

MOSES 3; GENESIS 2

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Overview

What was the nature of the initial proving ground created for Adam and Eve? In a single brief reference, Moses 3:9 elaborates on the spiritual state of existence that applied to all things in the garden: “It was spiritual in the day that I created it; for it remaineth in the sphere in which I, God, created it.” The use of “for” implies that the garden was in a spiritual state *because* it had remained in a particular “sphere.” But what is meant by the term “sphere”?

Joseph Smith typically used the word *sphere* to describe the orbit or order of a heavenly body or a realm of activity, power, or influence. In the book of Abraham, these two meanings converge in the idea that the nearer a planet is to Kolob, the higher its order of celestial governance.¹ But this interpretation immediately raises questions. For one thing, it is impossible to harmonize with current planetary science a view that the earth was physically transported through space from a higher to a lower sphere after the Fall. Moreover, the idea that there was no death in the Garden of Eden and that the earth once existed in a mixed condition—partly spiritual and partly natural—is inconsistent with the scientific view of the earth’s biology and geology.

While the Lord has not revealed any solution to the problem of reconciling science and scripture on specifics of the Garden of Eden, Latter-day Saint scholars have thought deeply about this problem. One possible solution is that the bodies of Adam and Eve could have been prepared in some manner beforehand on the earth. Then, afterward, the couple could have been temporarily placed in a terrestrial place or state to experience the events of the Garden of Eden. Consistent with this idea, Moses 3:8 seems to imply that

1. See Abraham 3:9, 16; 5:13; Doctrine and Covenants 130:4.

the bodies of Adam and Eve were created elsewhere and only later placed in the garden (“There I *put* the man whom I had formed”; emphasis added).

An important consequence of this view is that the subsequent Fall would not have required the movement of an entire planet from one place to another, as some have surmised. Rather, it would require only the removal of Adam and Eve from Eden to the telestial earth (a form of “reverse translation”), where natural conditions including death and time had already prevailed from the beginning of its creation. This allows for an earth with a long biological, geographical, and planetary history—consistent with scientific findings. Additionally, the proposal is also in harmony with suggestions in some ancient religious traditions.²

Of course, Latter-day Saints are also aware of the fact that scriptural descriptions of the Garden of Eden include figurative elements. Understanding that and suggestions such as the one above allows believers to accept the historicity of Adam and Eve, the reality of the Fall, and the tangible nature of the sacred Eden.

Ultimately, there is no conflict between the well-established scientific evidence for a long process of organic evolution and the scriptural story of Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, and the Fall. But because our understanding of how findings from these different sources fit together is imperfect, living with *seeming* conflicts sometimes requires patience and faith. We believe all truth can be circumscribed into one great whole. Hence, we gladly and thankfully seek after and embrace all truth—from religion, science, and other domains (see Doctrine and Covenants 88:78–79)—even when all the pieces of truth don’t seem to fit together yet. In a future day, the Lord will reveal a fullness of all the truths of existence (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:26–32).

The world-renowned scientist, Henry Eyring, father of Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency, found that it was the people who can tolerate “no contradictions in their minds [that] may have [the most] trouble.” As for himself, he continued, “there are all kinds of contradictions [in religion] I don’t understand, but I find the same kinds of contradictions in science, and I haven’t decided to apostatize from science. In the long run, the truth is its own most powerful advocate.”³ A lesson that might be drawn from Brother Eyring’s words is that those who are too quick to abandon religion or scholarship because of seeming contradictions will not be rewarded with the unimaginable discoveries that God desires to

2. For a discussion of such traditions, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God’s Image and Likeness 1: Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014), 142–144.

3. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “Science and Genesis: A Personal View,” in *Science and Mormonism: Cosmos, Earth, and Man*, ed. David H. Bailey, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, John H. Lewis, Gregory L. Smith, and Michael L. Stark (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2016), 155.

grant us in this life. Rather, if we exercise patience and faith in our sincere and noble search for truth, discoveries will come.

