
On the Foundation of Human Partnership and
the Faculty of Speech: A Thematic and Rhetorical Study of Genesis 2-3

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the intellectual and religious meaning of human's existence in light of the Genesis garden narrative. The narrative presents the human cycle as a complex process of building partnership and losing it—given the Human wisdom which is the origin of doubt and curiosity-- to the life of mortality. The paper argues that the Biblical position of the process of the human transformation from loneliness to partnership and then to life of productivity is not an act of evolution, but a series of responses resulting from the human mental condition.

The paper pays close attention to the question of the human intellect which is conveyed through the faculty of speech. In this regard, the paper studies the first Biblical debate, which is the argument that takes place between the woman and the serpent.

The paper concludes that the Human's intellect is a doubled-edged sword of construction versus destruction thus it is the human responsibility to control the powers of destruction through obedience. This is, in fact, the essence of Biblical Religion: the tension between the Human freedom and the intellectual capacity, on the one hand and God's obedience, on the other hand.

A: The Background

The Garden narrative is a subject of numerous inquiries taken from many perspectives: anthropological, theological or tradition history (consult Stordalen 2000). However, the present paper aims to pursue a fresh venue which looks at the narrative as a tension between the human intellect and the human condition of being immortal. The narrative position is that the human couple who lived in the Garden was designed to be immortal; however, they became mortal given their misbehavior which is—as this paper argues—a result of their intellect.
At first, the paper seeks to dwell on the ideal situation of man and woman in accordance to the Garden vision, which might be determined as the phase of partnership. Thus, I seek to explore the Biblical concept of human partnership. Then, the paper intends to shed light on the power of the human intellect and its potential danger in terms of the biblical narrative, which is disobedience. The way the intellect manifests itself as the leading force of the human rebellion is the focus of the second part of the paper.

In order to reach a common point of departure, I start the discussion through a synopsis of the story of Adam and Eve as is depicted in the Garden narrative enlightened through the angel of the inter-human relationship and the human attitude to the physical environment.

The narrative informs us about Adam's creation and his way of life in the Garden. He was formed out of the אדמה (אדם a word play) that is, out of the earth (ground). Then, in order to be a living being, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (2:7). He was occupied, given his specific assignment to take care of the Garden: ולשמרה לעבדה, "to till and keep the land" (2: 15 see Westermann 1984: 220-222).

Furthermore, Adam's freedom was confined: he was prohibited to eat from the fruit of one specific tree (2:16-17). The language indicates the significance of the command of the prohibition: והויצוהו אלהים... והויצוהו (twice repeated) the imperative breaks down the stylistic pattern of the narrative, mirroring its significance. That is, the third person approach of the report-- that characterizes the language of the narrative-- has been changed into the second person approach of the imperative, signifying God's command.

Nevertheless, it seems that Adam's life is in order. However, God identifies a problem, admitting, in fact, a certain defect in the human life. After all, God observes that Adam needs an addition to his daily routine of work and frame of order, which establishes his relationship with the physical environment as well as with God. Indeed, God identifies the problem: לא יהיה אדם לבדו: "It is not good that the man should be alone" (2:18).

The combination לא יהיה אדם לבדו contrasts the definition of the perfect condition—of the account of creation of chapter 1-- which is conveyed linguistically through the word
Therefore, God's creation of man is not perfect anymore and God acts in accordance:  "I will make him a helper as his partner" (v 18, the New RSV).

The meaning of "helper" is crucial for understanding the role of the new creature. Actually, נגדו connotes a notion of working together rather than being dependent (see Josh 1:14, 10: 4, 1 Ch 12:18, 22. Consult Trible 1978: 88-90). It appears therefore that Adam's problem, his loneliness, has been solved through God's new creation. The question—which God does not determine—is the nature of such a partner.

Interestingly enough, God's initial idea is to create other living creatures: animals and birds, as candidates for Adam partnership (v 20). Indeed, the new living creatures appear in front of Adam who, from his side, is capable of defining their essence through assigning every one of them a name, which is the manifestation of their intellect (consult von Rad 1961: 82-83 and see below). Nevertheless, the problem has not been solved, Adam is still alone. נגדוו נמציא לא אדם  "But for Adam there was not found a helper as his partner" (v 20).

