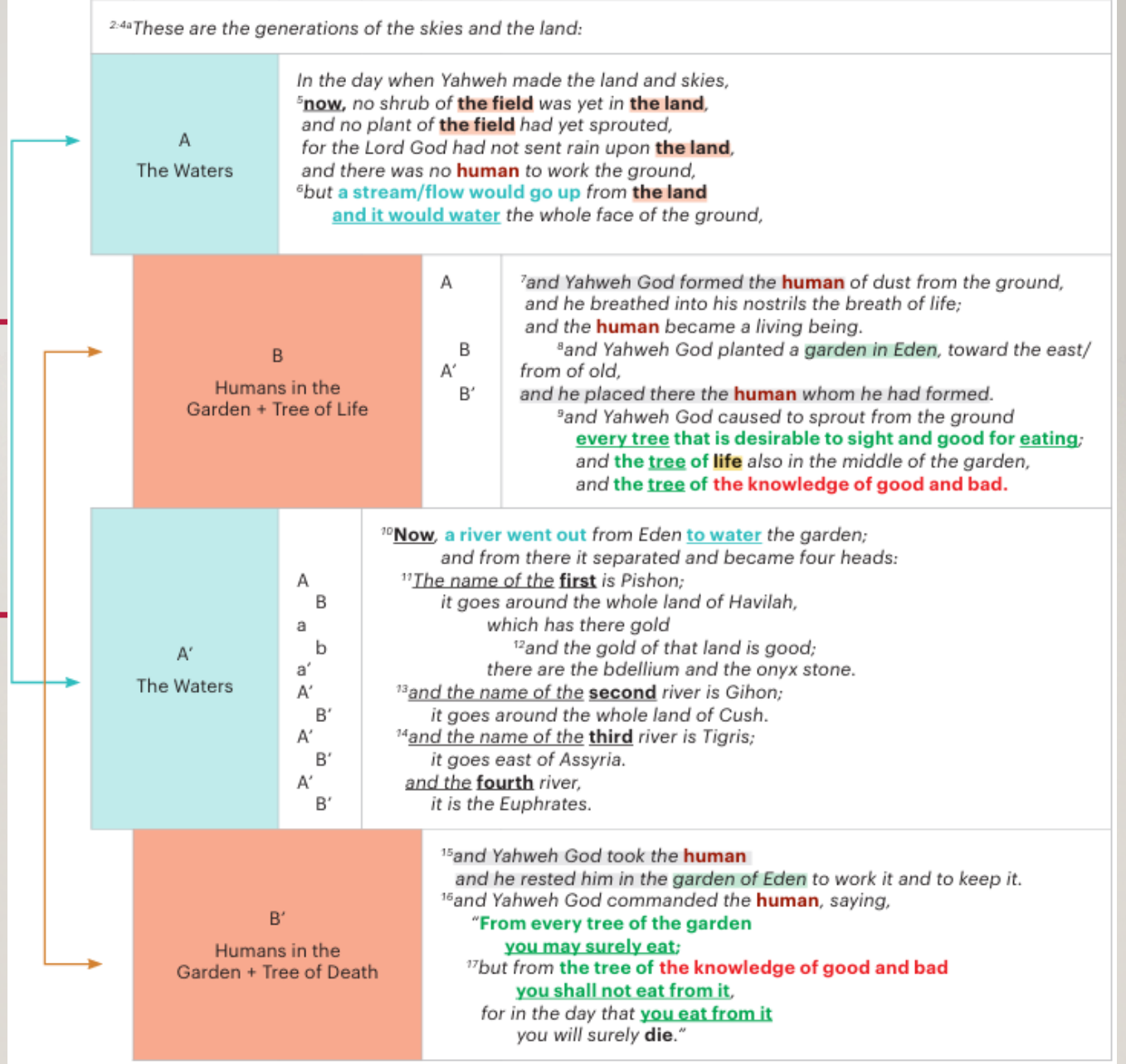
3:6-7	A	And the woman saw that **the tree** was good for eating
	B	and desirable to ***the eyes*** and desirable for becoming ***wise***
	C	and she took from its fruit and she ate
	C′	and she gave also to her husband and he ate
	B′	and ***the eyes*** of the two of them were opened
		and they knew they were ***naked***
	A′	and the leaves of a **fig tree** and made garments

	3:8-13	**Dialogue Between God and the Humans** *Characters:* Yahweh, man, woman *Setting:* Inside the garden
	3:14-21	**Consequences for the Snake, Man and Woman Divided** *Characters:* Yahweh, the man, woman, snake *Setting:* Inside the garden
3:22-24		**Humanity is Banished from the Garden** *Characters:* YHWH (active), the human (passive) *Setting:* Inside the garden, moves to the land outside the garden

THIS DESIGN INVITES THE READER TO CONTRAST EACH SCENE WITH ITS CORRESPONDING PARTNER:

A. *ha'adam* is placed in the garden
  B. God/man/woman/animals relationships exist in harmony
    C. the snake talks with woman about eating from the tree
      D. the humans eat from the tree
    C.′ YHWH dialogues with humans about eating from the tree
  B.′ God/man/woman/animal relationships are fractured
A. *ha'adam* is driven from the garden

TRANSLATION AND LITERARY DESIGN: GENESIS 2:4-17



2:4a These are the generations of the skies and the land:

A — The Waters

In the day when Yahweh made the land and skies,
5 **now,** no shrub of **the field** was yet in **the land,**
and no plant of **the field** had yet sprouted,
for the Lord God had not sent rain upon **the land,**
and there was no **human** to work the ground,
6 but **a stream/flow would go up** from **the land**
and it would water the whole face of the ground,

B — Humans in the Garden + Tree of Life

A
7 and Yahweh God formed the **human** of dust from the ground,
and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;
and the **human** became a living being.
B
8 and Yahweh God planted a garden in Eden, toward the east/
A′ from of old,
and he placed there the **human** whom he had formed.
B′
9 and Yahweh God caused to sprout from the ground
every tree that is desirable to sight and good for eating;
and **the tree of life** also in the middle of the garden,
and **the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.**

A′ — The Waters

A
B
a
b
a′
A′
B′
A′
B′
A′
B′

10 **Now,** a river went out from Eden to water the garden;
and from there it separated and became four heads:
11 The name of the **first** is Pishon;
it goes around the whole land of Havilah,
which has there gold
12 and the gold of that land is good;
there are the bdellium and the onyx stone.
13 and the name of the **second** river is Gihon;
it goes around the whole land of Cush.
14 and the name of the **third** river is Tigris;
it goes east of Assyria.
and the **fourth** river,
it is the Euphrates.

B′ — Humans in the Garden + Tree of Death

15 and Yahweh God took the **human**
and he rested him in the garden of Eden to work it and to keep it.
16 and Yahweh God commanded the **human,** saying,
"**From every tree of the garden**
you may surely eat;
17 but from **the tree of the knowledge of good and bad**
you shall not eat from it,
for in the day that **you eat from it**
you will surely **die.**"

NOTES

- This symmetrical design invites the reader to compare the pre-garden waters (A) with the garden waters (A’).
- The stream/flow by itself does not create Eden in 2:4b-6, but it does create the clay and generates potential for Eden to exist. For Eden to emerge, God must direct the waters toward a purpose and then plant a garden (B), which then (B’) creates an overflow of value for the nations (Israel, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Assyria).

NOTES

- The double placing (B and B’) of humanity in the garden is intentional.
- The first placement in 2:7-9 + 2:10-14 is about God setting humanity in a cultivated environment which is ripe with potential.
- The second placement in 2:15-17 focuses on the test that the garden represents:

NOTES

- 2:15: “and he rested him” ((וינחהו) points forward to the story of Noah (,(נח) who will have to bring comfort (נחם l , 5:29) to the land that is cursed because of humanity’s folly in the garden by offering a sacrifice on top of the sacred mountain. This comparison invites the reader to see how God is placing this human atop a sacred mountain of Eden in this story as well. It also hints forward to Noah’s own failure in his garden vineyard (9:20-24).

NOTES

- 2:16: The divine command to eat from all trees except for one sets up the plot tension of the test.
- The first introduction of the trees in (B) emphasizes the tree of life, while the introduction of the divine command (B’) emphasizes the tree that could bring death.

Notice the coordination of water/humans/plants by their common origins “from the ground.”

2:5	No *human* (אדם) to work the ground (אדמה)
2:6	A *spring* (אד) would go up from the land (מן הארץ) to water the ground (אדמה)
2:7	Yahweh formed (ויצר) *human* (אדם) as dust from the ground (מן האדמה)
2:9	And Yahweh sprouted (ויצמח) from the ground (מן האדמה) every tree

THE HINGE FUNCTION OF GENESIS 2:4 BETWEEN THE TWO LARGE LITERARY BLOCKS OF GENESIS 1:1-2:3 AND GENESIS 2:4-3:24.

GEN 2:4A	*"These are the generations*	
	A	*of the **skies** and the **land***
	B	*when they were **created:***
GEN 2:4B	B	*in the day Yahweh Elohim **made***
	A	*the **land** and **skies**..."*

GETTING TECHNICAL

- On its own, this line seems like a parallel design of two paired statements; however, when 2:4b is joined to the following verses, it becomes clear that the phrase “in the day Yahweh Elohim made the land and the skies” is a subordinate temporal clause that introduces all of 2:4b-6, in order to set up the main clause that begins the narrative action in 2:7 with the creation of the human.