Source

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Moses 3; Genesis 2

Moses 3:1–2; Genesis 2:1–2. The Seventh Day

3:1; 2:1. “all the host of them.” The phrase “all the host of them” is rich in meaning. However, at least some ancient readers understood the heavenly host to be God’s divine “army.” The Jewish sage Ramban specifically included “the souls of humanity” as part of the host of heaven.⁴ Elder Joseph Fielding Smith similarly saw the mustering of the heavenly host as including the organization and foreordination of spirits in premortal life (see Moses 6:44).⁵

3:2; 2:2. “God . . . rested.” Current biblical scholarship does not see Creation as the sudden appearance of material elements out of nowhere followed by a simple cessation of activity. Rather, Creation was the *organization* of preexisting elements so that the world would be fit for the purposes God had previously ordained for His creatures. In this way, the process of creating the universe is analogous to the building and fashioning of a temple out of materials already at hand. When the initial work of Creation was finished and God took His place in its midst by ascending to His throne, a temple made with divine hands came into full existence as a functional sanctuary, or a “control room of the cosmos,” as Bible scholar John Walton termed it.⁶

From this perspective we can regard the seventh day of Creation as the enthronement of God and the culmination of all prior Creation events. True rest is finally achieved only when God rules supreme over Creation from His heavenly temple and His righteous and duly appointed regents (in this case, Adam and Eve) rule an earthly equivalent. Happily, God’s “rest,” after being interrupted by humanity’s wickedness, will be permanently restored at the last day, when Christ “shall have delivered up the kingdom to . . . the Father” and shall have “put all things under his feet” (1 Corinthians 15:24–25).

4. See, for example, David Blumenthal, “Reading Creation,” in *Bibel und Midrasch, Forschung zum Alten Testament*, ed. G. Bodendorfer and M. Millard (Heidelberg, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 117–166.

5. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., *Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1979), 5:182–184.

6. John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 115.

3:2; 2:2. Were Adam and Eve created on the sixth or the seventh day? Significantly, Doctrine and Covenants 77:12 seems to imply that it was God’s work thus far, rather than the seventh day itself, that was sanctified. Additionally, the verse might be taken to mean that the creation of Adam’s and Eve’s physical bodies took place at the beginning of the seventh day rather than the end of the sixth: “God made the world in six days, and on the seventh day he finished his work, and sanctified it, and also formed man out of the dust of the earth.” Because the verse seems to contradict the standard interpretation of Moses 2:26–27 as being an account of the physical creation of humankind on the *sixth* day, some have concluded that there is either a semantic or “grammatical ambiguity” in the revelation—for example, perhaps “finished” should be understood as “ended.”⁷

Source

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Moses 3:1–3; Genesis 2:1–3

Moses 3:3; Genesis 2:3. God Blesses and Sanctifies the Seventh Day

3:3; 2:3. “God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.” The culmination of the “week” of divine activity was not an act of creation but rather the blessing and sanctification of the day when Creation ceased. Unlike the specific blessings to humankind and the animals given in Moses 2:22, 28, this blessing “is undefined and pertains to time itself. . . . God, through His creativity, has already established His sovereignty over space; the idea here is that He is sovereign over time as well.”⁸

To sanctify something is to declare it not merely *good* (as was done for the products of the six days of Creation) but rather to make it *holy*. From this perspective, Truman G. Madsen explained, “Far from being a day of strict injunctions, which are joyless duties imposed on duties of the prior day, the Sabbath is the reward for, the outcome of, indeed the climax of all other preparatory creations. It is not an imposed stoppage. It is what all the preparation was designed for, and therefore it has great value. It was, indeed, made for man.”⁹

7. Stephen E. Robinson and H. Dean Garrett, *A Commentary on the Doctrine and Covenants*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2000), 347.

8. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 15.

9. Truman G. Madsen, “The Gospel and the Sabbath,” in *Five Classics by Truman G. Madsen* (Salt Lake City, UT: Eagle Gate, 2001), 332. Compare Meir Zlotowitz, *Bereishis/Genesis: A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic, and Rabbinic Sources*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1986), 82; Mark 2:27.

