

THE CREATION ORDER—HIERARCHICAL OR EGALITARIAN?

JAN A. SIGVARTSEN
Berrien Springs, Michigan

The biblical creation account of Gen 1–3 is unique among the ancient Near Eastern creation texts by the great emphasis it places on the creation of the primordial woman and on the equality of the sexes. A strong case could be made that this equality emphasis is one of the key theological points made by the author of the Genesis narrative, especially when considered in light of the other ancient Near Eastern accounts which do not even mention the origin of the woman, as noted by Nahum M. Sarna.¹ This article will take a closer look at the biblical account and investigate the type of relationship the text promotes between man and woman, both before and after the Fall. **Figures 1 and 2** provide a concise overview of the key elements regarding this issue in Gen 1–3. Genesis 1:26-29 and Gen 2:7, 18, 20-25 address the relationship between the sexes before the Fall, while Gen 3:6 functions as the dividing point between the pre- and post-Fall perspective, and Gen 3:6-21 provides the post-fall view.

The Definition of Man (Genesis 1)

Then God said, “Let Us make man [earthlings] in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.” So God created man [earthlings] in His own image; He created him [*’ōtō*, third person masculine singular²] in the image of God; He created them male and female. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful [*pērū*, plural], multiply [*ūrbeū*, plural], fill [*ūmil’ū*, plural] the earth, and subdue it [*wēkibšūhā*, plural]. Rule [*ūrdū*, plural] the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.” God also said, “Look, I

¹Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 21.

²In contrast to the English language, most languages, including Hebrew, are gender specific, that is, masculine or feminine (although a certain word may be assigned a different gender based on the language). Since “earthling” [*’ādām*] is a masculine singular noun, it requires a masculine pronoun (the noun and the pronoun have to be in agreement with each other, both in gender and number), in this case, the third person masculine singular pronoun, the suffix (*ō*), translated as “him” (*’et* is the object indicator and is not translated). Thus, the use of the singular form of the masculine noun and pronoun does not indicate that God speaks only to the male, thereby excluding the female; it is used because of the gender of the noun and nothing more. In addition, the Hebrew language would always refer to a group with a masculine pronoun if there is at least one masculine member of that group. The only time a feminine pronoun is used is if there are only females in the group. Thus, if theology should be based on the gender of a certain noun, then the Holy Spirit must also be viewed as a woman, since the noun “Spirit” (*rūah*) is a feminine noun in Hebrew.

have given you [*lākem*, plural] every seed-bearing plant on the surface of the entire earth and every tree whose fruit contains seed. This food will be for you [*lākem*, plural]. (Gen 1:26-29, CSB).

One argument sometimes used in support of a hierarchy or male-headship/female-submission view is that God named the humans “man,” thus implying male headship.³ This argument ignores the wordplay between the Hebrew words “man” and “ground/land/earth” in Hebrew, *’ādām* and *’ādāmā*, which is first introduced in Gen 2:7, when God formed *’ādām* out of the dust of the *’ādāmā*.⁴ To keep this wordplay in the English language, “earthling” or “earth-being” may be a more appropriate translation. Be that as it may, when the author of the biblical creation account uses the word *’ādām* for the first time, it is defined as both “male (*zākar*) and female (*nēqēbā*).”⁵ This definition is crucial, since it emphasizes the unity between male and female—both are humans and in God’s image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27). At this point in the creation story, *’ādām* is a generic term for humans (both male and female) and not the first name of the first male Adam.⁶ Based on this biblical definition of *’ādām*, the following observations can be made regarding the relationship between male and female in Gen 1: (1) both male and female are created in God’s image and likeness (1:27c); (2) both male and female appear to be created at the same time (1:27); (3) both male and female are assigned the same task/role by God—“rule over animals and the earth” (1:26b, 28c). There is no indication in this creation account that the woman had a different function than the man; (4) both male and female receive the same blessing from God (1:28); (5) God speaks to both male and female by using the personal pronouns “them” and plural “you,” in addition to the plural form of the imperatives—be fruitful, multiply, fill, subdue, and rule (1:28-29); and (6) both male and female receive the same diet from God (1:29). From this, it becomes clear that the emphasis of Genesis 1 is on the unity and the equality between the sexes, thereby leaving no room for male headship or hierarchy.

³Philip B. Payne discusses the eleven most often used biblical arguments from Gen 1-3 used by people arguing for male headship (*Man and Woman One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009], 43-54); this paper is only considering four of them.

⁴This wordplay also appears after the Flood when God promises: “I will never again curse the ground (*’ādāmā*) because of man (*’ādām*), even though man’s (*’ādām*) inclination is evil from his youth. And I will never again strike down every living thing as I have done” (Gen 8:21). Unless otherwise stated, all biblical quotes are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible (CSB).