GETTING TECHNICAL

- The point of Genesis 2:4a is to situate the following narrative of Genesis 2:4b-3:24 as taking place after the creation of the skies and land recounted in Genesis 1:1-2:3.
- The point of Genesis 2:4b is to link backward so that Genesis 1:1-2:3 becomes a prologue to the following narrative.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENESIS 1:1-2:3 AND 2:4-3:24

- Many interpreters throughout history have read the Eden narrative (Gen 2:4-25) as a recursive elaboration of day six in Genesis 1, where animals and humans are created on the land.
- In this view, the narrative technique of the author is to first present an overview narrative (Gen 1:1-2:3) and then double back and provide a more in-depth presentation of a key moment in the previous narrative (Gen 2:4-25).

View #1: Genesis 2:4-25 Elaborates Day Six of Genesis 1:1-2:3



THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SEVERAL PROBLEMS WITH THIS INTERPRETATION

- If Genesis 2 is a recapitulation of day six of Genesis 1, the statement in Genesis 2:5-6 makes little sense: "…and no plant of the field was yet in the land, nor had any vegetation of the field yet sprouted." In Genesis 1, God generates plants from the ground on day three not day six.
- In Genesis 1, the animals are created first, then humans. In Genesis 2, the human is created first, then the animals.

THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SEVERAL PROBLEMS WITH THIS INTERPRETATION

- If Genesis 2 is re-presenting day six, it is hard to imagine that the author wants us to think of all the events of Genesis 2:4-25 as taking place in one day.
- The heading used in Genesis 2:4a “these are the generations of…” occurs 10 time in Genesis in a similar way Genesis (and 3x outside of Genesis).

	Text	Narrative Role	Relation to Previous Literary Unit
GEN 2:4A	These are **the generations of the heavens and the earth** when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.	To be determined...	To be determined...
GEN 5:1	This is the scroll of **the generations of humanity**. When God created human, he made him in the likeness of God.	Transition from Cain's line to Seth's line	Recursive/Sequel
GEN 6:9	These are **the generations of Noah.**	Transition from pre-flood rebellion to Noah's story	Sequel
GEN 10:1	Now these are **the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth**, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood.	Transition from Noah and three sons to the descendants of Noah's three sons	Sequel
GEN 11:10	These are **the generations of Shem.**	Transition from descendants of Noah's three sons to Shem's line	Recursive/Sequel
GEN 11:27	Now these are **the generations of Terah.**	Transition from Shem's line to Terah's line and to Abraham	Sequel
GEN 25:12	Now these are **the generations of Ishmael,** Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, bore to Abraham;	Transition from Abraham to Ishmael's line	Sequel
GEN 25:19	Now these are **the generations of Isaac**, Abraham's son:	Transition from Abraham to Isaac's line	Sequel
GEN 36:1 GEN 36:9	Now these are **the generations of Esau** (that is, Edom)... These then are **the generations of Esau** the father of Edom in the hill country of Seir.	Transition from Jacob to Esau's family line	Sequel
GEN 37:2	These are **the generations of Jacob.**	Transition from Jacob to Jacob's family	Recursive/Sequel

THIS TRANSITIONAL HEADING IS USED IN TWO PRIMARY WAYS IN GENESIS:

- 1. A sequel: To introduce a new literary unit by naming a key person who, along with their children, will be the focus on the following literary unit.
- 2. A recursive/sequel: To introduce the non-chosen son's family line through history (Cain in 4:17-22; Japeth and Ham in 10:1; Ishmael in 25:12; Esau in 36:1, 9), and then double back and focus on the chosen son: Seth, Shem, Isaac, Jacob's sons (5:1; 11:10; 25:19; 37:2).

GENESIS 2:4A: “THESE ARE “THE GENERATIONS OF” THE SKIES AND THE LAND…”

- The phrase generations of in Hebrew is toledoth (,(תולדות) from the root yalad “to give birth.” It is used to refer to what issued and generated from the key character named in the formula.
- The phrase “these are the generations of…” is used three times (Gen 2:4a, 5:1; Num 3:1) and is always used as a narrative introduction that refers back to the previous narrative as providing the conditions of the following sequel narrative.

View #2: Genesis 2:4-25 Follows as a Sequel From Genesis 1:1-2:3

GENESIS 1:1-2:3

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Day 6

Day 7

GEN 2:4A

Transition

GEN 2:4B-3:25

What happened
<u>after</u> Genesis 1:1-2:3

VIEW #2: GENESIS 2:4-25 FOLLOWS AS A SEQUEL FROM GENESIS 1:1-2:3

- The implications of this conclusion are extremely significant for the interpretation of Genesis 2:4-4:26, the Adam and Eve and the Cain and Abel story. 1. It means that Genesis 2:4b-25 is not another “cosmic creation story” parallel to Genesis 1.
- Rather, the narrative focuses on one particular spot of the already created dry land and shows God preparing it as a special Heaven-on-Earth place.

VIEW #2: GENESIS 2:4-25 FOLLOWS AS A SEQUEL FROM GENESIS 1:1-2:3

- Genesis 1 begins with a disordered cosmos, while Genesis 2 begins with a disordered land.
- Genesis 1 portrays the entire cosmos as a sacred space, Genesis 2 portrays one particular place within the cosmos as God's special dwelling place.

VIEW #2: GENESIS 2:4-25 FOLLOWS AS A SEQUEL FROM GENESIS 1:1-2:3

- It means that Genesis 2-3 is focused not on the creation of the cosmos as such but on the story of how God's ideals for creation in Genesis 1 were ruined and distort ed into the reality that the reader inhabits.

VIEW #2: GENESIS 2:4-25 FOLLOWS AS A SEQUEL FROM GENESIS 1:1-2:3

- It means that Genesis 1:26-28 describes the creation and vocational role of humanity as a whole. This opens the interpretive possibility that Genesis 1 describes the creation of general humanity in the narrative past, distinct from the narrative of Adam and Eve's creation in Genesis 2:4-25.
- According to this interpretation, it is from among an already created humanity that God "forms and appoints" one particular human family as his royal priests to oversee the Heaven-on-Earth place.

VIEW #2: GENESIS 2:4-25 FOLLOWS AS A SEQUEL FROM GENESIS 1:1-2:3

- It means that once Cain is exiled east of Eden, he is joining this wider “Genesis 1 humanity” as he marries, begins a family, and build a city and flourishing civilization.

VIEW #2: GENESIS 2:4-25 FOLLOWS AS A SEQUEL FROM GENESIS 1:1-2:3

- It means that God's creation of a cosmic mountain temple (Eden) and the creation of a royal priesthood is presented as a terrestrial creation story, similar to other ancient Near Eastern temple building accounts: The Ba'al Epic from Ugarit (13th century B.C.) and Enuma Elish (18th and 13th centuries B.C.).



IDEAL

GEN 1

2:4

REALITY

GEN 2:4b...

FORMED OF THE DUST

- Question
- What idea is being emphasized in Genesis 2 when God forms the human from the dust?
- “The whole point of the creation of the humans outside of the garden is that these are frail mortal creatures. But they have an opportunity to become “Human 2.0” when they hang out, not just in Eden and not just in the garden but in the middle of the garden—that’s where life is.”

THE NOT-YET EXISTENT PLANTS OF GENESIS 2:5

- Genesis 2:5 paints a portrait of the unproductive dry land that is devoid of plant life (cf. day 3 of Gene sis ch. 1) and human life (cf. day 6 of Genesis ch. 1).
- This line returns us to a state of tohu-vavohu from Genesis 1:2, but here is focused in on the dry land.

THE NOT-YET EXISTENT PLANTS OF GENESIS 2:5

- “Shrub” ((שיח) non-edible shrubs, used mostly of uncultivated land, wilderness areas (see Gen 21:15).
- In Job 30:4, 7, the scene involves starving people in desolate areas, eating plants that are hardly edible in order to survive. The shock of the scene is of people trying to eat and live off of “shrub.”

THE NOT-YET EXISTENT PLANTS OF GENESIS 2:5

- “Plant” (:(עשב) this refers to edible plants and vegetables. In Genesis 1:11, it is the growth from the dry land after it emerges from the sea, and in Genesis 1:29-30, these are the plants given to humans and animals as food (see also Gen 9:3; Exod 10:15).

THE NOT-YET EXISTENT PLANTS OF GENESIS 2:5

- The dual plant reference is a way of talking about any and all plant growth. Inedible or edible, none of it was growing in the land because of the lack of water. Two reasons are given for the lack of any kind of plants:
- 1. No rain (preview forward to the flood narrative)
- 2. No human to work the ground (preview forward to the human's purpose in Eden in 2:15 and after the exile from Eden in 3:23)

HUMANITY FORMED FROM CLAY: GENESIS 2:7

- There are two biblical motifs about human nature that are rooted in the language and imagery of Genesis 2:7: “And Yahweh formed ((ויצר)the human of dust(עפר) from the ground.”
- Is this line describing a literal special creation of the first human, focusing on the material substance from which he was made?

HUMANITY FORMED FROM CLAY: GENESIS 2:7

- Or is this an archetypal description focusing on the nature and mortality of the human species as a whole?
- We can focus on the key words “formed” (yatsar) and “dust” (‘aphar) and ask if (1) the verb form focuses on material substance and (2) if “formed of dust” is used to describe only the human of Genesis 2 or if it includes other humans as well.

HUMANITY FORMED FROM CLAY: GENESIS 2:7

- 1. Does the verb yatsar focus exclusively on the material substance of what is created?
- The verb appears 45 times in biblical Hebrew. And it takes a variety of direct objects, not all of which are material.

