

What the Bible Is Not Confused About: Creation & Worldbuilding.

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Methodological Framework

In this series, What the Bible Is Not Confused About, we begin by letting the Torah teach us how to read the world it is building. Before we decide what a passage must mean, before we import the answers we have inherited, and before we rush to resolve a difficulty, we ask a more basic question:

What assumptions does the text itself seem to make?

This does not mean that every question will disappear or that every tension will be easily solved. It means that we begin by taking seriously the patterns the Torah places in front of us. If the text repeats something, we notice it. If the text changes its language, we ask why. If a detail appears strange to us but ordinary to the characters, we ask what kind of world the narrative is assuming.

The guiding question is not simply, “Can we explain this difficulty?” The better question is: if we provisionally accept the premise the Torah seems to be offering, does the broader story gain clarity?

Does that assumption help later passages make more sense?

Does it reveal patterns we might otherwise miss?

Does it allow the narrative to unfold with greater coherence from beginning to end?

This is especially important in the opening chapters of Genesis, because Genesis is not only telling us that the world was created. It is introducing the reader to the kind of world the Torah will continue to inhabit. Creation is not merely background. It establishes categories, relationships, patterns, and expectations that later stories will keep using.

So our first task is not to explain Genesis 1 from the outside. Our first task is to listen to it from the inside.

Genesis 1:1-7

(1) When God began to create heaven and earth— ... (3) **God said**, “Let there be light”; and there was light. (4) **God saw** that the light was good, and **God separated** the light from the darkness. (5) **God called** the light Day—and called the darkness Night. ... (6) **God said**, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water.” (7) **God made** the expanse, and it separated the water that was below the expanse from the water that was above the expanse...

בראשית א':א-ז'

(א) בְּרָאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת
הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ: (ג) וַיֹּאמֶר
אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי-אוֹר: (ד)
וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאוֹר כִּי-טוֹב
וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין
הַחֹשֶׁךְ: (ה) וַיִּקְרָא
אֱלֹהִים | לְאוֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא
לַיְלָה... (ו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי
רְקִיעַ בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּיִם וַיְהִי מִבְּדִיל
בֵּין מַיִם לְמַיִם: (ז) וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים
אֶת-הַרְקִיעַ וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם
אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לְרְקִיעַ וּבֵין הַמַּיִם
אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לְרְקִיעַ...:

Before we reach the creation of humanity, Genesis 1 has already trained the reader's ear. God creates. God says. God sees. God separates. God calls. God makes.

The pattern is consistent: divine creative action is described in the singular. The pattern has been set. Now we can notice the interruption.

Genesis 1:26

(26) *And God said*, “**Let us make** humankind in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth.”

בראשית א':כ"ו

(כו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם
בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ וַיְרִדוּ בְדִגְתַּת
הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה
וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ
עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

When the Torah says, “Let us make humankind,” the question is not only why the language becomes plural. The question is whether the reader has already been introduced to something in creation that now matters more than we first realized.

Genesis 1:20-24

(20) God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and birds that fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” ... (24) God said, “Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: cattle, creeping things, and wild beasts of every kind.” And it was so.

בראשית א': כ"ד

(כ) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִשְׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם
שָׂרָץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה וְעוֹף יְעוֹפֵף
עַל־הָאָרֶץ עַל־פְּנֵי רִקְיַע הַשָּׁמַיִם:
(כא) ... (כד) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים
תּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה לְמִינָהּ
בְּהֵמָה וְרֶמֶשׂ וְחַיֵּית־אָרֶץ לְמִינָהּ
וַיְהִי־כֵן:

Now the possible “hidden character” in Genesis 1 becomes clearer.

The Torah does not only say that God creates living things directly. It also gives the waters and the earth active roles. The waters are told to bring forth living creatures. The earth is told to bring forth living creatures.

So when God later says, “Let us make humankind,” we have to ask: is the plural language pointing back to one of these created participants?

But if it is, the text should not leave us guessing forever. If humanity is made together with the waters, we should expect the following chapters to point us back to the waters. If humanity is made together with the earth, we should expect the following chapters to point us back to the earth.

So now we read forward and ask: when the Torah explains what a human being is, which part of creation does it choose?