⁵The same definition is repeated in the introduction of Noah’s genealogy in Gen 5:2.

⁶The first time *’ādām* is used as a proper name is in Gen 2:20 where the first male realizes his uniqueness, hence Adam, and realizes that he is in need of an equal like himself.

The Creation Order of Humankind (Genesis 2)

A second argument sometimes used in support of male headship or the hierarchical view is that the male was created before the female in Gen 2, thus suggesting that males should have authority over females. This argument ignores the literary structure used by the author to reveal the primary focus of the chapter.⁷ Much in the same way that the Sabbath functions as the climax of Gen 1, the creation of the woman followed by the first “marriage” functions as the climax of the Eden Narrative in Gen 2-3.⁸ The first indication that the woman is the main emphasis of this second creation story is the number of verses describing her creation, six in all (Gen 2:18-23) compared to only one verse describing the creation of the man (Gen 2:7). Sarna notes that this “is extraordinary in light of the generally nondescriptive character of the biblical narrative and as such is indicative of the importance accorded this event.”⁹ This is further emphasized by God’s declaration that it is not good for the man to be alone; this imperfection was rectified only when God finally created the woman to be the man’s equal partner at the climax of the story. By the end of chapter 2, the first couple lives in a harmonious relationship in which both were naked yet not ashamed (Gen 2:25). Therefore, the creation of man is mentioned first not because he was the most important element of the story; rather, he was mentioned first to emphasize the importance of the woman. In the same way, Gen 1 starts with the earth being formless and empty (Gen 1:2), but this does not automatically make it the focus of the narrative. Instead, it functions as the catalyst which drives the story to its climax, the Sabbath. In light of the literary structure, the whole purpose of the creation account is to make the earth into a place fit for life and where humans can dwell in perfect harmony with God. This is encompassed in the Sabbath rest.

What then is so important about the woman that she is the climax of Gen 2? Is it that the creator of humans has now created a human whose body can create other humans (Gen 4:1)? Even more so, Gen 3:15 and 3:20 reveal that the woman will give birth to a specific child who will crush the head of the serpent, the source of all evil; hence she will be “the bringer of the savior.” Because of this life-giving aspect of the woman, Eve (*ḥavvah* or *ḥayyah*¹⁰) is recognized as the mother of all living (*ḥay*), another Hebrew wordplay.

⁷Zdravko Stefanovic, “The Great Reversal: Thematic Links between Genesis 2 and 3,” *AUSS* 32, no. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 1994): 53.

⁸Jacques B. Doukhan, “The Literary Structure of the Genesis Creation Story” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1978), 45-47.

⁹Sarna, *Genesis*, 21.

¹⁰Sarna suggests Eve, *ḥavvah*, may be an archaic form of *ḥayyah*, “could mean ‘living thing,’ life personified” (Sarna, *Genesis*, 29).

Woman as Man's Helper—Defender, Ally, or Benefactor
(Genesis 2:18, 20, 22)

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make an *'ēzer* [ally, defender, benefactor] as his complement." So the LORD God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no *'ēzer* [ally, defender, benefactor] was found as his complement.¹¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. Then the LORD God made the rib He had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called "woman," for she was taken from man. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh. Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

A third argument sometimes used in support of male headship, or the hierarchical view, is that the woman was created to be a helpmate to the man, thus giving the woman an inferior function. Unlike in the English language and Western mindset, a helper in the biblical sense is more than just "Daddy's little helper." A simple word study of the Hebrew noun used for "helper" (*'ēzer*) shows that in every case in which this word has been used in the Pentateuch, apart from Gen 2, it always refers to God as the helper (Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26, 29). The English words defender, ally, or benefactor, may better describe the meaning of this Hebrew noun. In other words, just because God is our "helper" would not make God inferior to us. Thus, instead of viewing the woman as inferior and submissive to her husband, she should be considered an equal in every way. However, to prevent a reader from assuming that the woman is superior to the man since she is his ally (*'ēzer*), the author of the Eden Narrative states that she was to be the man's equal, corresponding to him (*kēnegdō*, "like" or "in front of" him—Gen 2:18, 20), "bones of my bones, flesh of my flesh" (Gen 2:23).¹² It is important to note that it is God who first names the female "woman" (*ishshā*, Gen 2:22). This, according to Jacques Doukhan, is further supported by the male, who uses a pairing of "divine passives" when celebrating his newly created equal—"this is called"

¹¹It is important to note that the creation of the animals in Genesis 2 takes place right after God declares that it is not good for the man to be alone (Gen 2:18). Thus, the creation and naming of the animals functions as the catalyst for the first male to also recognize this "not good" situation and the need for someone who he could recognize as his equal or counterpart.

¹²It is also interesting that the creation act of the woman itself (Gen 2:21b-22a) has the same number of Hebrew words as the creation act of the man (Gen 2:17), sixteen in each case. This may be an additional indicator that they should be considered equal.