2 Kings 19:25 *Have you not heard that I made it long ago? **I formed <u>it</u>** from days of old what now I bring to pass, that you should turn fortified cities into heaps of ruins…*	A series of events providentially arrange by God (see also Isa 22:11; 46:11)
Isaiah 27:11 *For this is a people without understanding; so their maker has no compassion on them, and **the One who formed <u>them</u>** shows them no favor.* **Isaiah 43:1** *But now, this is what the Lord says— he who created you, Jacob, **he who formed <u>you</u>**, Israel: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."*	The entire nation of Israel was "formed" and "made" by Yahweh (see also Isa 29:16; 43:7, 10, 21; 44:21, 24; 45:11; Ps 95:5)
Isaiah 45:6-7 *I am Yahweh, and there is no other. **I form <u>the light</u>** and create darkness, I bring good and create bad; I, the Lord, do all these things.*	Light and darkness, good and bad, metaphorical descriptions of historical events of abundance and peace, or war and defeat See Jeremiah 18:1-10
Isaiah 45:18 *For this is what the Lord says— he who created the heavens, he is God; **he who formed <u>the land</u>**, and made it; he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited— he says: "I am the Lord, and there is no other."*	The entire cosmos is formed by Yahweh (see also Jer 10:16; 33:2)

Amos 4:13 *He who **forms the mountains**, who creates the wind, and who reveals his thoughts to mankind, who turns dawn to darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth— the Lord God Almighty is his name.*	The mountains and the wind are elements within the cosmos
Amos 7:1 *This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: **He was forming swarms of locusts** after the king's share had been harvested and just as the late crops were coming up.*	Swarms of locusts
Zechariah 12:1 *Thus declares the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and **forms the breath of a human within him**...*	The breath of life that animates humans
Psalm 74:16-17 *The day is yours, and yours also the night; you established the sun and moon.* *It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; **you formed both summer and winter**.*	Summer and winter, seasonal orders of time
Psalm 139:16 *Your eyes saw my unformed body; all **the days you formed for me** were written in your book before one of them came to be.*	A person's "days," that is, the course of their lives, are formed by God

HUMANITY FORMED FROM CLAY: GENESIS 2:7

- 2. Does dust describe the unique material substance of the first hu man, or is this an archetypal description of the nature and mortality of the human creature?
- The words dust and clay are regularly used to describe humanity as a whole and every human, not just the human in Genesis 2.

GENESIS 3:19

- By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; **for you are dust, and to dust you shall return**.

JOB 33:4-6

- The **Spirit/Breath** (רוח)of God has made me, and the **breath** (נשמה)of the Almighty gives me life. Refute me if you can; array yourselves before me, take your stand. Behold, I belong to God like you; **I too have been pinched out of the clay.**

PSALM 103:14

- For he himself knows **our form**; he is mindful that **we are but dust**.

PSALM 119:73

- **Your hands made me and fashioned me**; give me understanding, that I may learn your commandments.

JOB 4:19

- (NASB95) How much more those who dwell in **houses of clay** (חמר)whose **foundation is in the dust** (עפר) who are crushed before the moth!

ISAIAH 64:8

- Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are **the clay, you are the former/potter**; we are all the work of your hand.

JOB 10:8-9

- **Your hands fashioned and made me altogether**, and would you destroy me? Remember now, that **you have made me as clay**; and would you **turn me into dust** again?

HUMANITY FORMED FROM CLAY: GENESIS 2:7

- Notice that in all these texts, the language of the Eden narrative is used to describe humanity's nature.
- "Being formed from dust is a statement about [human] essence and identity, not our substance. In this, Adam is an archetype… If we are all formed from dust, yet at the same time we are born of a mother through a normal birth process, we can see that being formed from dust, while true of each of us, is not a statement about each of our material origins.

HUMANITY FORMED FROM CLAY: GENESIS 2:7

- One can be born of a woman yet still be formed from dust; all of us are… “Formed from dust” is not a statement of material origins for any of us, and there is no reason to think that it is a statement of Adam’s material origins. For Adam, as for all of us, that we are formed from dust makes a statement about our identity as mortals. Since it pertains to all of us, it is archetypal.”
— JOHN H. WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF ADAM AND EVE, 76–77

GARDEN IMAGERY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- The garden of Eden is more than just a safe and fertile piece of land—it's a symbol of a bigger reality. What does the garden of Eden represent?
- "Seeing it as a design pattern of Heaven on Earth, seeing it in its ancient context has been so helpful for understanding why garden imagery is so pervasive from the beginning to the end of the Bible. It was the language of Heaven on Earth in the time of the biblical authors."

EDEN AND THE THREE-PART GEOGRAPHY OF THE LAND IN GENESIS 2:4-17

- Eden (עדן is) used in two overlapping ways in the Hebrew Bible.
- 1. Eden as “luxuriance” or “delight”
- 2. The cosmic land called “Delight/Eden” is consistently referred back to in the Hebrew Bible as a meeting place of Heaven and Earth, which is the source of all life and abundance “outside of Eden.”

2 SAMUEL 1:24

- O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet with **luxuries (lit. “edens”)**, who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.

PSALM 36:7-8

- How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of **delights (lit. “edens”)**.

JEREMIAH 51:34

- “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has devoured us, he has thrown us into con fusion, he has made us an empty jar. Like a serpent he has swallowed us and filled his stomach with our **delicacies (lit. “edens”)**, and then has spewed us out.

ISAIAH 51:3

- The Lord will surely comfort **Zion** and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts **like Eden**, her waste lands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

EZEKIEL 36:35 (NIV)

- They will say, “**This land** that was laid waste has become **like the garden of Eden**; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited.”

EZEKIEL 31:3-3, 9

- Consider Assyria, once a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches overshadowing the forest; it towered on high, its top above the thick foliage. The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field…. I made it beautiful with abundant branch es, the envy of all **the trees of Eden** in **the garden of God**.

EZEKIEL 28:13-14 (NASB95)

- You were in **Eden, the garden of God**…You were on **the holy mountain of God**; you walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

“PLANTED IN THE EAST/OF OLD” (מדקמ)

- The word qedem can be used geographically (“east”) or temporally (“before”).
- The geographical use is picked up and elaborated in Genesis 3:24 and 4: 16

GENESIS 3:24

- So he drove the man out; and **at the east** (מקדם)of the garden of Eden he stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

GENESIS 4:16

- Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, **east** (קדמת)of Eden.

“PLANTED IN THE EAST/OF OLD” (מדקמ)

- This geographical use of Eden is clear, but the question is whether in Genesis 2:8 the word miqeddem has a double meaning, because the temporal use of this word is very common.

ISAIAH 45:21

- Declare what is to be, present it — let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the **distant past** (מקדם)? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me.

HABAKKUK 1:12

- Lord, are you not from **antiquity** (מקדם)? My God, my Holy One, you will never die. You, Lord, have appointed them to execute judgment; you, my Rock, have ordained them to punish.

MICAH 5:2

- But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are **from of old** (מקדם), from ancient times.

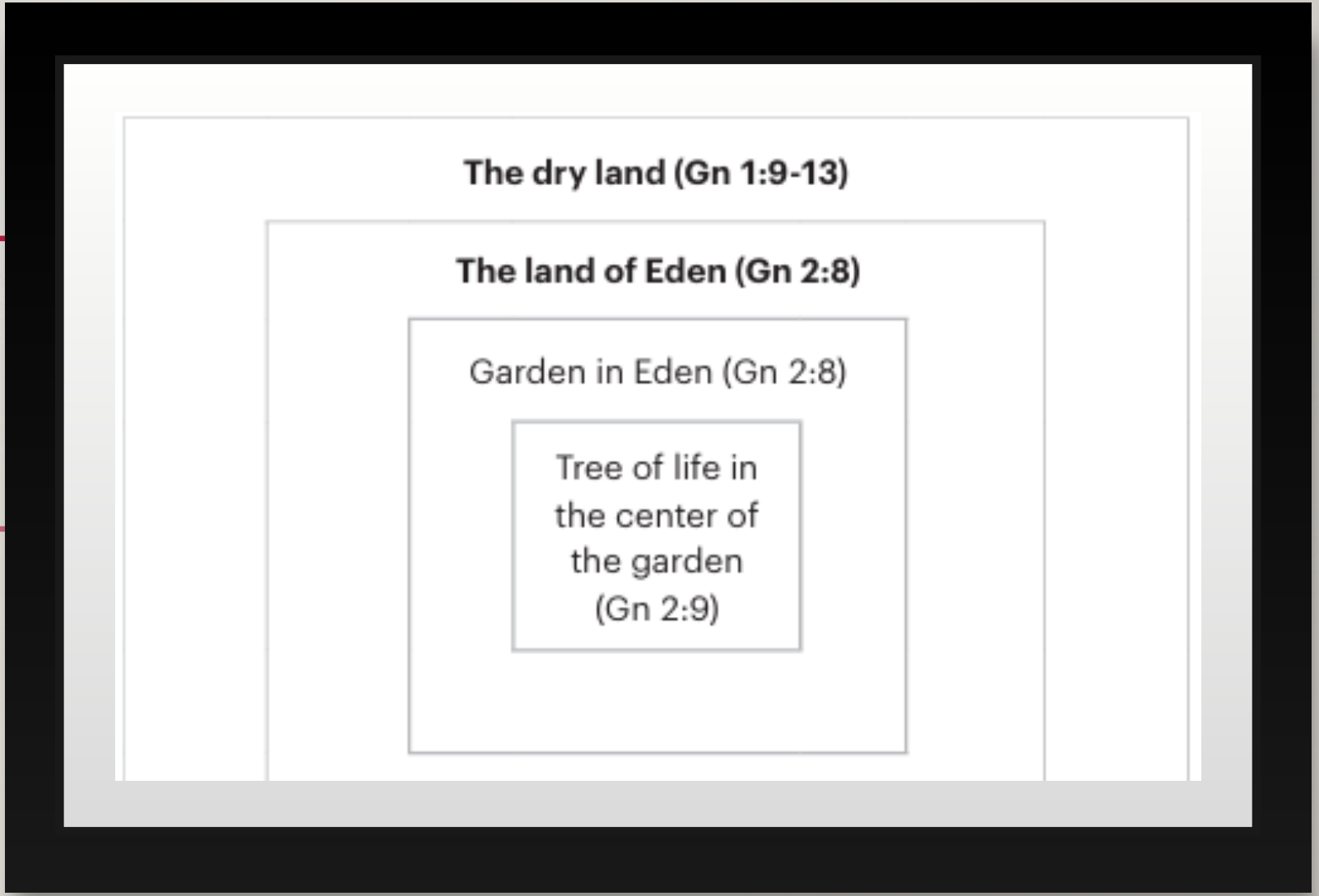
PSALM 77:11-12

- I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles **of long ago** (מקדם). I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds.