The order and perfection of Creation. The goodness of the completed Creation is beautifully expressed through the symbolism of the number seven, the *heptad*, representing divine perfection. “The narrative’s seven literary units feature seven times the formula for the effectuation of the divine will and the statement of divine approval; and the six days of Creation culminate in the climactic seventh.”¹⁰

Source

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Moses 3:3; Genesis 2:3

Moses 3:4–5; Genesis 2:4–5. All Things First Created Spiritually

3:5; 2:5. “*And every plant of the field before it was in the earth.*” The following paraphrase, which draws on the general word pattern of the Mesopotamian creation story (Enuma Elish), may provide a plainer reading of the verse:

Before there were any troublesome weeds, before the cultivated grain was grown, before God caused the rain to fall, before man was commanded to till the ground, the Lord God made all things in the spiritual state of a terrestrial world [that is, a temple-like Eden]. The Lord God had created all people in heaven, but no flesh was yet on earth.

This explanation provides the beginning bookend to the account that ends in Moses 4:29 with the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden. The emphasis on how easy their life was before that time highlights the fact that neither the troublesome weeds (that depend on rain) nor the life-sustaining grains (that depend on human cultivation) would make their appearance until after the Fall. Likewise, the statement that no flesh was yet on the earth refers to mortality, another condition that will not hold until after the Fall.

3:5; 2:5. “*created all things . . . spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth.*” There is no scriptural basis for the idea that everything created has a spirit, including, for example, rocks, plants, and the earth itself, as some have mistakenly taught based on poetical descriptions in passages such as Moses 7:48. Instead, verse 5 describes the premortal creation of all things in their spiritual *state* (including the premortal spirits of humankind and presumably some other forms of life) and the physical creation of Eden and everything it contained. This is consistent with the view of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, who “conceded that the word ‘spiritual’” in Moses 3:5 has “a dual meaning and applies to both the premortal life and the paradisiacal creation . . . [while emphasizing] that the ‘more

10. Sarna, *Genesis*, 4.

pointed and important meaning' is that of a 'paradisiacal creation.'"¹¹ The paradisiacal creation resulted in a world of terrestrial glory, the same glory to which the earth will be restored during the Millennium. Everything placed in the Garden of Eden was considered spiritual in the sense that it was in a state of relative perfection before the Fall.

Source

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Moses 3:4–5; Genesis 2:4–5

Moses 3:6–7; Genesis 2:6–7. The Creation of Adam

3:7; 2:7. “the Lord God, formed man.” The wording implies that God was involved in the forming of Adam and Eve in a personal way. Accordingly, scriptures and Church leaders' statements have sometimes been quoted to argue that Adam's and Eve's bodies were born of divine parentage in a very literal sense. However, the scriptures are not consistent on this point. For example, in 1830 the Prophet Joseph Smith translated Moses 6:22, which refers to a “genealogy of the sons of Adam, who was the son of God.” However, a little over a year later he modified a similar genealogical account in the King James Version from “Adam, who was *the son of God*” to “Adam, who was *formed of God*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 3:45; emphasis added).

Consistent with this interpretation, it should be observed that Moses 6:8 and 6:68 could be taken as support of the view that 6:22 is also meant to describe a covenant relationship rather than lineal descent. Regarding the manner in which the bodies of Adam and Eve were created, President Spencer W. Kimball said, “We don't know exactly how their coming into this world happened, and when we're able to understand it the Lord will tell us.”¹² As Richard D. Draper concluded, “Genesis, Moses, and Abraham preserve the 'official' account of humankind's entrance into the world as revealed by God. He has not seen fit to reveal more.”¹³

11. Cited in Charles R. Harrell, “The Development of the Doctrine of Preexistence, 1830–1844,” *BYU Studies* 28, no. 2 (1988): 20.

12. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Blessings and Responsibilities of Womanhood,” *Ensign*, March 1976, 70–73.

13. Richard D. Draper, “The Creation of Humankind, an Allegory? A Note on Abraham 5:7, 14–16,” in *Astronomy, Papyrus, and Covenant*, ed. John Gee and Brian M. Hauglid (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 2005), 82. For a thoughtful collection and extended discussion of statements made by Church leaders on this topic, see David H. Bailey, Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, John H. Lewis, Gregory L. Smith, and Michael L. Stark, eds., *Science and Mormonism: Cosmos, Earth, and Man* (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2016), 445–484.