It appears that God is testing Adam's needs. Consequently, the question of the human partner is complex because Adam's needs require specific qualities which are not found in the animals but within himself as a human being. As a result, God takes a radical turn and does not form a total new creature, but resolves the issue in a total different form: God builds-- out of Adam himself— a new human being as an integral part of the man, as Adam himself has acknowledged:

This at last
A bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh (v 21).

The unique human relationship is reflected through the word play that alludes to their mutual similarity:

לאתו זרה איש, כי איש לא מקחה. (21, v)

(איש is derived from even though not philologically, see Cassutto: 1965: 89. For the poetic language see Wenham 1987: 70). But, are the man and the woman just physically similar? The following comment is illuminating:

And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed (v 25).
The issue revolves around the tension between shame and nakedness (the hitpolel in the imperfect of בוש is unique but the root is familiar as well as the literary context). That is to say, the stress on עירומים (naked) in the context of יתבששו (shame) refers to the human Eros (see, for instance, Hos 2:5, 12. For the philological connection between עירומים and sexuality consult Wallace 1982: 144-145).

The question of the human Eros is made clear given the event of the eating of the fruit of the Tree; the eating which has determined the human mortality. Thus, in its practical way—avoiding philosophical statements—the narrative sheds light on the new phase in the human situation:

They knew that they were naked… and made loincloths for themselves (3: 7).

The meaning is that before Adam and the woman have eaten the fruit of the Tree they were naked but not ashamed. However—after they have eaten from the forbidden Tree—and became mortal, both the man and the woman rushed to cover their nakedness, indicating therefore that they revealed their sexuality. That is to say, they were not ashamed before eating from the forbidden tree because they were immortal. Now, that they had become mortal they were aware of their sexual organs; they discovered Eros.

In other words, the appearance of the woman introduces the human duality in the double form of man and woman as the names of the human pair: איש-אשה is revealing. However, the function of the human pair is not sexual; they are immortal and Eros is unknown and unfelt. Indeed, the building of the woman is aiming for partnership (עזר) rather than reproduction (וְרָבָּא פִּרוּ, which is the essence of the human creation in light of the P account of Gen 1: 27-28). Thus, the introduction of the woman to man's life signifies the essence of partnership, as it was meant to be through the human condition of immortality, which was not concerned with death (and consequently with Eros).

B. The Essence of Human Partnership

There is an intensive literature of Feminists theoreticians and Biblical interpreters regarding the awareness of sexuality and the format of the relationship which have been formed between Adam and the woman (see, among others, the programmatic studies of Pardes : 1996, Simkins 1998: 32-52, and Beer 2005: 3-28). I
call attention to the breakthrough work of Philis Trible who regards the relationship that have been formed between the man and the woman--given the building of the woman out of the man's organs--as an indication of unification, mutuality and equality (1978: 94-105. Trible has reconfirmed her position twenty years later in Kvam 1999: 431-443). Adam is not superior to the woman, claims Trible, specifically as he considers her as an integral part of himself. Trible wrote as follows:

Unlike all the rest of creation, she does not come from the earth; rather Yahweh god builds the rib into the woman. The Hebrew verb build indicates considerable labor to produce solid results. Hence woman is no weak, dainty, ephemeral creature. No opposite sex, no second sex…(1978: 102. Also see Rogerson 1991: 35-41).

The sexes begin in quality. Furthermore, the linguistic relation between the names איש-אשה indicates that the male human being derives his identity in relation with a woman and vise versa (see Van Wolde 1998: 30-31).

Attention was given to the material of the building of the woman. Thus, Bal called attention to the difference between shaping an image out of the clay (Adam) and the building of the woman: it is more difficult, more sophisticated (1985: 27. Also see Bloom 1990: 179-180).

Still the answer to the question regarding the place of the woman in the Pre-Eros human condition is not self-evident. The fact that the woman—rather than an animal—has been elected as Adam's partner requires clarifications regarding her unique qualifications. We recall that the immortal humans express their closeness in terms which are not sexual. Therefore, there is a tendency to present the relationship between the man and the woman in the period of pre-eating from the forbidden fruit, as two naïve children.