Ramban on Genesis 1:26:1

AND G-D SAID: 'LET US MAKE MAN.' -

The correct explanation of *na'aseh* (*let us make*) [which is in the plural form when it should have been in the singular] is as follows: It has been shown to you that G-d created something from nothing only on the first day, and afterwards He formed and made things from those created elements. Thus when He gave the waters the power of bringing forth a *living soul*, the command concerning them was *Let the waters swarm*. The command concerning cattle was *Let the earth bring forth*. But in the case of man He said, *Let us make*, that is, I and the aforementioned earth, let us make man, the earth to bring forth the body from its elements as it did with cattle and beasts, as it is written, *And the Eternal G-d formed man of the dust of the ground*, and He, blessed be He, to give the spirit from His mouth, the Supreme One, as it is written, *And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*. And He said, *In our image, and after our likeness*, as man will then be similar to both. In the capacity of his body, he will be similar to the earth from which he was taken, and in spirit he will be similar to the higher beings, because it [the spirit] is not a body and will

רמב"ן על בראשית א':כ"ו:א'
וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם -
וְהַפֶּשֶׁט הַנִּכּוֹן בְּמִלַּת "נַעֲשֶׂה"
הוּא מִפְּנֵי שְׁכַבֵּר הָרְאִיתָ לְדַעַת
(רמב"ן על בראשית א':א') כִּי
הָאֱלֹהִים בָּרָא יֵשׁ מֵאֵין בַּיּוֹם
הָרִאשׁוֹן לְבַדּוֹ, וְאַחַר כֵּךְ מִן
הַיְסוּדוֹת הָהֵם הַנִּבְרָאִים יִצֵּר
וַעֲשֶׂה, וְכֹאשֶׁר נָתַן בַּמַּיִם כַּח
הַשְּׂרוּץ לְשָׂרֵץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה, וְהָיָה
הַמֵּאֲמָר בָּהֶם "יִשְׂרָצוּ הַמַּיִם"
(בראשית א':כ'), וְהָיָה הַמֵּאֲמָר
בַּבְּהֵמָה "תּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ"
(בראשית א':כ"ד), אָמַר בְּאָדָם
"נַעֲשֶׂה", כְּלוֹמַר אֲנִי וְהָאָרֶץ
הַנּוֹצֵרֶת נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם, שְׁתּוֹצֵיא
הָאָרֶץ הַגּוֹף מֵיְסוּדֶיהָ כֹּאשֶׁר
עֲשֵׂתָה בַּבְּהֵמָה וּבַחַיָּה, כְּדַכְּתִיב
(בראשית ב':ז') "וַיִּצֶר יְהוָה
אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם עֹפֶר מִן
הָאֲדָמָה", וַיִּתֵּן הוּא יְתִבְרֵךְ הַרוּחַ
מִפִּי עֲלִיוֹן, כְּדַכְּתִיב (שם) "וַיִּפַּח
בְּאַפָּיו נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים". וְאָמַר
"בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ", כִּי יְדָמָה
לְשֵׁנֵיהֶם, בְּמִתְכַנֵּת גּוּפוֹ לְאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר לָקַח מִמֶּנָּה, וַיְדָמָה בְּרוּחַ
לְעֲלִיוֹנִים, שְׁאִינָה גּוֹף וְלֹא
תְמוֹת. וְאָמַר בְּכַתּוּב הַשְּׁנַי בְּצֻלָּם
אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ (בראשית

not die. In the second verse, He says, *In the image of G-d He created him*, in order to relate the distinction by which man is distinguished from the rest of created beings. The explanation of this verse I have found ascribed to Rabbi Joseph the Kimchite, and is the most acceptable of all interpretations that have been advanced concerning it.

א':כ"ז), לְסִפּוּר הַפְּלֵא אֲשֶׁר נִפְלָא
בוּ מִשְׁאֵר הַנְּבִרָאִים. וְזֶה פֶּשֶׁט
הַמְּקִרָא הַזֶּה מְצֵאתִיו לְרַבִּי יוֹסֵף
הַקִּמְחִי, וְהוּא הַנִּרְאֶה מְכַל מָה
שֶׁחָשְׁבוּ בוּ.

Ramban's answer is not just grammatical. It is narrative.

He reads "Let us make" in light of the creation pattern we have already seen: God gives created things the capacity to bring forth life. The waters bring forth. The earth brings forth. And when humanity is created, Ramban says the "us" is God and the earth.

Ramban's reading gives us a testable claim. If "Let us make" means God and the earth, then the following chapters should continue to connect humanity to the earth. The interpretation should not depend only on Genesis 1:26. It should help the later narrative read more clearly.