Two Creation narratives? Bible readers have long wondered why there are two creation narratives—the first in Moses 2 / Genesis 1 and the second beginning in Moses 3 / Genesis 2. Scholars typically explain this seeming duplication with the idea that the two stories came from different ancient sources, roughly like how our understanding of Joseph Smith’s First Vision comes from multiple accounts of his experience. Bible scholars call this idea the documentary hypothesis.

Notwithstanding the plausibility of some form of the documentary hypothesis and the view of some scholars who see the joining of these two separate Creation accounts as little more than a clumsily exposed stitch in a narrative seam, there is actually more editorial subtlety and skill shown in the way the story was put together than what is immediately apparent. For example, Richard Friedman, a scholar who has done much to popularize the documentary hypothesis himself, wrote that in the scriptural version of Genesis we have a text “that is greater than the sum of its parts. . . . [T]he combination of the from-the-sky-down and the from-the-earth-up accounts produces a much richer and much more whole conception of Creation than we would have if there were only one account. Also, placing the cosmic conception first creates the impression of the wide camera view narrowing in. This feeling of narrowing in will continue through the coming stories, contributing to the rich-in-background feeling.”¹⁴

Going further, Hugh Nibley explained the seeming discontinuity between the two Creation accounts as a *purposive* shift, seeing the interlude that separates the stories in verses 3–7 as stage directions composed to accompany a drama that was part of ancient temple ritual.¹⁵ As the curtain closed on the drama’s prologue outlining the seven days of Creation, a narrator might have paused to explain that all things were created spiritually prior to their natural appearance on the earth (Moses 3:4–5; Genesis 2:4–5). Following this interlude, the curtain might have reopened for a change of scene in the second part of the Creation drama; we are now viewing the details of the story of the creation of humankind not from the vantage point of heaven but instead as it was seen from the garden.¹⁶

Source

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Moses 3:6–7; Genesis 2:6–7

14. Richard Elliott Friedman, *Commentary on the Torah* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2001), 16.

15. Hugh W. Nibley, “Abraham’s Temple Drama,” in *The Temple in Time and Eternity*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 36.

16. Hugh W. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2005), 284.

Moses 3:8–14; Genesis 2:8–14. The Planting of the Garden of Eden

3:8; 2:8. “God planted a garden eastward in Eden.” The Garden of Eden can be seen as a sort of natural temple where Adam and Eve lived in God’s presence for a time. In support of this idea, ancient tradition and modern scholarship has pointed out that each major feature of Eden corresponds to a similar symbol in the Israelite temple. For example, the river, the cherubim, the tree of knowledge, and the tree of life match up, respectively, to the bronze laver, the cherubim, the veil, and the menorah.¹⁷

Outside of Israel, garden and temple themes were also combined as is illustrated in the famous Mari Investiture Panel from Old Babylon, created in the Abrahamic era. Though scholarly opinions about Mari differ on important details, researchers are in general agreement that the areas in the ritual complex have been laid out so as to accommodate a ceremonial progression of the king and his entourage toward the innermost sanctuary.¹⁸ The themes of the king’s journey include Creation, a garden with a central tree bearing sweet fruit, sacrifice, a veil held up by a second kind of tree (to which those who pass through must give sacred names), and a renewal of kingship in a face-to-face encounter with the divine.

How widespread are such resemblances to Israelite and modern-day temple worship? More widespread than one might expect. Indeed, John Walton has observed that “the ideology of the temple is not noticeably different in Israel than it is in the ancient Near East. The difference is in the God, not in the way the temple functions in relation to the God.”¹⁹ Of course, resemblances between revealed religion in Old Testament times and the religious beliefs and practices of other peoples do not imply that the Israelites got their religion from their neighbors. Rather, to believing Latter-day Saints, these resemblances provide confirmation that the gospel was preached in the beginning, which could mean that ancient evidence of distorted truths found outside of biblical tradition is the result of subsequent degeneration and apostasy.²⁰

Source

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Moses 3:8–14; Genesis 2:8–14

17. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “The Tree of Knowledge as the Veil of the Sanctuary,” in *Ascending the Mountain of the Lord: Temple, Praise, and Worship in the Old Testament*, ed. David Rolph Seely, Jeffrey R. Chadwick, and Matthew J. Grey (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University; Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2013), 49–65.

18. Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Ronan J. Head, “The Investiture Panel at Mari and Rituals of Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 4 (2012): 1–42.

