

The Bible in Context Ep 14: Fall and Storm Gen 3 Part 1

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Welcome back to the Bible in Context.

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This time it's just gonna be me, Nate's not gonna be with us. He may not be either next week, but we're looking forward to getting him back on. But we're gonna keep on trucking and moving to chapter three. Now that last week we finally finished with chapter two. Today what we're really gonna hit hard on is the snake and some comparisons between the snake and the humans and just kind of set up the groundwork for how the snake's deceptions and the curses that follow play out throughout this chapter.

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Now the first thing I think that's really cool for us to note is a wordplay that begins chapter three and actually connects chapter two to chapter three. So in the last verse of chapter two, we read that the humans are naked. They are a room. In the next verse, chapter three verse one, we're introduced to the snake who is a room. He is crafty. So there's this little wordplay here that is immediately setting the humans in comparison with the serpent.

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Now, let me say a couple things about this word, a room. The word translated, crafty. Crafty is a really good translation here. In the book of Proverbs, the word a room is used a lot to refer to...

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someone who is more wise or shrewd or cunning. It has more positive connotations, but throughout the rest of the narrative books of the Bible or the Old Testament, that word has negative connotations. It means something more along the lines of crafty or clever in a devious way.

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So the humans are Arom, they're naked, the serpent is Arom, he is crafty, and he uses his craftiness to deceive the humans by the end of this chapter into seeking wisdom apart from Yahweh. And I can't help but wonder if what the author is trying to do here is say, yeah, by the end of the story, the humans go from Arom to Arom in a way, just like the serpent. And then the serpent becomes Aror, which is cursed.

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So there's another word looped into this wordplay. The humans go from a roam to a room, and the serpent goes from a room to a roar. So just a cool little wordplay going on in this chapter. It's not gonna dramatically change how you read the story, but it kinda supports the story and just

makes it a little more fun to read if you know this is going on in the background. Now, the serpent himself,

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The word that is translated serpent here is the word nahash. And this is a really cool word because it shows up in some really key places and we've already looked a little bit at the tannin, the leviathan, the sea monster. And this is one of those words that get looped in to that same image, that same enemy of Yahweh, serpentine.

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sea monster that is seen throughout the biblical narrative. And this comparison gets explicitly drawn in Isaiah 27.1. And I know we've read this verse before on the podcast, but I think it's worth bringing up again just to solidify the comparison here between Leviathan and Nahash. So it says, In that day, Yahweh, with his hard and great and strong sword, will punish Leviathan, the fleeing Nahash, Leviathan, the twisting Nahash.

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the dragon that is in the sea. So here Isaiah very clearly links the dragon and Leviathan and the Nahash, the serpent, from Genesis 3 or at least that class of creature. So through that passage alone we see how this serpent gets looped into the same imagery. And then in Exodus we actually see in Exodus 4 and Exodus 7 Moses's and Aaron's staffs

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get changed into serpentine creatures. Now Aaron's staff gets changed into a tannin, a sea monster that we saw in Genesis 1. Moses' staff gets changed into a nahash. Now it could be here that the biblical author is trying to say each of Aaron's and Moses' staff got changed into two different species of serpents, but it could be just that it's using different language to describe a very similar creature.

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Both Moses' staff and Aaron's staff became these chaos creatures whom Moses and Aaron were able to control by Yahweh's power. Now later on in the biblical narrative, in 1 Samuel, the word Nahash shows up more. There's actually a really good book called The Serpent in Samuel that runs through how the word Nahash is used throughout the book to highlight this kind of chaos creature enemy of Yahweh theme.

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Yahweh's chosen king is always set up to defeat this serpent, or is supposed to at least. In 1 Samuel 11, Saul, he goes out and has to defeat King Nahash. So right there we have this new chosen king defeating Nahash, which is piggybacking off of the promise made by Yahweh in Genesis 3 about the seed of the woman who will crush the serpent's head. Now when you get to 1 Samuel 17, that's...

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David and Goliath, Goliath actually gets compared to the serpent through a wordplay. So in Hebrew, the word bronze is nahoshet and can be used as a wordplay with nahosh because it's so similar. And what happens in that passage is the word nahoshet gets applied to Goliath four times, talking about his bronze armor, his bronze helmet, and just all of his weapons and armor that he's wearing.

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And so it draws this strong connection between Goliath and the Nahash, as well as describing his armor as scaly. So kind of that serpentine imagery, just trying to drive home this point that Goliath is like the seat of the serpent, facing off against David, this new seat of the woman.