However, the clue must be found in the realm of the Human beings in contrast with the animals. Thus, the woman's unique advantage upon the animals and the birds is in the intellect, which is conveyed as well through the human specific privilege, that is, the faculty of speech that manifests the power of the intellect.

In short, only the woman אשה (only later on under the status of mortality to be called Eve) has been elected as Adam true partner; she is part of him. In this regard, the later Midrash on Genesis Raba (17:2) has perpetuated the feeling of true partnership through its characteristic language:
Who ever has no wife exists without goodness, without a helpmate, without joy, without blessing, without atonement…without well being, without a full life (cited in Sarna 1989: 21).

Similarly, Kohelet has concluded:

תומים אחד איש לשנים טובים

Two are better than one (4:9).

The lesson is that human partnership is not essential for the human physical existence because there was not such a concern as man was created alone. However, God has discovered that there is a further dimension out of the human physicality which is crucial for determining the human creation as good. Actually, the narrative alludes to this sort of relationship after Adam's rejection of the animals. That is, the exclusion of the animals is not just a curious episode, but a meaningful statement. That is to say, the relationship which manifests friendship conveys intellectual capacity, Sophia in Socrates terms (also see Sellner 1991: 240-257).

What is the meaning of human partnership without Eros? For the matter of clarification (which is by no means an indication of historical or thematic dependency) it is illuminating to present at this stage of the discussion on the human relationship in the pre-Eros condition, Plato's views on friendship versus body's desire as he has developed in his famous dialogue, Phaderus. First, we look at Lysias speech on love read by his admirer Phaderus:

Many of those in love desire a person's body before they know his ways and before they have experience of the other aspects belonging to him, so that it is unclear to them if they will still want to be friends with him when they cease to desire him (232b e1-e5).

And Socrates himself says:

Let that then, my boy, be your lesson: be sure that the attentions of a lover carry no goodwill: they are no more than a gluttoning of his appetite for As wolf to lamb, so lover to his lad (241 d).

However, Socrates contrasts love with the education of the soul (241b c5-d1)

….well if the better elements of their minds get the upper hand by drawing them to a well-ordered life, and to philosophy, they pass their life here in blessedness and harmony, masters of themselves and orderly in their behavior, having enslaved that part through which badness attempted to enter the soul and having freed that part through which goodness enters (265a-b1).
Eros, desire, seeks benefit and is dependent on the desire itself which can disappear. Thus, there is no equality in this sort of relationship. However, friendship is not beneficial and is freeing the good.

Similarly, we may conclude that the tendency of the Biblical Garden narrative is to depict Adam and the woman -- prior to the eating of the forbidden fruit—living the life of friendship of seeking the good with no benefit but for values ("helper"). Adam and the woman partnership present the meaning of sincereasily, that is, true human equality. Thus, immortality does not apply loneliness but friendship which is-- given the Garden narrative view-- essential for the human fulfillment.

C. Mind and Speech: The Tension

As noticed above, Adam gives names to the animals defining them in terms of their distinction. That is to say, Adam is using his faculty of speech for the matter of identification and determination. In other words, Adam's superiority over the animals is conveyed through the means of the faculty of speech, which enables him to categorise his environment through a system of order. This human capacity is understood by the Psalmist, employing his poetic language, as the power of dominion over the creatures:

\[\text{תעטרהו והדר} \text{וכבוד מאלהיםמעטות pcap ידיךبعثו בתנשיהו/חמלתך ברמות ידך.}\]

You have made them (אנוש, אדם בן אדם) a little lower than God (Ps 8: 6). Human beings are unique and their dominion has been manifested through their wisdom (Sophia) giving them the honorable status of being almost God-like.