19. John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 129.

20. See Truman G. Madsen, “Introductory Essay,” in *Reflections on Mormonism: Judaeo-Christian Parallels*, ed. Truman G. Madsen. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1978), xvi–xvii.

Moses 3:9; Genesis 2:9. The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil

3:9; 2:9. “tree of life.” Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote that the tree of life “figuratively refers to eternal life,”²¹ and Nephi referred to the tree of life as a manifestation of the love of God (see 1 Nephi 11:22–23). It should be emphasized that the tree of life represents eternal life not only in an abstract sense but also more concretely as a symbol of embodied Deity. Thus Jehovah, the premortal Jesus Christ, was represented to Moses in the burning bush as one who dwells in the midst of the blazing glory of the tree of life.²²

Going further, such trees can represent not only Deity but also humans who have taken on the titles of priesthood and royalty through temple rites of investiture. The symbolism of the tree of life has also been specifically connected to the divine mother of a king, which is consistent with the association of Mary, the mother of Jesus, with the tree of life in Nephi’s vision (see 1 Nephi 11:15–23).

Ancient commentators often identified the tree of life with the olive tree, whose extremely long life makes it a fitting symbol for eternal life. Additionally, the everyday use of olive oil as a source of both nourishment and fuel for light evokes natural associations when used in conjunction with the ritual anointing of priests and kings and the blessing of the sick.

However, the date palm provides a more fitting symbol for the tree of life in some ancient cultures and in the Book of Mormon. For example, note that Nephi contrasts the fruit of the tree of life to the forbidden fruit: “The one being sweet and the other bitter” (2 Nephi 2:15). The date palm’s fruit, which is often described as white in its most desirable varieties and which would have been well-known to Lehi’s family—possibly even being available in the Valley of Lemuel, where the family camped at the time of Lehi’s vision—would have provided a more fitting analogue than the olive to the love of God that was “sweet above all that is sweet” (Alma 32:42).

3:9; 2:9. “tree of knowledge of good and evil.” Perhaps the most relevant hint as to the meaning of this phrase comes from Deuteronomy 1:39, which speaks of little children “who . . . have no knowledge of good and evil,” suggesting that they are not accountable for their actions. In this sense, the term aptly refers to knowledge acquired by experience—a kind of knowledge that Adam and Eve lacked before the Fall. Thus, Solomon fittingly prayed for the ability “to discern between good and evil” so that he would be able to function in his royal role (1 Kings 3:9). Jewish and Christian traditions often identify the tree

21. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1985), 86; compare Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 209n6.

22. For scholarship in support of this idea, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God’s Image and Likeness 1: Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014).

of knowledge of good and evil as a fig tree, thus heightening the irony later on in these chapters when Adam and Eve attempt to cover themselves with its leaves. The fruit of the fig tree is known for its abundance of seeds, making an apron of green fig leaves an appropriate symbol for Adam and Eve’s ability to “be fruitful and multiply” after the Fall (Moses 2:28).

Source

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Moses 3:9; Genesis 2:9

Moses 3:15–17; Genesis 2:15–17. Adam Is Placed in the Garden; One Tree Is Forbidden

3:15; 2:15. “to dress it, and to keep it.” The Hebrew terms for “to dress” (*abad*) and “to keep” (*shamar*) connote, respectively, “to work, serve, till” and “to keep, watch (guard), preserve.” Significantly, these are the very words that are used to describe the later priesthood duties of the Levites in the tabernacle. The temple parallel to this act of creation is clear: now that Adam has been called as a temple worker of sorts, the temple of the Garden of Eden can begin to function.

3:17; 2:17. “thou shalt not eat of it.” Although the Hebrew text uses a singular pronoun, translated here as “thou,” the idea that both Adam and Eve were present to hear this command from God was not unknown in Jewish and early Christian tradition.²³

3:17; 2:17. “thou mayest choose for thyself.” Elder Joseph Fielding Smith offered the following paraphrase of the command: “The Lord said to Adam, here is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you want to stay here then you cannot eat of that fruit. If you want to stay here, then I forbid you to eat it. But you may act for yourself and you may eat of it if you want to. And if you eat of it you will die.”²⁴ Elsewhere, Elder Smith explained, “In no other commandment the Lord ever gave to man, did he say: ‘But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself.’”²⁵

23. See Gary A. Anderson and Michael Stone, eds., *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999), 36; Gary A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 81–84.