(*lēzō 't yiqqārē*) and “has this been taken” (*lūqōhā-zzō 't*).¹³ Only by recognizing her as his counterpart, *'ishshā* (“woman”), is he able to understand himself as *'ish* (“man”)—a Hebrew wordplay emphasizing their togetherness. In this context, the Hebrew word for woman, *'ishshā*, may be translated best as “wife” or “mate.” The following observations can be made regarding the relationship between male and female in Gen 2: (1) woman is made to “complement,” be an equal, to man (2:18b); (2) woman is to be an ally, defender, and benefactor for the man (2:22)—that is, the Hebrew word *'ēzer* always refers to a stronger partner (e.g., God is a stronger ally, defender, and benefactor than humans); (3) man is not complete without an equal, an ally, defender, and benefactor (2:18, 20b); (4) woman, in contrast to the animals, was created from the same substance as the man, that is, from his rib (2:21-22); (5) woman was recognized by the man to be an equal, a counterpart—“flesh of my flesh, bones of my bones” (2:23); (6) man leaves both his father and mother when entering a relationship with a woman—that is, father and mother are viewed as a family unit with no hierarchical distinction implied (2:24);¹⁴ (7) man and woman unite into one flesh when starting a new family unit (2:24b)—that is, they function much like the plurality of the Godhead (Gen 1:26; Deut 5:6) and thus should be equal members of the unity, being made of the same substance and unified in mission and purpose; (8) both man and woman were naked but felt no shame, suggesting a shared moral purity (2:25).

From these observations, it may be seen that the emphases in Gen 2 are on the creation of the woman as the man’s equal, her role as his ally/defender/benefactor, and on the ensuing marriage.¹⁵ There are no indications that the man was considered superior to the woman; thus, as in Gen 1, there is no room for male headship or hierarchy in Gen 2. This is important since it shows that the creation of human beings is an egalitarian structure. The next question is, did the equality between the sexes continue after the Fall?

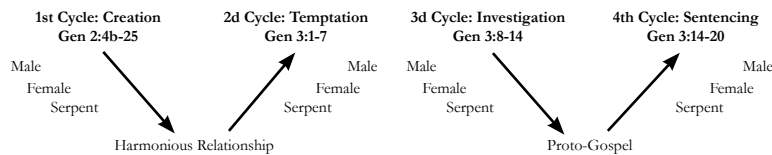
¹³Jacques Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978), 46-47.

¹⁴Since Adam did not have any parents, this should be understood as an anachronistic comment, explaining the origin of the marriage custom practiced at the time when the Eden Narrative was written down. This may indicate that the larger purpose of Gen 2-3 is to explain why the world is the way it is. If God created a perfect world, why is there so much evil? Why are people dying before their time, or of old age, or in childbirth? Why are women subjugated by the men, within their marriage and/or within the larger society? Why do humans have to work so hard for a living? Genesis 2-3 also reveals what God intends to do to solve the problems of evil.

¹⁵It is interesting to note that this dual emphasis in the two creation stories, Sabbath and family relationship, also appears in the Decalogue, in which these two “institutions” both appear as positive commandments—remember (Exod 20:8) and honor (Exod 20:12)—in contrast to the other eight which are worded as negative commandments—don’ts.

The Man Was Questioned First (Genesis 3)

A fourth argument sometimes used to support a male-headship or hierarchical view is that God questioned the man first after eating of the forbidden fruit, thereby suggesting that God viewed the man as the representative of the human race, even allowing him to speak on behalf of the woman. This argument ignores the importance of the literary structure of a text in underscoring the key message—that God will provide a solution to the problem of sin which had been introduced into the world through the rebellion of the first human couple. This literary structure starts in Gen 2, with the creation of the male, continues with the creation of the female, and ends in Gen 3:1 by introducing the serpent. The next cycle, the temptation, starts with the serpent, progresses to the fall of the female, and ends with the fall of the male. The third cycle starts with God questioning the male, then the female, and finally, God speaking to the serpent. The last cycle curses the serpent, makes predictions relating to the female, and finally, ends by the predictions relating to the male. The first complete cycle brings attention to the harmonious relationship between husband and wife (Gen 2:25), while the second cycle reveals the proto-gospel (Gen 3:15)—the focus of both these cycles would then be the female, completing God’s creation and the bringer of God’s salvation.



This complex structure would collapse, and the theological message would be lost, if the author did not start or end each cycle with the male. Thus, God starts questioning the male in order to highlight the salvation message through the “verdict” given to the woman.

He Will Rule over You—Predictive or Prescriptive?

Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. So the LORD God called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you? [*’ayyekkā*]”¹⁶

¹⁶This specific interrogative particle is used by God to ask a deeper question. Umberto Cassuto notes that God is asking: “Why are you there [hiding]? Is that where you should be? Come out and face me!” (*From Adam to Noah: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part 1* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989], 156). It may be of some importance

And he said, "I heard You in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid." Then He asked, "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" Then the man [the male] replied, "The woman You gave to be with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate." So the LORD God asked the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "It was the serpent. He deceived me, and I ate." (Gen 3:6-13).

It is important to note that God only cursed the serpent (Gen 3:14) and the earth (Gen 3:17) as a consequence of the first humans' rebellion of eating the forbidden fruit. God's words given to the first couple only describe the consequences they would now have to experience due to the disharmony which had entered God's creation. Before the Fall, the couple experienced a harmonious relationship in which they were both equal (Gen 2:23-25). Their rebellion destroyed this perfect unity and deception (Gen 3:6), and blame (Gen 3:12) entered their relationship; they found themselves naked (Gen 3:7) and afraid (Gen 3:10).

The consequences affecting primarily Adam were that the earth would be cursed due to his rebellion, and humans would no longer be able to enjoy freely of the blessings from the ground. Instead, they would have to labor in pain to receive food (Gen 3:17-19). Ever since, humans have tried to minimize the effect of this curse and make life easier for themselves.

The consequences affecting primarily the woman would bring her sorrow, toil, and pain. The childbearing that would bring salvation to humanity would also cause the woman great pain and sometimes death (e.g., Gen 35:18). The second part of the consequences of the woman's rebellion has caused much discussion: "Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you" (Gen 3:16). It suggests that Adam would rule over his wife. Instead of living in a harmonious relationship as intended by God at the creation, sin is the source for the subordination of the woman. Sin is the beginning of the hierarchical view and the subordination of the woman. The question is, were these words to the woman intended as a prediction or as a prescription, or were they something that God instituted as the ideal for marriage and male-female relations in a sinful world? One point most Bible believers would agree upon: God wants only what is best for people, even if they live in a sinful world. This begs the question, does male headship have a positive function in society, or would it be better to view submission of women as a manifestation of sin and we humans (especially followers of God) should instead strive for an egalitarian view which was the ideal presented before Adam and Eve rebelled against God?¹⁷ Is there any empirical support from the behavioral

that this particle happened to also be the opening word of Lamentations (Lam 1:1), suggesting that God may also have expressed some grief when calling out for the humans.

¹⁷The reader also needs to consider the reach of this statement. Should God's word be understood within the marriage framework, or should it be read more broadly as a reference to the relationship between the sexes? It could be argued that in practice it does not make much difference, since the marriage relationship often reflects the

and social sciences indicating that the male headship model has efficacy? If not, scholars are cautioned against recommending an interpersonal model that may be highly problematic, and could potentially place both men and woman at risk.

Genesis 3 concludes with God clothing both Adam and Eve in tunics (*kuttōnet*—that is, priestly garments), suggesting that both the male and the female were to have a priestly role in the now sinful world (Gen 3:21). The Hebrew word for “tunic” is a technical term which always refers to the priestly garments in which God instructed priests to be clothed. However, in this verse this priestly role is emphasized even more, since it is God himself who does the act of clothing. This point becomes even stronger when this verse is read in its proper sanctuary context—the Garden of Eden as the archetypal sanctuary.¹⁸ Thus, if priestly garments are mentioned in relation to the sanctuary and God is clothing or instructs the clothing of the person, this person is always a priest (Exod 28–29; 39–40; Lev 8:5–13). Both Adam and Eve served in the archetypal sanctuary as priests (Gen 2:15–18).¹⁹

The equality between the sexes is also emphasized after the Fall, and several observations can be made from the text in support of this view: (1) both were tempted regarding the forbidden, fruit and both broke God’s commandment (3:6); (2) both were in it together when they ate the fruit (the narrative emphasizes the togetherness of their fall, noting that “she also gave some [fruit] to her husband, who was with her” [3:6]); (3) both had their eyes opened and became aware that they were naked, suggesting that both experienced the consequences for their moral choice (3:7); (4) both felt a need to cover themselves (3:7); (5) both were afraid and hid in the garden when they heard God walking in the garden (3:8); (6) both were questioned and held responsible for their actions, indicating that God speaks directly to both of them and both have access to God (3:9–13); (7) both were affected in the same way by their decision to break the commandment; they started to pass the blame onto someone else (3:12–13) (it could be argued that Adam speaks first, not necessarily because he was in charge, but rather because he wanted his story, in which he blames the woman, to be heard first and influence the outcome); (8) both would experience gender-specific consequences for their actions—consequences affecting primarily the woman (3:16) and the man (3:17–19); (9) both would ultimately suffer death (3:19); (10) both received new clothes from God (3:21), tunics made of skin rather than the loin cloths

larger society. If the larger society is egalitarian, any marriage within that society would be more likely to also be egalitarian. If, on the other hand, there is a strong sense that a marriage should be hierarchical, it is also very likely that the larger society would become more hierarchical.