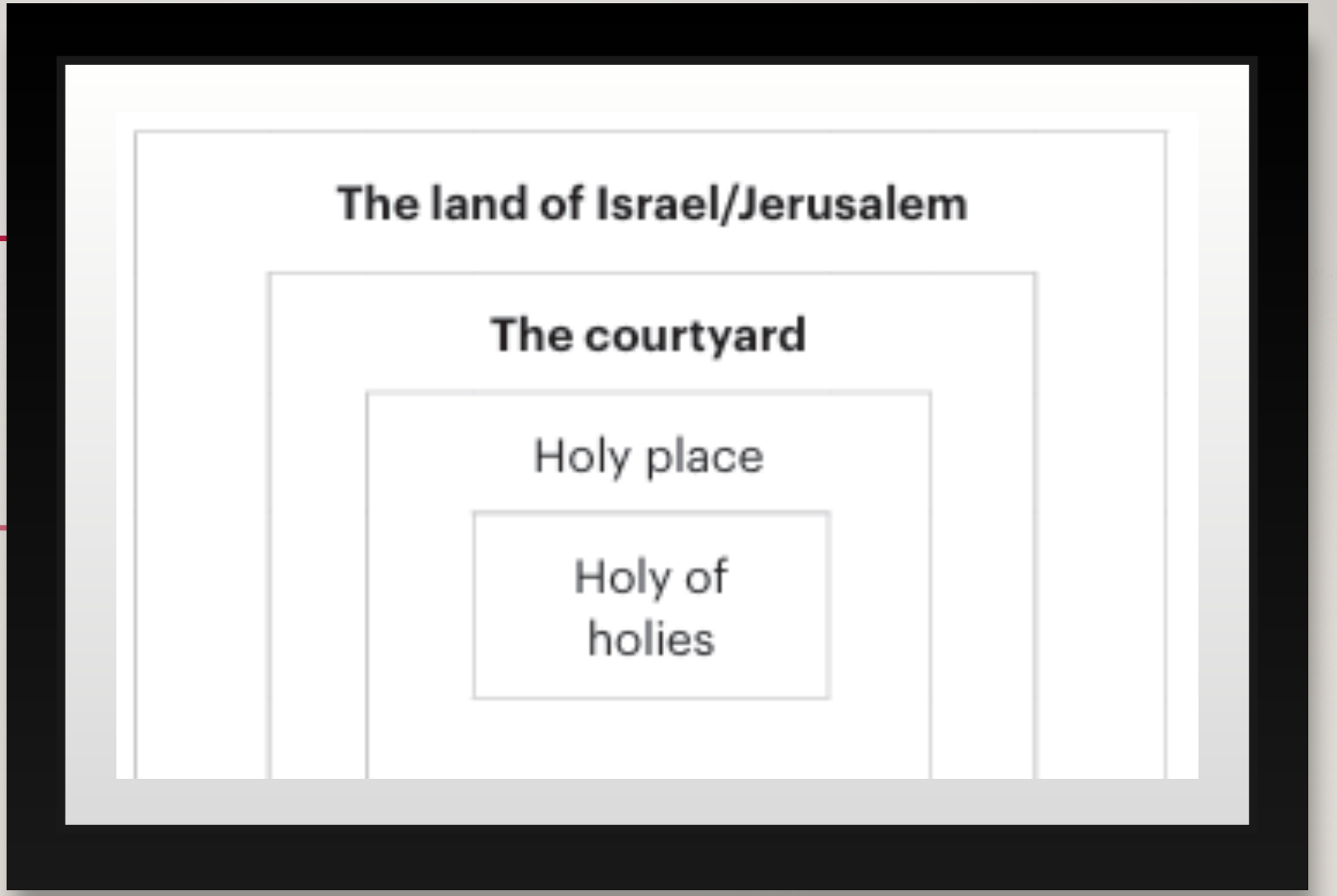
“PLANTED IN THE EAST/OF OLD” (מדקמ)

- In the earliest history of interpretation, the word was understood both ways.
- Geographical: Old Greek (κατα ἀνατολας)
- Temporal: Latin Vulgate (a principio, “from the beginning”), and early Septuagint revisers (Aquila ἀπο ἀρχηθεν, Symmachus ἐκ πρωτης, Theodotian ἐν πρωτοις), and all of the Aramaic Targums (Neofiti, Pseudo-Jonathan)

THE THREE-PART GEOGRAPHY OF EDEN



THE GARDEN OF EDEN ON THE DRY LAND PROVIDES A SYMBOLIC TEMPLATE FOR ISRAEL'S TABERNACLE / TEMPLE, ESPECIALLY AS DESCRIBED IN EZEKIEL'S IDEAL/ RESTORED TEMPLE (EZEK 40-48).



THE TREE OF LIFE

- The tree of life is the tree in the center of the garden that imparts “eternal life.”
- God is the author of all life in Genesis 1-2, and trees are potent images of God giving the gift of “self-re generation” to his creation. The reader knows that the tree of life cannot be magical in the sense of offering its own life to the eater. Rather, God is the giver of life, and the tree is at the center of the temple garden, so that proximity to the tree means proximity to the author of life.

GENESIS 2:9

- And Yahweh God caused to sprout every tree from the ground that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; **and the tree of life was in the middle of the garden, and the tree of knowing of good and bad**.

GENESIS 3:22

- Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, **he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.**”

REFLECTION

- “[The tree of life] represents life that is beyond the original life that God breathed into human. The first human by nature is susceptible to death…. Nevertheless, continued eating from the tree could renew life and prevent death. Apart from disobedience to God’s command, mortals had access to this tree…

REFLECTION

- The tree of life allows humanity to transcend its mortality, the state in which it was created on the sixth day, so it can move to a higher dimension… to eternal life and immortality. As one partakes of this...fruit by faith, one participates in this eternal life. This highest potency of life was available in the garden and becomes once again available to us as we reenter the temple-garden through the second Adam… and look forward to the resurrection of our bodies.” — BRUCE WALTKE, OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY, 257.

THE TREE OF LIFE IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN PERSPECTIVE

- The tree of life was an iconic image in the ancient world. It's helpful to compare and contrast this tree's significance in Mesopotamian, Canaanite, and Egyptian culture with the biblical portrait. William Osborne, Trees and Kings: A Comparative Analysis of Tree Imagery in Israel's Prophetic Tradition and the Ancient Near East.

THE TREE OF LIFE IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN PERSPECTIVE

- “As any astute tourist quickly observes, the landscape of much the Near East is predominantly stark and barren. The land is comprised of innumerable shades of brown, with only brief interjections of green and blue. The higher in elevation one goes, the greener the picture becomes. Consequently, mountains and rivers, along with the forests that adorn them, seem to be natural focal points anyone who lives or travels in these lands.

THE TREE OF LIFE IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN PERSPECTIVE

- The ancient peoples, from the remote western world of Egypt to the eastern river marshes of Babylonia, lived in the land, not simply on it. They were all agrarian cultures, whose livelihood was found and maintained among the shade, fruit, shelter, and beauty of their trees. As a result, there can be little doubt that this lifestyle had a significant effect on these ancient cultures and the way they perceived the world. Trees were some of the most sacred elements in ancient near Eastern civilizations." — OSBORNE, TREES AND KINGS, 31.

THE TREE OF LIFE IN ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN PERSPECTIVE

- Sacred Trees in Ancient Egypt Nut, the sky goddess, who is often associated with the sky-dome and the gift of rain, is also often portrayed as a tree that supplies fruit, water, and life for the land.

EGYPTIAN KINGS AS TREES

- The productivity of ancient Egypt was completely dependent upon the Nile, which annually flooded and irrigated the shores and deltas. Osiris was the deity associated with the Nile, the one who provided fertility for the land through the waters. In Egyptian mythology, Osiris was believed to have a son, named Horus, who was incarnate as the Pharaoh: the king stood as the sole mediator between the gods and the people, responsible for fertility and order.





EGYPTIAN KINGS AS TREES

- Temple of Karnak: King Sety I (early 1200s B.C.) is sitting in the middle of a tree, being crowned and given a scepter by Thoth who is writing his name on the leaves of the tree. It's an image for the king's role as a god giving life to the land through the sacred tree.



TREES IN MESOPOTAMIAN CULTURE (ASSYRIA AND BABYLON)

- Trees and gardens were associated with the royal gardens of imperial kings.
- “By the will of the gods, vines, fruit trees of all kinds, olive trees, aromatic trees, flourished greatly in my gardens. Cypress trees...grew tall and sent out shoots. I created a marsh for the flow of water for the gardens… Birds of the heavens, herons...boars and deer...gave birth in abundance.`”— ROYAL INSCRIPTIONS OF SENNACHARIB, TEXT #8



Wall relief of Assyrian king Asshurbanipal's garden parties (7th cent. B.C.)