Indeed, the human mind is mutually related to speech. The philosopher of language, John Searle has elaborated on the matter as follows:

The function of mental states in our evolutionary history is to enable us to represent and cope with the world outside ourselves. The mind enables us both to get information about the world, and to coordinate intentional action in the world. Language is an immensely powerful extension of these very capacities. So, an animal without language can have perceptions and even some sorts of memories, and beliefs and desires, but once an animal has language it has an immensely richer system of representation. The representational capacity of languages is an extension of the biological representational capacity of the mind (2002: 18).
The mind enables us to go beyond ourselves and to understand the world. In this way our mind enriches our conceptions and perceptions; we are capable of integrating ourselves into the world. And language is the extension, the means of providing the understanding of the world.

Speech is therefore the manifestation of *Sophia* in terms of arguing a case, building a dialogue, exploring through a conversation, through reasoning--speech is the greatness of the human faculty. There is no evolutionary development compared to the human ability to build sentences, to create a narrative or to recite a poem.

In this regard, the unforgettable words of Isocrates (436-338 BCE), a member of the canon of the Ten Attic Orators, convey his appraisal of the speech as the basis of civilization:

> In most of our abilities we differ not at all from the animals; we are in fact behind many in swiftness and strength and other resources. But because there is born in us the power to persuade each other and to show ourselves whatever we wish, we not only have escaped from living as brutes, but also by becoming together have founded cities and set up laws and invented arts, and speech has helped us attain practically all the things we have devised. For it is speech that has made laws about justice and injustice and honor and disgrace, without which provisions we should not be able to live together. By speech we refute the wicked and praise the good. By speech we educate the ignorant and inform the wise. We regard the ability to speak properly as the best sign of intelligence, and truthful, legal, and just speech is the reflection of a good and trustworthy soul. *With speech we contest about disputes and investigate what is unknown...Nothing done with intelligence is done without speech, but speech is the marshal of all actions and of thoughts and those most use it who have the greatest wisdom* (cited in Kennedy 1963: 8-9) (emphasis is mine).

And the ‘father of humanism’ Petrarch highlights the importance of speech as follows:

> Eloquence on its own can be of great help to the progress of human life…people are suddenly turned from a most wicked way of life to the greatest modesty through the spoken words of others (cited in Wickers 1993:31).

Human beings ask questions and explore. They can progress, educate themselves through speeches and develop civilized life.
However, language is a double-edged sword: Human kind possesses the wisdom of speech, which might bring them to the highest intellectual capacities, the sole dominant, and the most educated. However, speech can also lead to the great rebellion—without keeping the boundary straight between the human and the metaphysics. Consequently, the great intellect might bring upon the human a catastrophe instead of a combination of morality and discipline which keeps the balance by knowing the limitation. The tension is forcefully expressed in the book of Job that has outlined the heights of the human wisdom but also the limitation:

תִּרְאוּ אַלְּדֵי הָאָדָם וְהָכֹכָבִים וְהָרָעָב מֵאָדָם (אַוַּוְיָב כ"ח 28).

Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.

In terms of Biblical Religion as manifested in Job, this statement is the crux of human wisdom, which might lead to destruction unless the balance is kept through the Fear.

D. The Duality of Speech

As a result of eating the forbidden fruit Eros reflects the revolutionary transformation in human existence. Eros projects therefore the new relationship between Adam and Eve, on the one side, and the relationship to God, on the other. The way Adam responds to God's inquiry reflects his new attitude to the woman:

הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר נִתְנָה לְיוֹבָה לָכֶם (אַוַּוְיָב 3:12).

The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit from the tree, and I ate (3:12).

This is not the language of partnership but of accusation, mistrust. Eros marks the new relationship between Adam and Eve formerly determined as איש ואישה the manifestation of equality, that is, partnership. Now, at the point of the departure of the man and the woman from their initial and intended condition, the sexes fall out of equality. The eating has established a new atmosphere of accusation and suspicion that marks the distinction between the condition of the true values of friendship of the pre-Eros phase and the Eros condition. Furthermore, now when the woman is mortal Adam changes her previous name (conveying similarity and gives her a new name that characterizes her new condition in the Eros era: רְפָן הַהֹוָה אֲלֵי כַּל-רְפָן מֵאֲדָם.

Eve because she was the mother of all living (3: 20).