¹⁸Greg K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 66–80; John H. Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, Library of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 109–110.

¹⁹Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch*, 100–101.

they had made for themselves of sewed fig leaves; (11) both “became [or were] like God, knowing good and evil” (3:22); and (12) both received the same punishment, expulsion from the Garden without access to the Tree of Life (3:23-24).

The emphasis in Gen 3 is that both the man and the woman sinned, both were affected by their choice, and both were expelled and had to die outside the Garden. The order of God’s questioning and sentencing serves as a part of the literary structure which has the proto-gospel (Gen 3:15) as its chiasmic climax (serpent-woman-man [Gen 3:1-7]; man-woman-serpent [Gen 3:10-14]; serpent-woman-man [Gen 3:14-19]), and does not suggest a male headship or hierarchy. Thus, there is no indication in Gen 3 that only the woman should be blamed or held more responsible for the Fall. This understanding, however, changed during the Second Temple Period.

It Was the Woman’s Fault—She Gave It to Me

The negative view of women, with relation to the Eden Narrative, seems to have developed in the period between the Old and the New Testaments when several extrabiblical books, known as the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, were written.²⁰ Many of these books expand, comment upon, and rewrite the biblical account and present an early indication of how biblical passages were read and understood at the time of the New Testament, including the Eden Narrative (Gen 2–3) and the “Sons of God and the Daughters of Men” passage in Gen 6.²¹ The *Life of Adam and Eve*, although there is no scholarly consensus regarding dating and provenance of this book, is traditionally believed to have been written by a Palestinian Jew in Hebrew or possibly in Greek around the Common Era (100 B.C.E.–200 C.E.), and the Christian interpolations (additions) were added by the Christian community who valued and safeguarded this book over the following centuries.²² This

²⁰This negative view was not unique to the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha, but is also found in Philo, Josephus, and early rabbinic literature. However, the Jewish view of this time period was not any worse than what appears in Greek literature and in early Christian literature. See Payne, *Man and Woman One in Christ*, 31-40.

²¹The Second Temple Period texts do not present a consensus view regarding when the “Fall” of humankind happened. The prominent view considers Gen 2–3, “Eve’s transgression,” as a description of how sin came to dominate the world (e.g. *Jubilee* 3:17-35; *Life of Adam and Eve* 18:1; *Sirach* 25:24), while the minority tradition considers Gen 6, where women have sex with angels, as the cause (e.g., *1 Enoch* 6-9). Whereas *1 Enoch* 6:1-4 mentions that the fallen angels desired and swore an oath that they would choose human wives for themselves, the *Testament of Ruben* makes the women the cause for their desire, since they seduce them, thus becoming the sexual predators, causing the angels to fall (*T. Reu.* 5:6). The New Testament follows the first tradition, although later Christian interpreters, as noted by Susan L. Greiner (“Did Eve Fall or Was She Pushed?” *BR* 15, no. 4 [Aug 1999]: 16-23, 50-51) combined the two and started to view the “Fall” and sin as having to do with sexuality (“original sin”).

²²For a discussion on the providence and dating of the book, see: Gary

book deals specifically with the Eden Narrative and expands upon and explains in more detail the “blessings” and “curses” mentioned in Gen 3. In addition, it inserts a lengthy narrative section in the narrative gap between Gen 3:24 and Gen 4. Reading this expansion in light of the Eden narrative, it becomes apparent that several new elements have been added to the story.

It is interesting to note the explanation given to Gen 3:16 regarding the judgment God gave to the woman due to her transgression in the *Apocalypse of Moses* 25:1-4 (the Greek version of the text). The author views the second half of Gen 3:16 in light of the first half, thereby understanding the whole verse as related to childbirth. Thus, the desire experienced by the woman is her sexual desire (considered sinful) for her husband, even though it ultimately causes her pain and suffering and even the possibility of death. Her husband, on the other hand, will rule over her. Like Gen 3:16, this text is not clear either as to whether the “ruling over you” is a part of God’s “punishment” for her transgression or a natural consequence of just living in a sinful world.

Genesis 3:16

¹⁶He said to the woman:

I will intensify your labor pains; you will bear children in anguish.

Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you.

Apocalypse of Moses 25:1-4

¹And the Lord turned to me and said:

“Since you have hearkened to the serpent, and transgressed my commandment, you shall suffer torments and intolerable pains; you shall bear children in much trembling and in one hour you shall come to the birth, and lose your life, from your sore trouble and anguish. But you shall confess and say: “Lord, Lord, save me, and I will turn no more to the sin of the flesh.” [But even another time you shall so turn.] And on this account, from your own words I will judge you, by reason of the enmity which the enemy has planted in you. And you shall return again to your husband and he will rule over you.”