Asshurbanipal's Royal Garden in Nimrud Designed a Microcosm of his Empire



TREES AND THE GODS

- Ur-Nammu of Ur (2060–1955 b.c.) offering a libation to a tree, which apparently represents the moon god Nanna, who sits enthroned behind it (cf. 239). The beneficent power of the god is present in the tree (cf. 253–55). The king, in strengthening the tree by a drink offering, enhances that power. In return, the tree dispenses life-giving water. Othmar Keel, The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms, 135.



THE MOTIF OF A DIVINE TREE PROTECTED BY THE GODS COMES FROM MESOPOTAMIA

- A carving from Nimrud shows goats around a tree of life, symbolizing its vitality, and then cherubim, showing that it's also the domain of the gods (also below, a plaque stitched to the chest of a deceased person in a tomb.)





TREES OF LIFE IN SYRIA-CANAANITE TRADITION

- Syrian seal (1750-1550 B.C.) Two goats flank and eat from the cosmic world tree, symbolizing food given to all creatures of the land (birds, goats, fish) by the gods who stand nearby. To the right, the giant is the storm god with his plant-scepter. From Othmar Keel, Creation: Biblical Theologies in the Context of the Ancient Near East, image #21.



KUNTILLET ʿAJRUD (SINAI PENINSULA), 9TH-8TH CENTURY B.C.

- This image was found in fortress in the Sinai peninsula, with an inscription that mentions Yahweh and Asherah. The image was certainly drawn by an Israelite, who here shows familiarity with the Ancient Near Eastern motif of the tree of life.



OSBORNE'S CONCLUSIONS: TREE IMAGERY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST IS ASSOCIATED IN THREE INTERWOVEN WAYS:

- 1. Abundance and prosperity from the gods is depicted as abundant gardens and tree-filled forests
- 2. Deities and their powers to give fertility are regularly associated with tree symbols
- 3. Kings who mediate the power of the gods are either the caretakers of trees or symbolized as trees themselves

COMPARISON AND CONTRASTS WITH GENESIS 1-2

- In Genesis 1-2, all humanity is given the royal task of stewarding the garden and its trees. This fits with the pattern of the image of God: all humanity assumes the role of the king.
- The tree is not divine but a symbol of divine life and abundance that can be internalized (eaten). The tree is not magic but an image of proximity to the source of divine life.

THE RIVERS OF GENESIS 2:10-14

- The description of the primordial river in Eden has an intentional literary design. Each river is described with decreasing length, imitating a spring running out over the land.

[10]**Now, a river went out** *from Eden* **to water** *the garden;*
and from there it separated and became four heads:

1	A	[11]*The name of the* **first** *is Pishon (פישון= "leaper/springer")*
	B	*it goes around the whole land of Havilah,* *a which has there gold* *b* [12]*and the gold of that land is good;* *a' there are the bdellium and the onyx stone.*
2	A'	[13]*And the name of the* **second** *river is Gihon (גיחון = "gusher")*
	B'	*it goes around the whole land of Cush.*
3	A'	[14]*And the name of the* **third** *river is Tigris;*
	B'	*it goes east of Assyria.*
4	A'	*and the* **fourth** *river,*
	B'	*it is the Euphrates.*

Each of the names is associated with various regions of the ancient biblical map.

RIVER	REGION	PEOPLE GROUPS AND EMPIRES
Pishon	Havilah = South and East of Canaan, the NW edge of the Arabian desert	Cainites, Ishmaelites, Edomites, Arabs
Gihon	Cush = Southern Egypt, the upper Nile, Ethiopia	Egyptians and Ethiopians
Hiddeqel	Assyria = The Tigris River	Assyria
Euphrates	Babylonian flood plains	Babylon

RIVERS ASSOCIATED WITH BIBLICAL MAP

- This Eden-sourced river prepares the reader to view each of these regions (Egypt, Jerusalem and surroundings, Mesopotamia) as extensions of Eden's life-giving waters, places that are graced with the life of Eden. This makes perfect sense of the Eden analogies applied to Canaan (Gen 13:10), Mesopotamia (Gen 11:1-4), and Egypt (Gen 13:10; 45:18, 20).

GENESIS 2:11-12: PISHON

- The Pishon is given the longest description, which prepares the reader for understanding the significance of future stories.
- “Goes around the land of Havilah”: Where Ishmael’s descendants will settle (Gen 25:18) and where Hagar will wander in her flight from Sarah (Gen 16:7)

GENESIS 2:11-12: PISHON

- “Good gold” + “aromatic resin” + “onyx stone”: These are all associated with the symbolic Eden gifts given to Israel in their wilderness wanderings
- Gold for the tabernacle
- Aromatic resin ((בדלח the appearance of the manna (Exod 16:33 and Num 11:7)
- Onyx stone (אבן שהם the): stones in the high priest’s ephod (Exod 25:7; 28:9)

QUESTION

- Is there significance in the fact that these treasures are not located in the garden but just outside the garden? Does this communicate that the garden creates value in the world but is not to be mistaken with those actual treasures?
- Are we to view these treasures as signals that one is near to the garden but understand that these should not be identified with the real treasure of the garden, namely that one can be with God there? [suggestion from Jacob Stromberg

GENESIS 2:13: THE GIHON

- The Gihon is associated with the land of Cush
- “Cush” has multiple references in the Hebrew Bible.
- Southern Egypt (= modern Ethiopia): 2 Kings 19:9; Esther 1:1; 8:9; Ps 68:31; Isa 18:1; 20:3-5; 45:14; Ezek 29:10; 30:4-5, 9; Nah 3:9.

GENESIS 2:13: THE GIHON

- The son of Ham, who has as his descendants people of southern Egypt: Gen 10:6-7; but this very Cush is the father of Nimrod, who goes East to Mesopotamia to build the empires of Assyria and Babylon.
- The name of “Gihon” spring/river is only elsewhere associated with the spring that sup plies water to Jerusalem and the temple (1 Chron 32:30; 33:14), which is where Solomon was crowned king of Israel (1 Kgs 1:33, 38, 45).

GENESIS 2:14: THE TIGRIS AND EUPHRATES

- The Hideqel and Euphrates are associated with the two Mesopotamian empires.
- The Tigris flows “to the east of Assyria.”
- The Euphrates is left to the reader’s imagination, which is of course supposed to make us think of Babylon.

EDEN AS A COSMIC MOUNTAIN

- The depiction of Eden as a high place, from which flows a river of divine life that provides life for all of the nations, is foundational for the biblical storyline. Eden is “Heaven on Earth” in the form of a cosmic high place, where the life of Heaven is one with Earth.

EDEN AS A COSMIC MOUNTAIN

- 1. Eden is a high enough place for a river to flow out and water various distant regions of the land.
- 2. Eden is referred to by later biblical authors as a mountain.
- 3. The plans for the tabernacle, which was designed as a micro-Eden, were revealed to Moses on top of Mount Sinai where he encountered Yahweh in the burning tree.

EDEN AS A COSMIC MOUNTAIN

- 4. The Jerusalem temple, which was designed as “Heaven/Eden on Earth,” was built on Mount Zion, a high hill which is constantly likened to Eden.
- 5. The heavenly Jerusalem, that is, renewed Eden on earth, is described as a high mountain garden city that flows with the river of life.

GENESIS 2:10

- Now, **a river went out** from Eden **to water** the garden; and from there it separated and became four heads…

EZEKIEL 28:13-14

- You were in **Eden**, the **garden of God**…you were on the **holy mountain of God**.

EXODUS 24:16-18

- 16The glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day he called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. 17And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. 18Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he **went up to the mountain**; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights…

EXODUS 25:8-9

- Let them construct a sanctuary for me, that I may dwell among them. **According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture**, just so you shall construct it.

JOEL 2:1-3

- Blow the trumpet in **Zion**, sound the alarm on **my holy mountain**...3before them [the army] the land is like the **garden of Eden**; behind them, a desert wasteland.

EZEKIEL 36:34-35 (NASB95)

- 34The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of every one who passes by. 35They will say, “This desolate land has become **like the garden of Eden**; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.”

ISAIAH 51:3 (NIV)

- 3The Lord will surely comfort **Zion** and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts **like Eden**, her wastelands **like the garden of the Lord**. Joy and glad ness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

PSALM 46:4

- There is a **river** whose streams make glad **the city of God,** the holy place where the Most High dwells.

PSALM 48:1-2

- 1Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise, in **the city of our God, his holy mountain.**
  2Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth, like **the heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King**.

EZEKIEL 47:

- The River of God Flowing Out of Eden
- **Joel 3:18** 18And in that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; and a spring will go out from the house of the Lord to water the valley of Shittim.

REVELATION 21:9 AND 22:1

- And he carried me away in the Spirit to **a mountain great and high**, and he showed me **the holy city**, Jerusalem coming down **out of heaven from God**. 1Then he showed me **a river of the water of life**, clear as crystal **coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb**.

THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN AND THE PRIMEVAL RIVER IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- In the ancient Near East, the union of heaven and earth was conceived as a mountain whose base was the bottom of the earth and whose peace was the top of heaven, making it the axis mundi…the center of the world… The cosmic mountain was the meeting place of the gods, the source of water and fertility…the meeting place of heaven and earth.

THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN AND THE PRIMEVAL RIVER IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- The cosmic mountain motif appears in the literature and religious rituals of Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Hittites, Canaan, and ancient Israel." — MICHAEL MORALES, THE TABERNACLE PRE-FIGURED: COSMIC MOUNTAIN IDEOLOGY IN GENESIS AND EXODUS, P. 8.

THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN AND THE PRIMEVAL RIVER IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- Ancient Near Eastern temples “were the architectural embodiment of the cosmic mountain… [The] pyramids and ziggurats were architectonic representations of the archetype of the cosmic mountain, often decorated with portrayals of the cosmic waters and fertile trees.

THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN AND THE PRIMEVAL RIVER IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- The connection between temples and cosmic mountains is related to their function as links between heaven and earth, as attested by the names of the Babylonian sanctuaries ("Mountain of the house," "House of the Mountain of all Lands"), so that the ziggurat was literally and symbolically a cosmic mountain." — MICHAEL MORALES, THE TABERNACLE PRE-FIGURED: COSMIC MOUNTAIN IDEOLOGY IN GENESIS AND EXODUS, P. 11.

- This image is from a carving on a fountain from an Assyrian temple (8th-7th cent. B.C.). It depicts a deity whose body is a tall forest mountain, and four primal rivers go out into the world as a gift of his own divine life.



From Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, p. 118.

THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN AND THE PRIMEVAL RIVER IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- A highly interesting wall painting from Mari (191) shows a rectangular space surrounded by a wall… flanked by date palms and trees… four cherubim, and two bulls. One foot of each bull is planted on a mountaintop.
- The two mountains probably indicate that the center of the court is located on a mountain. The two fountain deities in the lower of the two smaller rectangles correspond to the two mountains.

THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN AND THE PRIMEVAL RIVER IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- A stream with four branches (as in Gen 2:10) rises from the vessels held by the deities. A stylized plant grows out of the stream.
- This is the place from which all life issues. In the center of this region, in the upper rectangle, stands Ishtar, the goddess of fertility, love, and war… Her right foot is set on a lion. The king stands in greeting before her. She appears to be presenting him with ring and staff. In any case, the picture depicts all parts of an entire temple complex. The temple building is a broad-room with a wide antechamber (cf. 172–73, 207).

THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN AND THE PRIMEVAL RIVER IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- The anteroom and the forecourt incorporate all those features which characterize the temple as a sphere of life. We find these features repeated—almost without exception—in the Solomonic temple and in the description of paradise: the mountain (Ezek 28:13–16), the rivers, the trees, the cherubim. Even the bulls are present.

THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN AND THE PRIMEVAL RIVER IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- In the Jerusalem temple they carried the bronze sea (1 Kgs 7:25). Belief in the presence of the living God supplied the temple forecourts with all the symbols which had already played a role in the Ishtar temple of Mari. — OTHMAR KEEL, THE SYMBOLISM OF THE BIBLICAL WORLD: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ICONOGRAPHY AND THE BOOK OF PSALMS, TRANS. TIMOTHY J. HALLETT (WINONA LAKE, IN: EISENBRAUNS, 1997), 142–144

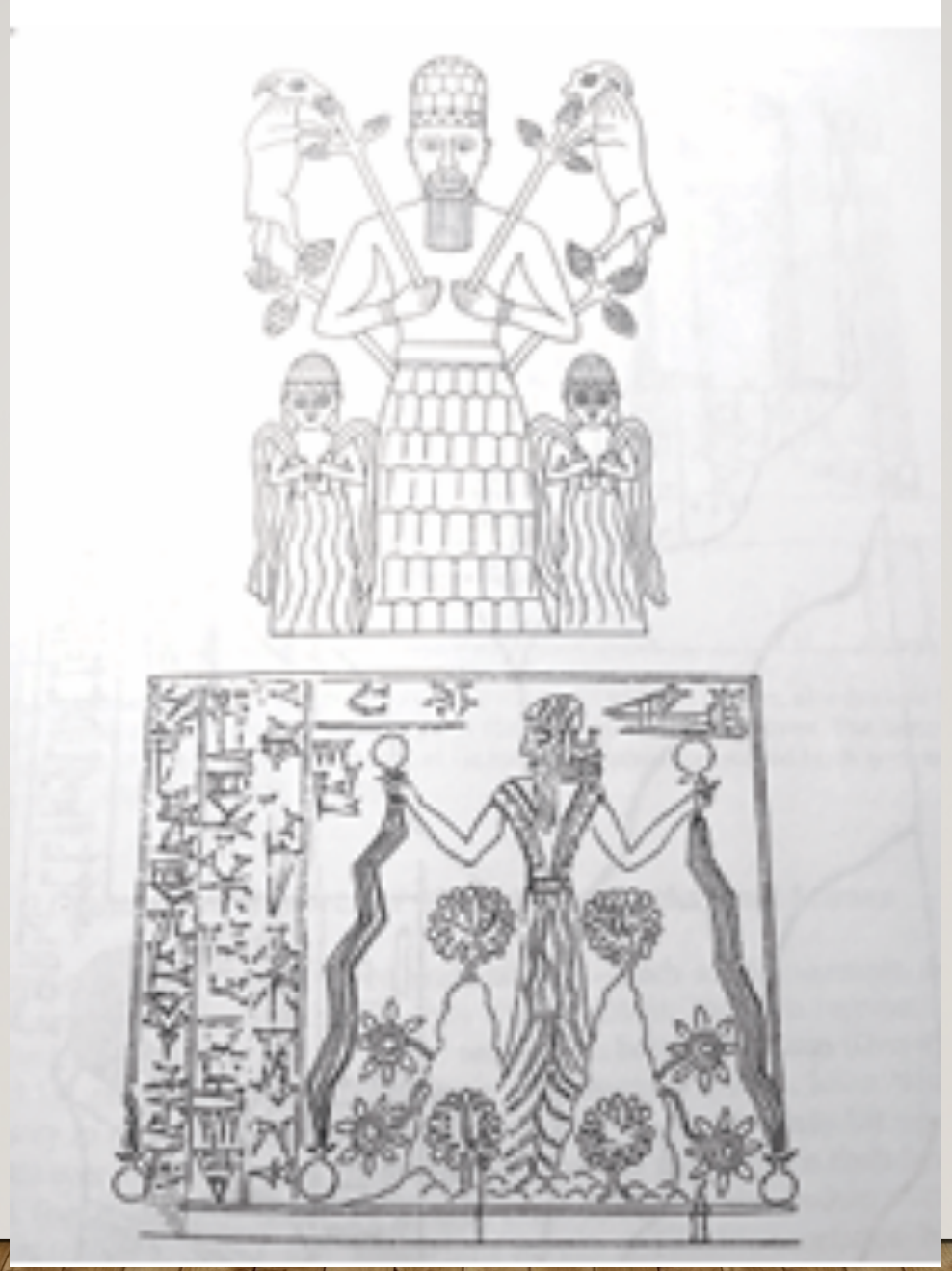


THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN AND THE PRIMEVAL RIVER IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- Assyrian relief found in a fountain in the Temple of Asshur (patron god of Assyria, 1800-1500 B.C.). A combination of two river deities (four streams total), who issue from the mountain god, who supplies all plant life (notice the tree of life goat motif). This image depicts Asshur as the chief of the cosmic mountain, supplying vegetation and water to the cosmos. Kassite cylinder seal (14th cent. B.C.):

THE COSMIC MOUNTAIN AND THE PRIMEVAL RIVER IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

- Between forested mountain tops, the mountain god rises and provides rivers of life and vegetation for his realm. The rain waters come from his hands, and the primeval river flows from his skirt. Both images from Othmar Keel, Creation: Biblical Theologies in the Context of the Ancient Near East, p. 31.



THE DESIGN PATTERN OF THE PRIMEVAL RIVER

- Because the garden of Eden represents the union of Heaven and Earth, its river is portrayed as the source of all the world's fertility and abundance.
- When later biblical authors portray the arrival of God's deliverance and restoration of Jerusalem and all creation, it is no surprise that they draw upon this river imagery.

JOEL 3:18

- 18And in that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; and **a spring will go out from the house of the Lord To water** the valley of Shittim.

ZECHARIAH 14:6-9 (NIV)

- 6On that day there will be neither sunlight nor cold, frosty darkness.
  7It will be a unique day—a day known only to the Lord—with no distinction between day and night. When evening comes, there will be light. 8On that day **living water will flow out from Jerusalem**, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter. 9The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name.