A new era of relationship has been established:

(3:16).
Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.

'משלי' (‘rule over you’) connotes the new human situation. The partnership based on independence which meant equality, friendship and Sophia has disappeared, and a new set of relationship between man and woman has been formed. This new relationship is based on dependency, control, desire, dominion. Every thing has been changed: "Eve is imprisoned in motherhood", claims Bal (1987: 128).

Furthermore, the double-edged sword of the faculty of human speech is associated with the Eros revolution. Thus, when passion: תאוה intervenes with Sophia למשלי (3:6) there is a room for doubts, which are presented through the first Biblical argument, that is, the Serpent and the woman's reasoning over the issue of God's order with regards to the Tree. Given the instrument of speech and reasoning, human beings possess the power to create new situations which might be tragic.

Actually, the pivotal episode in the Garden narrative is revolved around speech: the dialogue between the woman and the serpent. The way the woman talks to the serpent indicates her intellect: "She is intelligent, informed, perceptive" (Murphy 1999: 54). In short, the woman is creative; she is capable to interpret situations and create new realities.

The issue revolves around the critical matter of the eating from the tree of knowledge of good and bad. Notice that God did not motivate His command thus the door has been opened for interpretations and elaborations. This is the place of the human faculty of speech; the verbal means to question and to argue a case.

The serpent is the 'devil advocate' who provokes the issue. His definition is meaningful at this context: ערומים (with qamats) shrewdness is associated through the faculty of the sound with ערומים (with hathaph pathah) nakedness. The phenomenon of word-play is characteristic to the Garden narrative (אדם-אדמה, איש-אישה) connoting related meanings. The phonetic similarity gives more emphasis and functions as a signal: "It immediately marks clear to the reader that something is happening at the content level of the text" (van Wolde 1989: 75). Thus, when the serpent approaches the naked woman the text connotes sexuality alluding therefore to the Eros revolution. That is to say, Eros has been integrated with Sophia: ערומים together with ערומים (with qamats) stimulating therefore the double-edged sword of the faculty of the intellect, that is, speech: intellect versus passion, good versus bad.
It appears that speech changes perceptions. A powerful demonstration of the effect of speech is Gorgias' Encomium of Helen. The Sophist describes speech as a moving force:

The effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies. For just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease and others to life, so also in the case of speeches, some distress, other delight, some cause fear, others make the hearers bold, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion (cited in Bizzell and Herzberg 1990: 41).

Speech is powerful, setting up the mind.

The dialogue which takes place between the serpent and the woman reveals indeed that he dominates the art of speech and demonstrates that the serpent is not considered by accident as the shrewdness. The serpent approaches the woman through a statement which confronts her straightforwardly. His statement starts with the combination אף-כי that might introduce an assertive clause (assertive, yes, indeed, compare Ezek 14: 21), or stress a temporal clause (even when, compare Ne 9: 18) or introduce elliptically a question. Translators incline to read the serpent's approach to the woman as a question: "Did God say?" (e.g., The New RSV to 3:1). However, rhetorically it appears that the combination is an assertive clause. Thus, the shrewd serpent seeks to provoke the woman through his statement: "you shall not eat from any tree of the garden!" (ibid). Actually, the serpent has employed the rhetorical device of the hyperbole

fired with brutality: its role is to give a direction to thought…by the return shock is it intended to give an indication to the significant term (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 290).

The serpent provokes the woman through the employment of the hyperbole to respond, but he also alludes provocatively to a broader plan of God to exclude further the freedom of the two human beings. The seed of suspicion has been planted.

Indeed, the woman has been provoked. Interestingly enough, her response correlates with the serpent's rhetorical approach reflecting her feelings of uneasiness regarding God's instruction:

תמער הנין אשרBahor-حج נאמר אלהים ולא תأكلו ממנה ולא תגענו בו פן-תמות.

You shall not eat from the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die (3: 3).
The serpent has aimed well and the woman on her side takes the initiative (see Korsak 1994: 458). Actually, her ample words reveal that she is declaring her readiness to make a human independent decision regarding the moral matter of obedience to the high authority, God (consult Sheleff 2002: 171-172).