A. Anderson, “Life of Adam and Eve,” OB 2:1332-1333; Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 49; M. D. Johnson, “Life of Adam and Eve: A New Translation and Introduction,” OTP 2:252; J. Levison, “Adam and Eve, Literature Concerning,” (DNTB, 4-5).

Although the book was probably composed in Hebrew or perhaps Greek, it only survived through its various translations (Latin [by the name, “*Vita*”], Armenian, Georgian, and Slavonic), and the current Greek form (by the name, “*Apocalypse of Moses*”). These translations and textual variations of the book reflect how the Adam and Eve tradition developed independently during the Christian Era. These five textual traditions are titled “The Books of Adam and Eve.” For a synopsis of these books, see Gary A. Anderson and Michael E. Stone, eds. *A Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve*, 2d ed., SBLJL 17 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999).

The Latin version of the text, the *Vita*, proposes that Satan rebelled against God because he would not accept God's creation hierarchy in which humans were placed above the angels (*Vita* 13:2–14:1), as suggested by Ps 8:5 (v. 6 in MT).²³ It was due to Satan's expulsion from heaven, caused by his refusal to accept humans' elevated position, that he sought revenge against Adam and Eve by influencing them to break God's commandment (*Vita* 13:2-16:1). The *Apocalypse of Moses* also reveals that it was Satan who spoke through the serpent when Eve was tempted, explaining how a serpent was able to speak in the first place: "The Devil said to him [the Serpent]: 'Fear not, only be my vessel and I will speak through your mouth words to deceive them'" (*Apoc. Mos.* 16:4b). As soon as Satan with the help of the serpent had successfully tempted Eve, she was used by Satan to deceive Adam: "For, when he [Adam] came, I opened my mouth and the Devil was speaking, and I began to exhort him" (*Apoc. Mos.* 21:3). The text places the whole blame for the fall on Eve through Adam's words: "And Adam said to Eve: 'O Eve, what have you done to us? You have brought great wrath upon us which will rule over our entire race'" (*Apoc. Mos.* 14:2); "And to me [Eve] he said, 'O wicked woman! What have you done to us? You have deprived me of the glory of God'" (*Apoc. Mos.* 21:6). As the *Vita* concludes: "What you have done will be passed on to your children after my death" (*Vita* 44:2).

Topic	Gen 3	Life of Adam and Eve	Pericope
Satan's explanation for why he tempted humans		11:1-17:2 (not in Gr.)	4-5
Temptation of the serpent	3:1	15:1-16:4	17-18
Temptation of Eve	3:1-6a	17:1-20:5	19-22
Temptation of Adam	3:6b-7	21:1-6	23
God's investigation	3:8	22:1-4	24
God questions Adam	3:9-11	23:1-3	
Adam blames Eve	3:12	23:4a	
Eve blames serpent	3:13	23:4b-5	25
God gives sentence to Adam	3:17-19	24:1-4	
God gives sentence to Eve	3:16	25:1-4	
God gives sentence to serpent	3:14-15	26:1-4	26-27
Adam and Eve expelled from Garden	3:22-24	27:1-29:6	
Life outside the Garden	4:1-5:5	Remaining sections	

²³The Hebrew text reads: *wattēhassērēhū mmē'at mē'ēlōhīm wēkābōd wēhādār iē'attērēhū*—"You made him little less than God and crowned him with glory and honor," while most English translations follows the Septuagint, which has amended the texts and has replaced "God" with "the angel," placing humans below the angels as opposed to God (ἡλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχὺ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους δόξης).