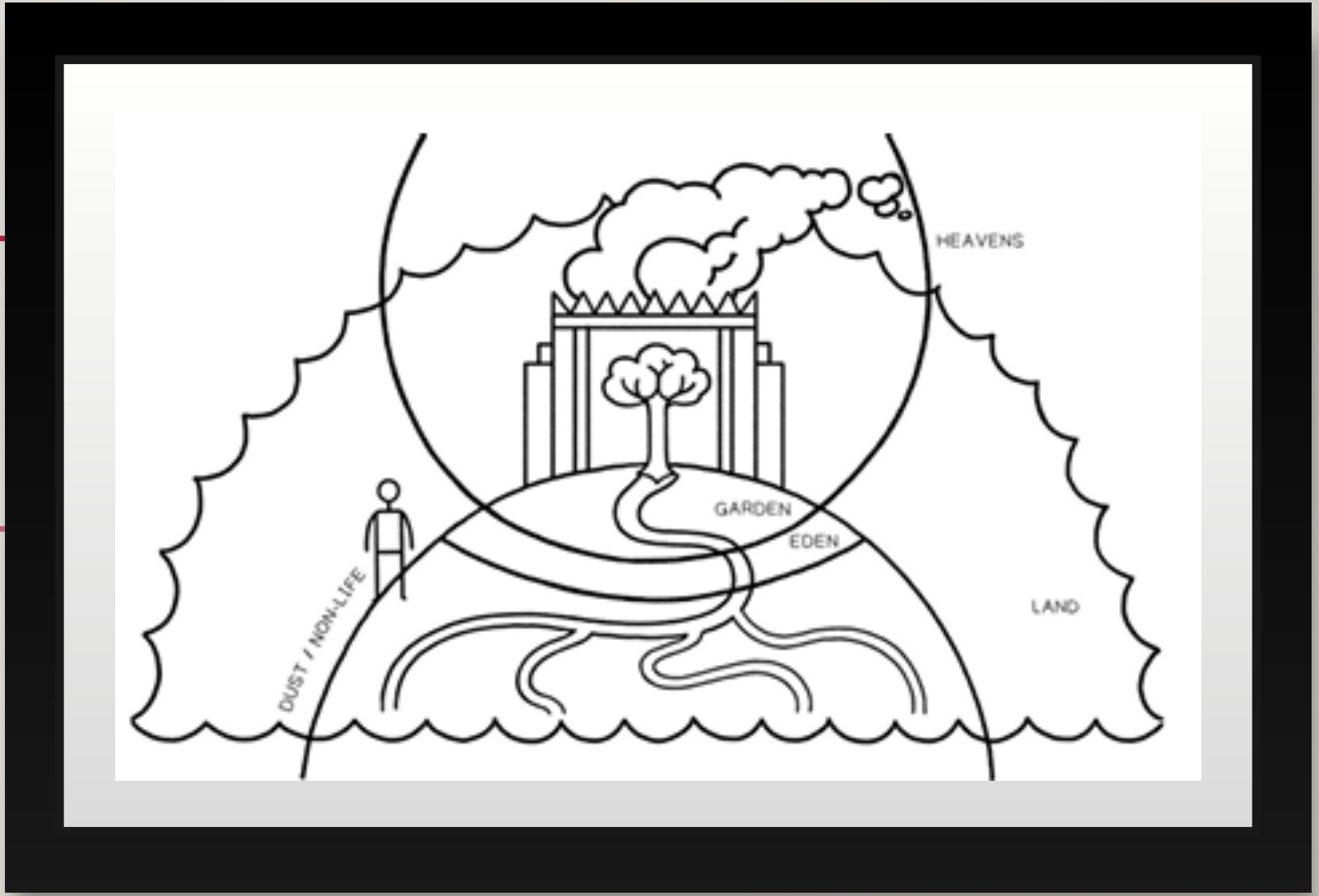
ISAIAH 30:23-26

- 23He will also send you rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the food that comes from the land will be rich and plentiful. In that day your cattle will graze in broad meadows… when the towers fall, **streams of water will flow on every high mountain and every lofty hill**. 26The moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the Lord binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted.

PSALM 36:7-9 (NIV)

- 7How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. 8They feast on the abundance of your house; **you give them drink from your river of delights**. 9For **with you is the fountain of life**; in your light we see light.

EZEKIEL 47 AND THE RIVER OF LIFE



THE HUMAN'S PRIESTLY ROLE AND THE DIVINE COMMAND

- What is the very first command God gives to humanity in the garden?
- "This is the fulcrum, or the lynchpin, of human access to eternal life. Again, it's not perfect eternal beings who fall from immortality. It's dirt beings who are given a chance to become Human 2.0—one with God. But there is a choice that could ruin it all that will lead to exile from the realm of eternal life."

“TO WORK AND TO KEEP”: GENESIS 2:15

- and Yahweh Elohim took the human and placed him into the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.
- These two verbs are packed with significance, as they portray the ideal vocation of humanity.
- ‘Abad ” ‘ עבדto work,” “to serve,” “to worship”

‘abad = to work	**Exodus 20:8-10 (NIV)** *8Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9Six days you shall labor and do all your **‘abad**, 10but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any **‘abad**, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.*
‘abad = to serve	**Genesis 27:29** *29May peoples **‘abad** you, and nations bow down to you; be master of your brothers, and may your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be those who curse you, and blessed be those who bless you.*
‘abad = to worship	**Exodus 3:12 (NIV)** *12And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will **‘abad** God on this mountain.”*

‘abodah = priestly service	**Numbers 18:7** *[7]But you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to do your **‘abodah.*** **1 Chronicles 24:3** *[3]With the help of Zadok a descendant of Eleazar and Ahimelek a descendant of Ithamar, David separated them into divisions for their appointed order of **‘abodah**.*

“TO WORK AND TO KEEP”: GENESIS 2:15

- “To serve and **keep**” (shamar / (שמר) = a priestly service of worship. These verbs are used together as a phrase only elsewhere in descriptions of the priests and Levites working in and around the temple.

NUMBERS 3:5-9 (NASB95)

- 5Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 6 ”Bring the tribe of Levi near and set them before Aaron the priest, that they may serve him. 7They shall **shamar** the **mishmeret** for him and the **mishmeret** of the whole congregation before the tent of meeting, to **‘abad** the **‘abodah** of the tabernacle. 8They shall also **shamar** all the furnishings of the tent of meeting, along with the duties of the sons of Israel, to **'abad** the **‘abodah** of the tabernacle. 9You shall thus give the Levites to Aaron and to his sons; they are wholly given to him from among the sons of Israel.”

NUMBERS 8:26

- 26They may, however, assist their brothers in the tent of meeting, to **shamar** the **mishmeret**, but they themselves shall ‘**abad** no ‘**abodah**. Thus you shall deal with the Levites concerning their obligations.

NUMBERS 18:7

- 7But you and your sons with you shall **shamar** to your priesthood for everything concerning the altar and inside the veil, and you are to ‘**abad** the ‘**abodah**. I am giving you the priesthood as a bestowed service…

“TO WORK AND TO KEEP”: GENESIS 2:15

- to serve till” is a very common verb and is often "עבד, used of cultivating the soil (2:5; 3:23; 4:2, 12, etc.). The word is commonly used in a religious sense of serving God (e.g., Deut 4:19), and in priestly texts, especially of the tabernacle duties of the Levites (Num 3:7–8; 4:23–24, 26, .etc.)

“TO WORK AND TO KEEP”: GENESIS 2:15

- Similarly, “ שׁמר guard, to keep” has the simple profane sense of “guard” (4:9; 30:31), but it is even more commonly used in legal texts of observing religious commands and duties (17:9; Lev 18:5) and particularly of the Levitical responsibility for guarding the tabernacle from intruders (Num 1:53; 3:7–8).

“TO WORK AND TO KEEP”: GENESIS 2:15

- It is striking that here and in the priestly law these two terms are juxtaposed (Num 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:5–6), another pointer to the interplay of tabernacle and Eden symbolism already noted.” — GORDON J. WENHAM, GENESIS 1–15, 67.

“TO WORK AND TO KEEP”: GENESIS 2:15

- “[T]he tasks given to Adam are of a priestly nature: caring for sacred space. In ancient thinking, caring for sacred space was a way of upholding creation. By preserving order, non-order was held at bay… If the priestly vocabulary in Genesis 2:15 indicates the same kind of thinking, the point of caring for sacred space should be seen as much more than landscaping or even priestly duties.

“TO WORK AND TO KEEP”: GENESIS 2:15

- Maintaining order made one a participant with God in the ongoing task of sustaining the equilibrium God had established in the cosmos. Egyptian thinking attached this not only to the role of priests as they maintained the sacred space in the temples but also to the king, whose task was “to complete what was unfinished, and to preserve the existent, not as a status quo but in a continuing, dynamic, even revolutionary process of remodeling and improvement.”

“TO WORK AND TO KEEP”: GENESIS 2:15

- This combines the subduing and ruling of Genesis 1 with the ʿbd and šmr of this chapter. — JOHN H. WALTON, THE LOST WORLD OF ADAM AND EVE, 106-107.

ADAM AS HIGH PRIEST

- Throughout the history of Jewish literature, Adam is depicted as a high priest in Eden, performing the work of the temple.
- 4Q504
- Jubilees 3:27

GENESIS 2:16-17: THE DIVINE COMMAND GIVEN ABOUT THE TREE

- Notice the symmetrical pairing of the divine command:

a - from every tree of the garden
*b you will **surely** eat (אכל תאכל)*
a′ - and from the tree of knowing good and bad
b′ you will not eat (לא תאכל)
a″ - for in the day of your eating (אכלך)
*b″ you will **surely** die (מות תמות)*

OBSERVATIONS

- Notice that the first command is to eat from all of the trees, not the prohibition.
- The divine command is not arbitrary but is directly linked to humanity's continued enjoyment of life in the garden of Eden.
- The prohibition serves the purpose to safeguard the divine intent, that humanity enjoy God's own life in the garden.

MAGICAL FRUIT?

- The divine command does not assume that the fruit has “magical powers” to give knowledge.
- Rather, the choice to eat is itself the act of “knowing good and bad.”
- “No fruit per se is magically conveying life or death; it is the eating from one or the other tree that brings about life or death, that is, the choice to strike a path independent of divine wisdom.” — adapted from Andre Lacoque, The Trial of Innocence, 96.

THE TREE OF KNOWING GOOD AND BAD

- This Edenic state is fragile and conditional upon trusting and living by God's command. In Genesis 1, God alone is the provider and "knower" of what is good and not good. That is, he has the wisdom to know what is necessary for humanity to fulfill their role as God's partners in the "gardenizing" all of creation. This dignified role for the humans, however, comes with a great responsibility and choice:

THE TREE OF KNOWING GOOD AND BAD

- Will they learn wisdom from God, or will they take it for themselves?
- In the "**good**" garden, there are trees loaded with fruit for eating and cultivating, and in the center of the garden (from which flows the river) is the tree of life. It's an image of God's ultimate gift to creation: the opportunity to share in and receive God's own goodness and life into oneself.