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Then, interestingly, in that same chapter, this is after Saul has started to go downhill and he starts to become the bad guy of the story. Whenever David tries on Saul's armor, we're told that Saul's armor is nahoshet, it's bronze. So this serpentine imagery gets applied to Saul as well. Now that's a bit of a tangent, but I wanted to just show that this word, nahosh, throughout the Bible bears these connotations of

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kind of the chaos creature, the anti-Yahweh, the enemy of Yahweh sea monster that we've already seen throughout the biblical narrative in some of our earlier episodes. And again, from some of our earlier episodes, we should remember that this snake serpentine chaos creature imagery was already in the mind of the ancient Near Eastern person. This wasn't something that the...

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original readers of the book of Genesis read and were like, oh hey, who's this snake? I guess we'll find out later. They were reading it and when they saw this snake, they most likely knew this is a spiritual being that is an enemy of Yahweh. This is the Leviathan, the sea monster, not just some random snake. So we need to keep in mind that when we read this story, the Nahash, this talking snake, I mean, it's talking, that's significant.

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spiritual being that is a rebel to Yahweh that has been put into this serpentine sea monster motif through the word serpent. He's been dressed as a serpent in this story. Now what is it that he wants to do? Well, he wants to get the humans to rebel. And to do that he gets them to take wisdom apart from Yahweh. We talked about this a little bit last time when we talked about the two trees of the garden how

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the tree of the knowledge of good and bad is, if you had to put a label on it, it represents wisdom. And so, it's not that wisdom is a bad thing. King Solomon actually asks for wisdom in terms of the knowledge of good and evil, or the knowledge of good and bad, later in the biblical narrative, and Yahweh happily gives it and rewards Solomon for his request.

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of good and bad from Yahweh. That is not what the serpent is trying to get Adam and Eve to do. He wants them to take it on their own terms and fail the test placed before them. The serpent, the Nahash, comes to the woman and just places a little seed of doubt in her with a question. Rather than focusing on the provision in the way in which things are to properly function, the snake raises a question about the boundaries.

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that Yahweh has put in place so that that order can be maintained, so that goodness continue to thrive. And then questions whether or not that boundary is there for the benefit and the function of humanity or for the deliberate limitation and in a sense to toy with humanity and keep them to be to keep them as less than what they could be.

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He says, if you eat this fruit, then you'll become like Elohim, like God, knowing good and evil. I do think that word Elohim there, the proper translation is singular God, referring to Yahweh, even though we talked about the word Elohim can be plural or singular. But if they eat this fruit, they'll become like Him, like Yahweh, knowing good and bad. And I think that's another pointer to the fact that to know good and bad is pointing to wisdom.

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nefarious metaphysical evil because that's not applied to Yahweh. Yahweh has the wisdom for ruling and ordering all things and that's what the snake is saying they will be able to do to rule the world with their own wisdom instead of Yahweh's wisdom if they take from this tree. So the woman, she begins to play with these doubts and let them manifest into really belief in these doubts and desire. And then you'll see that in chapter 3 verse 6.

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she saw that the tree was good and a delight to the eyes and that it was desired to make one wise and then she took and ate and then gave some to her husband. So in this you'll see a few keywords that are going to show up quite a few times throughout Genesis. You'll see that she saw that it was good, she took, and then gave. Now that's going to turn into a

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a little word motif that goes throughout the rest of the book of Genesis to show that someone is having a fall-like moment. We'll talk about this when we get there more, but the next time we see this is in Genesis 6 where the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were good and they took for themselves. And sometimes that word good gets translated in different ways, but if you read ahead, just keep your eyes peeled for that little...

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sentence structure, or those words grouped together, because it's playing on this failure motif, this rebellion motif. Now after this, their eyes were opened, they realized that they were a room,

they realized they were naked instead of being wise, and sewed fig leaves together to make loin cloths. Now I think it's worth making a brief mention about these fig leaves, because if you look at what commentators have to say about these fig leaves...

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there's not really a very clear reason for the use of fig leaves other than some commentaries will mention that it was one of the more broad leaves in this area and so maybe it made sense for them to use these because they would cover a wider surface area and you have to sew less together to make clothes. That's possible. I think that the author is usually so intentional with the things that he puts into the narrative.

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that there might be something more to it. And I think it has to do with actually the next narrative with Cain and his offering. And so I just wanna mention this really quickly without diving too far into Genesis 4. In Genesis 4, Cain offers vegetables. He offers vegetation as an offering to Yahweh. We'll talk more about that offering and what it is, why it's significant that he used vegetables and

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Cain used a lamb for a blood offering, but the long and short for now is that he should have used a lamb. He should have made a blood offering, but he used insufficient vegetation, vegetables. And here we'll see at the end of this chapter, Yahweh is going to clothe them in the skins of animals. This is the first slaughtered animals in the Bible. We're not told if it's a sacrifice or not, but in either way, it's interesting that what

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is fitting is that which comes from the death of an animal, but first, vegetation is used. So there may be just this little theme in the first couple chapters of Genesis of the requirement of animals, but humans using vegetation to cover their wrongs before Yahweh provides for them. That may not be the case, but I think it makes sense, and I think it makes a little more sense.