Following is a list of changes and additions which have been added to the Eden Narrative by the *Life of Adam and Eve*: (1) Satan sought to revenge himself on the humans (*Vita* 13:2-16:1); (2) Adam seems to be the representative of the human race and the head of the family, which is suggested by Satan's ultimate goal of making Adam break God's commandment (21:1-6); (3) the serpent is possessed by Satan in order to tempt Eve (15:1-16:4); (4) Eve is possessed by Satan in order to tempt Adam (17:1-20:5); (5) Eve was alone when tempted by the serpent/Satan (7:2); (6) Eve had to promise/swear that she would give the fruit to Adam after she had eaten of it (19:1-3); (7) the serpent argued that Eve had to share the fruit with Adam so she would not be ranked higher than him after she had eaten the fruit (19:1-3),²⁴ suggesting, in contrast to the biblical account, that hierarchy was a part of the relationship between Adam and Eve; (8) the fruit is considered "the poison of his [Satan's] wickedness, which is (the sense of) desire, which is itself the beginning of every sin (19:3);²⁵ (9) Eve became naked first, thus experiencing the consequences of sin even before deceiving Adam (20:1, 4-5); (10) Eve covered her nakedness before she came to Adam to tempt him (20:4-5); (11) Eve receives the blame for the Fall (14:1; 21:3, 6; 22:3 [*Vita* 44:2]); (12) it was Eve who told Adam to blame her for the Fall if God became angry after Adam ate the fruit (Ge. [44](21):4b; Gr. 23:4); (13) the consequences of Eve's sin would affect the whole of humanity, thus the idea of "inherent sin" or "fallen nature" (14:2; *Vita* 44:2); (14) Adam did not eat freely, but Eve betrayed him, that is, he was beguiled by Eve, who wittingly made him eat of the forbidden fruit (21:1-6); (15) before Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, they were clothed in light, but after the fall the glory of God disappeared (20:1-2; 21:6) and they found themselves naked (20:1, 4-5; 21:5);²⁶ (16) the fall receives a sexual connotation—"Sin of the Flesh" (25:1-4); and (17) the complex literary structure of Gen 2-3 has collapsed, thus emphasizing Adam's elevated role by "sacrificing" the salvation aspect of the structure (22:1-26:4 | Gen 3:8-19).

²⁴The Armenian and Georgian translation adds, in the words of Satan, that if Eve would not give Adam the fruit: "you [she] will become prideful and become jealous of Adam and you will not make him eat of it, and he will be like an animal before you [her], as you [Eve] were before God, because God was jealous of you" (Ge. [44](19):1c). Thus, Satan argues that Eve would be ranked higher than Adam if she did not also give Adam the fruit to eat. It should also be noted that only Adam (14:1 [not in Greek]) and later Seth (Ar./Ge. 23[3]:2b; Gr.12:1-2; La. 39:1-2; Ge./Ar. 39[12]:1-2; Sl. 11-15.12) carry the title "Image of God," and not Eve, suggesting that both Adam and later Seth were ranked higher than Eve.

²⁵The Armenian translation explains that this "sin" is a reference to the desire of sins, harlotries, adulteries, and greed (Ar.[44](19):3).

²⁶The Targum Pseudo Jonathan on the Pentateuch also has this addition to the Eden Narrative, it states: "And the eyes of both were enlightened, and they knew that they were naked, divested of the purple robe in which they had been created. And they saw the sight of their shame, and sewed to themselves the leaves of figs, and made to them cinctures" (Gen 3:7, PJE).

The Latin version adds a few more details (*Vita* 3:2b; 35:2): (1) Eve takes full responsibility for the Fall; (2) Adam is dying because of her sin; (3) Adam is considered innocent; and (4) Eve alone introduced mortality to the world.

Considering the additional elements appearing in this list, it becomes apparent that many of these proposals became a part of the traditional reading of the Eden Narrative. Although the biblical text emphasizes the equality between the sexes, the view presented in this pseudepigraphical text—that Eve was to be blamed for the original sin and that Adam, the man, was to be the representative of humanity, which is why Adam was the ultimate prize for Satan—became the accepted understanding of the Genesis creation accounts. Greiner concludes:

By blending the original Genesis account with the noncanonical seduction stories, later authors and artists turned sex into a sin and Eve into a sexual temptress, the ancestress of witchery, the root of evil and the cause of the Fall. As almost any Renaissance painting of Eve will confirm, the most familiar portrait of Eve is not the image of the first woman of the Hebrew Bible, but the corrupted figure from the pseudepigrapha.²⁷

Conclusion

This article investigated the type of relationship the biblical creation account promotes between man and woman, both before and after the Fall. The pre-Fall emphasis is on unity and equality, an egalitarian view between the sexes, leaving no room for male headship or hierarchy. Genesis 1 presents both sexes as being created in God's image and likeness and adds that they were given the same task, to rule over animals and the earth. This egalitarian creation order is also the emphasis of Gen 2 in which the woman serves as the climax and the main emphasis in the same way the Sabbath serves as the climax of Gen 1. This article also noted that Gen 2 presents the male and the female as equal partners, the woman being the ally, defender, and benefactor of the man, both fulfilling the same duty for God, to "guard and protect" the Garden.

This harmonious relationship between the man and the woman, or husband and wife, changed due to the Fall. It seems as far as God was concerned, the equality continued, since he questioned them both and held them both responsible for their transgression. He also clothed them both in priestly garments, indicating they were both to continue their joint priestly duties even after the Fall. It is in light of this disharmony caused by sin that God's words to the woman should be considered: "he will rule over you." Thus, male headship and female submission were a result of the Fall. This being the case, the hierarchical view should not be considered the ideal and be upheld as God's original plan, but rather, the symptom of the disharmony caused by sin. Hence, God's people should be aiming toward and working for full equality between the sexes, to minimize the consequences of sin. The hierarchical, reading combined with a negative view of the woman, in which she carries the full responsibility for the Fall and is blamed for the original sin,

²⁷Greiner, "Did Eve Fall or Was She Pushed?," 50-51.

is not the biblical account. On the contrary, it developed during the Second Temple period and became the filter later interpreters used when reading the Eden Narrative.