THE TREE OF KNOWING GOOD AND BAD

- But ongoing access to the tree of life is conditional upon not taking from the tree of knowing **tov** and **ra**. The meaning of this phrase is important for the logic of the narrative, so we must take a deep dive into the meaning of the key words.

Genesis 2:9

Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and **good** *for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of* **good** *and* **bad**.

"**Good**" (Heb. *tov*): (1) what is morally/ethically good, (2) what is beneficial, pleasant or in good condition

"Bad/Evil" (Heb. *ra'*): (1) what is morally/ethically bad, (2) what is harmful, unpleasant, or in poor condition

Good/Bad = Condition or Quality

Jeremiah 24:1-2

The Lord showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the Lord. One basket had very ***tov*** *figs, like those that ripen early; the other basket had very* ***ra'*** *figs, so* ***ra'*** *they could not be eaten.*

Proverbs 25:19

A ***ra'*** *tooth and an unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.*

Good/Bad = Pleasant/Unpleasant, Beneficial/Harmful

1 Kings 5:4

But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no enemy or ***ra'****.*

Judges 16:25

It so happened when they were ***tov*** *of heart, that they said, "Call for Samson, that he may amuse us." So they called for Samson from the prison, and he entertained them. And they made him stand between the pillars.*

Ecclesiastes: 2:16-17

For the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die! So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was ***ra'*** *to me.*

Good/Bad = Morally Good/Evil

Psalm 140:1-2

*Rescue me, O Lord, from **ra'** humans; preserve me from violent men*
*who devise **ra'** in their hearts; they continually stir up wars.*

Esther 7:5-6

*Then King Ahasuerus asked Queen Esther, "Who is he, and where is he, who would presume to do thus?" Esther said, "A foe and an enemy is this **ra'** Haman!"*

Creative Combinations

Deuteronomy 1:35

No one from this ***ra'*** generation shall see the ***tov*** land I swore to give your ancestors

Jeremiah 18:7-10

*At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its **ra'**, I will relent concerning the **ra'** I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does **ra'** in my sight by not obeying my voice, then I will think better of the **rai** with which I had promised to [verb] **tov** it.*

KNOWING TOV AND RA

- Knowing tov and ra is a sign of maturity.
- This rare phrase appears elsewhere to describe children.

DEUTERONOMY 1:39

- …Your **little ones**… and your **sons,** who today **do not know good or evil**, shall enter there, and I will give it to them and they shall possess it.

ISAIAH 7:15-16

- [Immanuel] will eat curds and honey at the time he **knows** to refuse **evil** and choose **good**. For before **the boy** will know to refuse **evil** and choose **good**, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.

1 KINGS 3:7-9

- Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, yet **I am but a little child**; I do not know how to go out or come in. So give your servant an heart that listens, to judge your people, **to discern between good and evil.** For who is able to judge this great people of yours?

KNOWING TOV AND RA

- The narrative in Genesis 1-2 shows that God knows what is “pleasant/beneficial” and that he will pro vide tov when something is not tov (the woman), that is, ra’. So the tree represents a choice:
- Will they live with God, allowing him to know/define tov and ra’? Presumably they need this knowledge as they mature, but the question is who will teach it to them? Will they learn from watching God’s knowledge at work?

KNOWING TOV AND RA

- Adam and Eve are portrayed as “children.” The tree of knowing tov and ra represents two options/ modes for how to know/ experience tov and ra. Will they take this knowledge for themselves so that they “become like elohim” knowing what is tov and ra’? Or will they allow God to teach them wisdom?
- The two trees at the center of the garden will later be set in analogy to the role of the Torah in Israel’s covenant with God.

Genesis 2:9
And God caused to sprout...the tree of life in the center of the garden, and the tree of knowing good and evil.

Genesis 2:16-17
And Yahweh commanded the human saying, "From the fruit of every tree you may surely eat. But from the fruit of knowing good and evil you may not eat from it, for in the day of your eating, you will surely die."

Deuteronomy 10:4-5
Yahweh wrote on the tablets... the ten words which the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire...Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets inside the ark which I had made; and there they are, as the Lord commanded me.

Deuteronomy 31:26
Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you.

Deuteronomy 30:15, 19
Behold, today I have set before you life and good, death and evil...life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life that both you and your seed may live.

THE CHOICE OF LIFE OR DEATH

- “Within the garden Yahweh had set both a tree of life and a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Taken together, with their fruits connected to life and death respectively, the trees may be seen to function like the Torah, imploring Adam to choose life, just as Moses implored Israel in Deuteronomy 30.

THE CHOICE OF LIFE OR DEATH

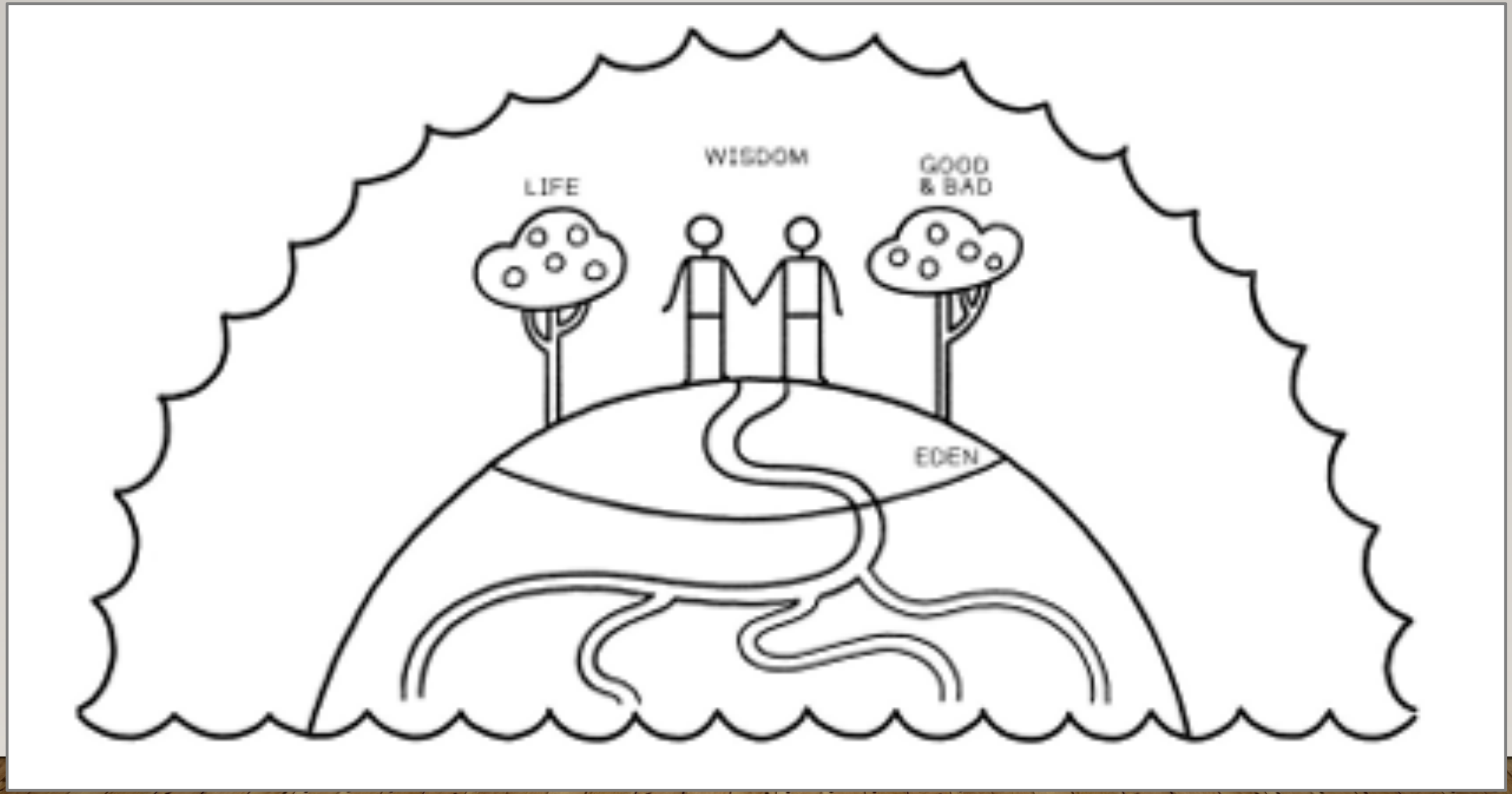
- Resisting the second tree, the fruit of which offered wisdom independent from God, was Adam's wisdom, allowing him to perfect the fear of Yahweh through submission of his will to God's… Just as for Solomon and his foreign wives (1 Kings 11), so too for Adam: the choice between the two trees is cast as a choice between allegiance to Yahweh and his wife, with whom he is "one flesh." This, through the cunning orchestration of the serpent, is the test for Adam." — MICAHEL MORALES, WHO CAN ASCEND THE MOUNTAIN OF YAHWEH, 54

THE TREE OF LIFE - QUOTE

- “[The tree of life] represents life that is beyond the original life that God breathed into human. The first human by nature is susceptible to death…. Nevertheless, continued eating from the tree could renew life and prevent death. Apart from disobedience to God’s command, mortals had access to this tree…

THE TREE OF LIFE - QUOTE

- The tree of life allows humanity to transcend its mortality, the state in which it was created on the sixth day, so it can move to a higher dimension… to eternal life and immortality. As one partakes of this...fruit by faith, one participates in this eternal life. This highest potency of life was available in the garden and becomes once again available to us as we reenter the temple-garden through the second Adam… and look forward to the resurrection of our bodies.” — BRUCE WALTKE, OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY, 257.


WISDOM
LIFE
GOOD
& BAD
EDEN