Genesis 2:7

(7) the ETERNAL God formed a **Human** from the soil's **humus**, blowing into his nostrils the breath of life: the Human became a living being.

בראשית ב'ז'

(ז) וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
אֶת־הָאָדָם עֹפֶר מִן־הָאֲדָמָה
וַיִּפְחַח בְּאַפָּיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי
הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה:

Genesis 3:17-23

(17) To Adam [God] said, “Because you did as your wife said and ate of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ Cursed be **the ground** *because of you*; By toil shall you eat of it. All the days of your life:(18) Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you. But your food shall be the grasses of the field;(19)By the sweat of your brow Shall you get bread to eat, Until you return to **the ground**—*For from it you were taken. For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.*”

בראשית ג' י"ז-כ"ג

(יז) וּלְאָדָם אָמַר כִּי־שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתְּךָ וְתָאֲכַל מִן־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לֵאמֹר לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ אַרְוֶרָה הָאֲדָמָה בְּעִבּוּרְךָ בְּעִצְבוֹן תֹּאכְלֶנָּה כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ: (יח) וְקוֹץ וְדַרְדַּר תִּצְמַיֵחַ לְךָ וְאָכַלְתָּ אֶת־עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה: (יט) בְּזַעַת אִפְיֶיךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם עַד שׁוֹבְךָ אֶל־הָאֲדָמָה כִּי מִמֶּנָּה לָקַחְתָּ כִּי־עָפָר אַתָּה וְאֶל־עָפָר תֵּשׁוּב:

Attending to Narrative Signals

Genesis 2:5-6

(5) when no shrub of the field was yet on earth and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted, because the ETERNAL God **had not sent rain upon the earth** and there were no *human* beings to till the *humus*, (6) but a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of the earth—

בראשית ב' ה'-ו'

(ה) וְכֹל | שִׁיחַ הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם יִהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ וְכֹל־עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם יִצְמַח כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אֵין לְעַבֵּד אֶת־הָאֲדָמָה: (ו) וְאֵד יֵעָלֶה מִן־הָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת־כָּל־פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה:

The Torah deliberately acknowledges the world the reader knows.

When Genesis tells us there was not yet rain on the earth, it is not merely filling in background information. It is signaling that the familiar world has not fully arrived yet. The reader knows a world where plants depend on rain, where rain falls from the sky, and where rainbows appear after rain. But the Torah pauses to tell us that, at this stage of the story, rain is still absent.

By mentioning that there was no rain, the Torah is not only showing that it understands our world. It is preparing to build that world narratively. Rain will enter the story later, not as a random weather detail, but as part of the Flood.

Genesis 7:11-12

(11) In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day, all the fountains of the great deep burst apart, and the floodgates of the sky broke open. (12) **The rain fell** on the earth forty days and forty nights.

בראשית ז'י"א-י"ב

(יא) בַּשָּׁנָה שֵׁש־מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה
לְחַיֵּי־נֹחַ בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי
בְּשִׁבְעָה־עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בַּיּוֹם
הַזֶּה נִבְקְעוּ כָּל־מַעְיֵנֹת הַתְּהוֹם
רַבָּה וְאַרְבַּת הַשָּׁמַיִם נִפְתְּחוּ:
(יב) וַיְהִי הַגֶּשֶׁם עַל־הָאָרֶץ
אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה:

The first major rain in the Torah is not ordinary weather. It comes in the Flood.

That means Genesis is not merely giving background information. It is building a world over time. It first tells us rain is missing. Then it gives us a story in which rain arrives with overwhelming force.

So as we read the Flood, we should hear the echo of Genesis 2. The world that once had no rain now becomes a world flooded by rain.

Genesis 9:12-13

(12) God further said, “This is the sign that I set for the covenant between Me and you, and every living creature with you, for all ages to come. (13) **I have set My bow in the clouds**, and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant **between Me and the earth**.

בראשית ט"י"ב-י"ג

(יב) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים זֹאת
אוֹת־הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי נֹתֵן בֵּינִי
וּבֵינֵיכֶם וּבֵין כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה אֲשֶׁר
אִתְּכֶם לְדֹרֹת עֹלָם: (יג)
אֶת־קַשְׁתִּי נֹתַתִּי בָעָנָן וְהָיְתָה
לְאוֹת בְּרִית בֵּינִי וּבֵין הָאָרֶץ:

The reader already knows a world with rainbows. But Genesis has not treated the rainbow as something that can simply appear without preparation. If there is no rain, there is no rainbow. So when the Torah first tells us that rain has not yet fallen, it may also be telling us that the world is not yet ready for the sign that will later appear in the clouds.