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than just the author mentioning the fig leaves because they would cover a large surface area. As far as the narrative is concerned, that's not really a plot point in this story. So we've already gotten through the serpent and his identity. We've gotten through the wordplay between the human's nakedness and the serpent's craftiness and the serpent's goal in trying to deceive humanity into taking wisdom for themselves. And now we're to the point where

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Humanity has insufficiently covered themselves after their sin, and now they hear the sound of Yahweh walking in the garden. And this is in Genesis 3, 8, where it reads, and they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord. And it goes on. There's a scholar named Jeffrey Niehaus who in an article called In the Wind of the Storm,

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looks at the words in this first actually proposes basically a proposes a retranslation of this first i think is very likely more correct and it's it's helpful to take some time to actually look at what is behind this first so the first thing i want to point out here is they heard the sound of the hallway walking in the garden that word sound it it doesn't sound it's the heber word cool it can mean sound it can mean voice or it can mean thunder

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So this word can be accurately translated as thunder, and it is used that way in other places in the Hebrew Bible. Now, voice, sound, and thunder are all good translations of this word, so we'll see why I think thunder is the best as we continue through this verse. Now the next thing I think we should look at is they heard the Lord God walking, they heard Yahweh walking in the garden. This word denotes sort of a to and fro, back and forth, walking throughout something.

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kind of walking around or more accurate translation maybe be just to say that they're going throughout because this word the root of the word can also mean to go it can be used to command someone to go at times and you know i think at the end of this first it'll be a little more clear as to why it's significant that yalway is not just walking in the garden but he is going throughout the garden now the next word we should look at is the word in the cool of the day so

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If you're reading an ESV, you might have a little footnote there that says literally it means wind. And yes, the word behind cool here is ruach. Now I don't know where we got the idea of the cool of the day. Maybe it came because, you know, if the ruach can mean spirit, breath, and wind, it must mean a windy part of the day, which must mean that it's a cooler part of the day. I'm not really sure. I'm sure someone has done the work to see what the history of translation is here.

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and show why it was translated as cool. I was a little bit surprised that even the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament from before Jesus' time, they kind of punted with this as well and they just said that Yahweh was walking around in the evening. So I don't know if they knew what to do with this either. But literally, he was walking around in the wind or the ruach, the spirit, something along those lines. We've already talked about ruach a little bit.

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on this podcast so hopefully you're familiar with the meanings of that term as spirit, breath, and wind. And the last term that I think we need to look at in this verse is the day. He was walking around in the wind of the day. So the Hebrew word behind day is the word yom. Now, Nahaus in his article has shown that there is a more rarely used word that has the same spelling that can mean storm.

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and this is seen, he shows how this is used in other related languages as well. But he shows that it's possible here to translate this word day as the word storm. Now taking together all these considerations we talked about with the word sound, the word walking, the word wind, and the word day, here's what our translation would be. And they heard the thunder of Yahweh God going throughout the garden to the wind of the storm, or in the wind of the storm.

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In this translation, it's easy to see that this is Yahweh appearing in a storm. This is a storm theophany, a storm appearance of God. Now is there anywhere else inside the Torah where Yahweh appears as a storm? And particularly on a mountain. If you're thinking of Sinai, that's right. So Israel comes out of this Exodus and we've already looked at how creation is in Exodus. So they come out.

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and meet with Yahweh in a storm on a mountain. Israel at Sinai, Adam and Eve at the Garden of Eden. So immediately this verse is drawing connections to future post-Exodus theophanies of Yahweh and tying these passages together thematically. And that to me suggests that this translation makes a lot more sense, along with the fact that some of these words, it's obvious that both modern and ancient translators didn't really know what to do with them.

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But I think our translation here makes sense of all the words in this verse. So here we have after Adam and Eve have fallen, they have looked for wisdom outside of Yahweh. He appears to them in a storm on his mountain dwelling, just like to Israel after their exodus and in which he is seen. He is seen in that same storm still present on Sinai after their fall with the golden calf.

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So there's a whole lot of thematic links between these passages and this storm theophany, just another one of these thematic links. So let's do one more quick recap of where we have been. We have the serpent who was crafty, who was cunning and came and deceived the woman into doubting Yahweh's provision. She questions whether or not God is out to harm and hinder them, hinder humanity instead of caring for them.

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sees that the fruit on the tree is good and she takes it and she gives it. And that phrase, to see that something is good, to take, and to give is going to be something we see throughout the book of Genesis to denote rebellion. So after this rebellion, they hear Yahweh coming to them in a storm theophany. And then he's going to begin to address the woman, the man, and the serpent in the next passage about what has just happened. And we'll look at those speeches next time. Thanks for listening.