FIGURE 1

Relationship Between Man and Woman: Genesis 1–3 (Part 1)

Pre-Fall
<p>Gen 1:26-29</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human = male + female = God's image and likeness • To rule (<i>rādā</i>) over God's creation • God's commandment given to both ➔ Equality between male and female ➔ God gave the same role to both male and female
<p>Gen 2:7 Creation of male (<i>yāšar</i> = form/fashion) 16 words Gen 2:21b-22a Creation of female (<i>bānā</i> = build) 16 words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Equally important, since the same number of words. ➔ Creation of female has the same position in the 2nd creation story as the Sabbath holds in the 1st. • Not good ➔ good/completeness (naked) - Gen 2:23-25 • Chaos ➔ Sabbath - Gen 2:1-3 <p>Gen 2:18 20, 23, 24 - Woman, an equal to man</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I will make 'a helper' <u>who is like him/as his counterpart</u>" - ²<i>e'ēseh-llō 'ēzer kēnegdō</i> • "but for man was not found 'a helper' <u>who was like him</u>" - <i>ūlē'ādām lō²-māšā² 'ēzer kēnegdō</i> • "Bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" - <i>ešem mē'āšmay ūbāsār mibbēsārī</i> <p>➔ "For this (<i>lēzō 't</i>) is called woman (<i>iššā</i>) because from man (<i>iš</i>) has this (<i>zō 't</i>) been taken."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The man was not the first to call her "woman." • The designation "woman" comes from God (Gen 2:22). • Jacques Doukhan notes that Gen 2:23 contains a pairing of "divine passives" - lends further support to God naming the woman: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "this is called (<i>lēzō 't yiqqārē</i>' - v: niph. imp. 3rd m.sg.) • "has this been taken" (<i>lūqōḥā-zzō 't</i> - v: qal. pass. perf. f.sg.) • Leave (<i>āzab</i> ➔ cleave (<i>dābaq</i>) ➔ become one flesh (<i>wēhāyū lēbāsār 'ehād</i>).
<p>Gen 2:15-18 - God-given role for humans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This role given to both man and woman ("the helper")? • <i>'abad /šāmar</i> - "to work and watch" or "to do service [in the law], and to keep its commandments ➔ a priest and not just a gardener." <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See, Sailhamer, <i>The Pentateuch</i>, 100-101. • The Garden of Eden: The first archetypical temple
Gen 3:6 - The Fall

FIGURE 2

Relationship Between Man and Woman: Genesis 1–3 (Part 2)

Post-Fall
<p>Gen 3:16—Should this verse be understood as:</p> <p>Egalitarian vs. Hierarchical Within Marriage vs. General Relationship Prescriptive vs. Prediction</p>
<p>Gen 3:16-21 - God’s “curse” on woman and man</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The harmonious relationship between man and woman before the Fall (Gen 2:23-25) was destroyed by accusations (Gen 3:12) and deception (Gen 3:6) and they found themselves naked (Gen 3:7) and became afraid (Gen 3:10). • It should be noted that neither the woman nor the man are cursed by God. However, God did curse the serpent/Satan (Gen 3:14) and the ground (Gen 3:17). <p>Gen 3:16 - Consequences affecting primarily the WOMAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoped for something good from the tree (<i>‘ēṣ</i>) but would instead receive sorrow, toil, pain (<i>‘āṣab</i>). • Childbearing, which will bring salvation (Gen 3:15), will at the same time be painful. • However, her “desire” will be for her husband and he will “rule over” her. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They were to enjoy the blessing of procreation → pain, sorrow, toil • They were supposed to live in a harmonious relationship → subordination of the woman. → God’s blessings were tainted by the introduction of sin. <p>Gen 3:17-21 - Consequences affecting primarily the MAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tree (<i>‘ēṣ</i>) also affected the man - he would no longer be able to enjoy freely of the blessings from the ground, but would instead have to labor in pain (<i>‘āṣab- ‘iṣṣābôn</i>) to receive food. • The man names his wife, Eve (<i>ḥavvah</i>), since she will be the mother of all living (<i>ḥay</i>).
<p>Gen 3:21 - God clothed them in tunics (priestly garments)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>kuttonet</i> - technical term, referring to the priestly garments when God is the subject of the clothing (Sailhamer, <i>The Pentateuch</i>, 109-110). • They continued in their roles as priests. • They were expelled from the sanctuary - The Garden of Eden. • They brought the <i>proto-evangelium</i> to the world.