24. Joseph Fielding Smith, “Fall-Atonement-Resurrection-Sacrament,” address delivered at the University of Utah Institute of Religion, January 14, 1961.

25. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1954–1956), 1:114. See Moses 3:17.

3:17; 2:17. “*in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” Spiritual death after eating the fruit would have been swift since transgressing would cause Adam and Eve to be separated from God’s presence. Physical death would be just as sure, but not so immediate: we know that the lives of Adam and Eve were mercifully prolonged so that they could experience a “state of probation” (see 2 Nephi 2:21).

Since the tree of life is not specifically included in God’s prohibition, readers have wondered whether Adam and Eve may have eaten from it to prolong their lives while they remained in the garden. But careful analysis of the Hebrew makes this possibility unlikely.²⁶ In addition, Elder Bruce R. McConkie maintained that the chief idea represented by worthily partaking of the fruit of the tree of life was not immortality but rather eternal life.²⁷ Therefore, Adam and Eve’s only approach to the tree of life was to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge, leave the garden to pass into mortality, and then return at last to eat the sweet fruit only if and when they were fully qualified—and authoritatively invited—to do so.²⁸

Source

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Moses 3:15–17; Genesis 2:15–17

Moses 3:18–20; Genesis 2:18–20. Adam Gives Names

3:20; 2:20. “*Adam gave names.*” Bible scholar Nahum Sarna commented: “In Genesis 1, God bestows names only on the cosmic phenomena connected with time and space. Here He assigns to man the role of naming terrestrial animates, which . . . is another way of expressing the bestowal of authority and dominion over them, the idea contained in v. 28.”²⁹

In Islamic tradition, a different event appears in place of the episode of the naming of animals: the reciting of sacred names to angels. Like temple initiates in other cultures, Adam—before the Fall and after having been given instruction by God—is said in these sources to have been directed to recite a series of secret names to the angels in order prove that he was worthy of the elevated status of priest and king that had been conferred upon him.

26. For scholarly arguments supporting this interpretation, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God’s Image and Likeness 1: Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014).

27. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1985), 86.

28. Bruce C. Hafen, *The Broken Heart* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1989), 30.

29. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 2.

Is it possible that Adam himself received a name as part of this episode? The fact that the first reference to Adam as a proper name is in verse 20 seems to lend support to such a conjecture. It also seems significant that the final naming in the story of the garden and the Fall—Adam’s bestowal of a permanent proper name on Eve—occurs in immediate proximity to the account of God’s making coats of skin for the couple (see Moses 4:26–27).

In this connection, it may be significant that Islamic traditions also associate a test of naming with the marriage of Adam and Eve. Thus, the test of Adam’s knowledge of certain names culminated in an examination to determine whether Adam could identify Eve and recite *her* name: “When Adam awoke from his sleep he saw [Eve] sitting at his head. The angels said to Adam, testing his knowledge: ‘What is this, Adam?’ He answered: ‘A woman.’ They asked: ‘And what is her name?’ he replied: ‘Eve (*hawwa*).”³⁰ Al-Tha’labi explained that when Adam and Eve were rejoined after the Fall, “they recognized each other by questioning on a day of questioning. So, the place was named *Arafat* [= questions] and the day, *’Irfah* [= knowledge or recognition].”³¹

Source

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Moses 3:18–20; Genesis 2:18–20

Moses 3:21–24; Genesis 2:21–24. The Creation of Eve

3:22; 2:22. “made . . . a woman.” Donald W. Parry noted a “five-fold uniqueness” in the creation of Eve:³²

1. *Creation as forming versus building.* The Hebrew verb used to describe Adam’s creation is *yšr* (“to form or fashion”), but the verb used for Eve is *bnh* (“to build”), “recall[ing] the building of temples and altars.” The term is also used “with regard to women bearing and delivering children.”

30. William M. Brinner, trans., *’Ara’is Al-Majalis Fi Qisas Al-Anbiya’ or “Lives of the Prophets”: As Recounted by Abū Ishāq Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ibrāhīm Al-Tha’labī* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002), 48.

