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Before the Serpent Became Satan # 5

By Jim Myers

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The moment of truth came when she touched it -- and nothing happened. Suddenly she was faced with the realization that something she believed to be the “absolute word of Elohim” was untrue. She touched it and she didn’t die! So, what else could she believe – the serpent must be right! Divine wisdom was just one bite away!

I imagine that as soon as the fact that she had touched it and nothing happened sunk in, she quickly raised it to her lips. The spotlight is now focused upon the man. He knew exactly what Yahweh Elohim had commanded him. What should he do? Would he have dominion over the part of his nature that wanted him to act like a wild animal or would submit to it? He didn’t have a rabbi, preacher, priest or teachers that he could consult. He didn’t have a Torah scroll or a Bible to read. And then the unthinkable happened --

... she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her man with her ...

She ate it and didn’t die! Then, she turned and offered the next bite to him. We can only image the tremendous pressure he felt as he took it from her. Now she was the silent one standing next to him and watching to see what he would do. He made a life changing decision in a split-second:

... and he did eat...

His decision affected not only his life and that of the woman; its repercussions would touch the lives of every living creature that would ever inhabit the earth.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons (Genesis 3:7).

I often wonder if this story is one of the first humorous stories to appear in the Bible. Just put yourself in the man’s position for a moment. He had to be close to being stressed out by the time the forbidden fruit touched his lips. He did the unthinkable and lived -- and then the first revelation of his newly acquired wisdom flashed into his mind – “*Oh no, we are naked!*”

Professor U. Cassuto provides us with an enlightening commentary on this situation in his book, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part One:*

In truth their eyes were opened as they had expected, but the outcome was not what they awaited. They had hoped that by eating the fruit of the tree they would attain Divine knowledge; in point of fact, they did gain knowledge, but of what kind? They knew they were naked! The cognition that had seemed so desirable to them as to warrant the transgression, for its sake, of the Creator’s precept, appeared to them,

once they had achieved it, vastly different from what they had originally imagined. The first knowledge they acquired was the wretched and grieving realization that they were naked. The significance of this consciousness is in relationship to their previous state, when they felt no shame (Genesis 2:25).

The author of Genesis had set the stage for this remarkable contest at the end of chapter 2 and the first verse of chapter 3.

*And the man and his wife were both **clever**, and were not **confused**. Now the serpent was more **clever** than any other **wild animal of the field** that Yahweh Elohim had made.*

For the moment it appears that the serpent was clearly the cleverest and that the man and woman were confused. But this is not the end of the story, it is only the beginning. Before the impact of his current state of confusion could sink in, guess who shows up?

And they heard the voice of Yahweh Elohim walking in the garden in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8a).

Was he coming to execute them for eating the forbidden fruit? How else would they die? What could they do?

...and the man and his woman hid from the presence of Yahweh Elohim among the trees of the garden (Genesis 3:8b).

Something new came into being as a result of the man's choice to act as a wild animal instead of an Elohim – **fear!**

*And Yahweh Elohim called unto the man, and said unto him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and **I was afraid**, because I was naked; and I hid myself (Genesis 3:9-10).*

He said he was afraid because he was naked (exposed, uncovered), but why should he be afraid of that – Yahweh had created him. He doesn't know what to do. But what about Yahweh, he also finds himself in a new situation with the man, too.

"In Eden God had made no provision for atonement for sin, but in the unfolding of man's story God grasped the full measure of man's character, drew the necessary conclusion, and acted upon it" (Classical Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism by Bruce D. Chilton and Jacob Neusner, p. 92).

An interesting question arises from the above quote from the Chilton and Neusner book –

"God grasped the full measure of man's character."

The role of Yahweh, if one is using a very literal interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3, seems to be that of a learning deity, not one that is "all-knowing." An all-knowing God wouldn't have to grasp anything. The text may reflect the manner in which ancient readers understood God, a very different understanding from than that of most contemporary Christians and Jews.

One final point of interest before we close this issue is the fact that the antidote for "death" was very close by.

And out of the ground made Yahweh Elohim to grow every tree that is pleasant 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 Evil (Genesis 2:9).

If the man believed that he was dying, why didn't he rush over to the Tree of Life and take a bite of its fruit? It was close by and nothing was in his way except Yahweh. What a fitting scene for the events to follow – a guilty man standing in the presence of Yahweh within reach of eternal life.

(Continued in the next issue.)

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