She refers to a certain tree at the centre of the garden; however, she does not define it as the tree of knowledge (compare Jacob 1974: 23). That is to say, the woman presents the Tree as merely a tree creating therefore a new reality given her perception; this is actually an ordinary tree. In this regard, Bal, who in order to save the woman's integrity against the accusation of stupidity, regards her answer as a simple mistake on her side that has missed the point (1987: 121-122). The critic has misread the nature of the argument, which is the woman's struggle for independency.

Furthermore, the woman exaggerates as she adds a new element to God's original prohibition, which has been conveyed in the infinitive absolute מַתָּהּ וָמַתָּהּ (2: 17). The infinitive absolute is employed to strengthen the verbal idea (Kautzsch 1960: & 131 n). However, the woman addresses the serpent without using the absolute but speaks instead in terms of a "possible event" פָּן (compare 3: 22). Thus, she doubts whether indeed they will die as a consequence of the eating. Hence, the woman presents a situation which looks less demanding (merely a tree) but also more alarming (the touch) and less ensured regarding the results (dying). Consequently, her perception conveys frustration and uneasiness regarding God's prohibition rather than a trust in God.

In other words, speech is a double-edged sword: the woman could stop the serpent's tone of provocation; however, as she pursues the matter she indicates a problem and a feeling of doubts and hesitations regarding God's command; a situation that the serpent is developing for his advantage.

Indeed, the serpent strengthens the women's feelings:

רָאָמֶר הַנַּחַשׁ אֶל הָאָשֶׁר: לָא מָתָהּ וְלָא מָתָהּ.

The serpent said to the woman: you shall not surely die (3: 4).

The serpent forcefully denies God's original prohibition utilizing the infinitive absolute as his means of rejection: "You shall not surely die" (the New RSV: "you will not die" is inaccurate).

Thus, the serpent has convinced the woman to eat-- strengthening, in fact, her own feelings regarding the matter. He has justified his shrewdness through his rhetorical skills of choosing a useful strategy which avoids a direct confrontation with
his addressee. On the contrary, the serpent is adjusting himself to the woman's position ensuring her state of mind. The serpent's rhetorical approach is a remarkable demonstration of the basic principle of persuasion as Chaim Perelman has pointed out:

To make his discourse effective, a speaker must adapt to his audience…The speaker can choose as his points of departure only the theses accepted by those he addresses (1982: 21).

Indeed, language—the extension of the mind is capable to create new realities, as the serpent together with the woman has done.

E. Conclusions

The Garden narrative (Gen 2-3) presents the story of humankind as a course of three phases: the lonely Adam, the partnership of friendship and Sophia and the Eros condition. The narrative introduces the three phases as a chain of events but not as an evolutionary development. That is, each of the events did not emerge as a process of development but as a matter of reward or punishment. Thus, the narrative describes the human transformation paying special attention to its motivations.

This paper investigates the implications of the second phase, that is, the pre-Eros condition which has been presented as the ideal human relationship— the period of friendship and Sophia. In this regard, the paper studies the power of the language, the extension of the mind as an essential human force.

The narrative reveals a deep interest in the relationship between Adam and the woman. The woman has been presented as the ideal response to Adam's loneliness; she is his partner and her introduction to his life manifests the significance of the Sophia in human life.

However, Sophia through the extension of language is a double-edged sword which manifests the limits and boundaries of the human intellect. Language is capable of creating new realities, which stand in the border between order and disobedience. As a matter of fact, this tension between order and disobedience is the Biblical story of the tension between God and humankind. The woman's disobedience reflects her capacity to mediate over God's order— as she conveys verbally in her confrontation with the serpent. Indeed, this is the human trial: Sophia, language which might keep the balance, on the one hand, but might lead to rebellion, on the other hand.
It is illuminate to reconstruct the Biblical view regarding the essence of friendship and *Sophia* in the pre-Eros condition in contrast to the relationship between Adam and Eve in the Eros phase. Indeed, Eros is the provider of new life but is also the source of subordination which ends the partnership of equality, that is, friendship of values and *Sophia*.

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