31. Brinner, “*Lives of the Prophets*,” 54.

32. Donald W. Parry, “Eve’s Role as a ‘Help’ (*Ezer*) Revisited,” in *Seek Ye Words of Wisdom: Studies of the Book of Mormon, Bible, and Temple in Honor of Stephen D. Ricks*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Gaye Strathearn, and Shon D. Hopkin (Orem, UT: Interpreter Foundation; Provo, UT: Religious Education, Brigham Young University, 2020), 204–207. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in the following numbered list are from this source.

2. *Formed from the ground versus built from a living creature.* Whereas Adam and the animals were formed from *'adamah*, the ground, Eve was built from a *šela*, traditionally translated as a “rib” but perhaps more accurately translated as a “side,” containing both flesh and bone. Hence Adam’s exclamation of joy: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man” (Moses 3:23).
3. *Eve was created while Adam slept.* “Hebrew *tardemah* is used of abnormally heavy sleep, divinely induced.”³³ The image is one of transition from a former state into a new one, a “sleep and a forgetting.”³⁴ The awakening of Adam represents the beginning of his recovery from his state of ignorance. In the *Apocalypse of Adam*, Adam is instructed by three men of surpassing glory who reveal knowledge to him about his Creator.³⁵
4. *“It was not good that the man should be alone” (Moses 3:18).* Prior to this point, every step of Creation had been pronounced “good,” but “Eve’s absence . . . was ‘not good.’”
5. *'Ezer.* “Of all God’s creative works, [Eve] is singularly called *'ezer*.” The Hebrew means “a helper or strength corresponding to him.” Far from signifying woman’s secondary status to the man, the term *'ezer* is also used by God to describe His relationship to humankind.

3:22; 2:22. “Brought her unto the man.” In Moses 3:22, as noted in a Jewish midrash, “the image may well be that of God playing the role of the attendant who leads the bride to the groom. Without doubt, the verse conveys the idea that the institution of marriage is established by God Himself.”³⁶ God declared that a husband “shall cleave unto his wife” (Moses 3:24; Genesis 2:24). The underlying meaning of the idea of two distinct entities being intimately attached to one another while preserving their separate identities is also used in biblical tradition to describe “human yearning for and devotion to God.”³⁷

Source

Book of Moses Minute by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

Related verses

Moses 3:21–24; Genesis 2:21–24

33. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 22.

34. William Wordsworth, “Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood, 1803–6,” in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Henry Reed (Philadelphia, PA: Troutman and Hayes, 1851), 470–472.

35. See George W. MacRae, “Apocalypse of Adam,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 279–280.

36. Sarna, *Genesis*, 23.

37. See Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Heavenly Torah as Refracted Through the Generations*, trans. Gordon Tucker (New York, NY: Continuum, 2007), 190–193.

Moses 3:25; Genesis 2:25. Naked and Not Ashamed

3:25; 2:25. “they were both naked.” When verse 25 states that Adam and Eve “were both naked,” it means that they were no longer clothed with the glory of their earlier state. The verse attests to the couple’s innocence, their loss of memory, and their lack of awareness of the initial change that had come over them and of the greater change that was yet to come.

Note that the verse is meant to prepare us for Moses 4:13. It “forms the transition to the next episode by means of a word play on ‘naked’ (Hebrew *’arom*, plural *’arummim*) and ‘shrewd’ (Hebrew *’arum*). It also conveys an anticipatory hint at” how the two concepts are going to be related.³⁸ Approximating the Hebrew wordplay in English, we might say (with Gordon Wenham) that the couple aspired to be shrewd (like the serpent), and they ended up nude.³⁹

3:25; 2:25. “not ashamed.” The fact that Adam and Eve “were not ashamed” expresses the idea that while the two partners were as yet free from transgression, they could stand “naked” in God’s presence without shame because they were “clothed with purity” in what early commentators called “garments of light.” These garments correspond symbolically to the equally significant but less glorious “coats of skin” that God made for Adam and Eve after the Fall.

Source

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Related verses

Moses 3:25; Genesis 2:25

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38. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation Commentary*, The JPS Torah Commentary, ed. Nahum M. Sarna and Chaim Potok (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 23.

39. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 72.