That is what makes the sequence so powerful: first, no rain; then catastrophic rain; and only then, the rainbow. The Torah is not merely explaining weather. It is building the conditions that allow the rainbow to mean something inside its own world.

This is what I mean by the Torah knowing the end from the beginning. A small detail like “there was no rain” becomes part of a much larger narrative movement. The world without rain becomes the world overwhelmed by rain, and then finally the world protected by the sign that follows rain. That is the kind of worldbuilding we are tracking.

Looking for Consistency

Having attended to the questions the text raises and the signals it gives the reader, we now turn to what remains consistent across the narrative. Rather than focusing on differences or apparent contradictions, our approach is to ask what persists. What patterns, structures, and assumptions continue from one passage to the next.

Where some read variation as evidence of disunity, we read it against the backdrop of

an already established framework. The order of creation may change between Genesis 1-2, but the idea that all animal and human life is made from the Earth remains consistent, as does the commanded diet for all life. The text has shown us how to read it; now we ask whether that reading holds. Do the same ideas continue to operate? Do earlier signals illuminate later developments?

By attending to what stays the same, we begin to see how the Torah builds its world with intention and continuity. Consistency becomes a guide, revealing an underlying coherence that holds the narrative together, even as its surface details shift.

Genesis 1:29-30

God said, “See, I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth, and **every tree** that has seed-bearing fruit; they shall be yours for food. And to all the animals on land, to all the birds of the sky, and to everything that creeps on earth, in which there is the breath of life, [I give] all the green plants for food.” And it was so.

בראשית א': כ"ט-ל'

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים הִנֵּה נֹתַתִּי לְכֶם
אֶת-כָּל-עֵשֶׂב | זֶרַע זֶרַע אֲשֶׁר
עַל-פְּנֵי כָל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת-כָּל-הָעֵץ
אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ פְּרִי-עֵץ זֶרַע זֶרַע לְכֶם
יִהְיֶה לְאֹכְלָהּ: וְלִכְל-חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ
וְלִכְל-עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלִכְל | רוֹמֵשׁ
עַל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-בּוֹ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה
אֶת-כָּל-יֶרֶק עֵשֶׂב לְאֹכְלָהּ
וַיְהִי-כֵן:

Food is not a side detail in Genesis 1. Creation ends with a diet. Humans and animals are both sustained by plant life: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees, and green vegetation. The first food-world of Genesis is shared. Life eats from what grows from the earth.

That means trees are not introduced as dangerous. They are introduced as food, as life-giving, and as part of the created order given to living creatures. Before Genesis gives us a forbidden tree, it gives us a world where humans and animals live from trees and plants.

Genesis 2:16-17

(16) And the ETERNAL God commanded the Human, saying, “Of **every tree** of the garden you are free to eat; (17) but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; *for on the day you eat of it, you shall die.*”

בראשית ב':ט"ז-י"ז

(טז) וַיִּצַו יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
עַל-הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר מִכָּל עֵץ-הַגֶּן
אָכַל תֹּאכַל: (יז) וּמֵעֵץ הַדַּעַת
טוֹב וְרָע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ כִּי
בַיּוֹם אֲכַלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת תָּמוּת:

Genesis 2 does not undo that food-world. It narrows it. The human is still told that every tree of the garden may be eaten from, with one exception: the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

That restriction matters because it is specific. The tree of knowledge is forbidden to the human, but the tree of life is not forbidden here. And the animals are not given this prohibition. So at this point in the story, the tree of life still belongs to the broader world Genesis has already established: a world where trees sustain life for humans and animals.

Testing the World Genesis Has Created.

At this point, Genesis has built a world with humans, animals, trees, food, life, and one specific human prohibition. The next scene does not leave that world behind. It tests it.

The question is not only whether the human will obey the command. The question is what happens when the created world itself begins to reason about the command. Before anyone eats, Genesis gives us one more signal about awareness, perception, and the relationship between humans and animals.

Genesis 2:25-3:1

(25) The two of them were **naked**, the Human and his wife, yet they felt no shame. (1) Now the serpent was the **shrewdest** of all the wild beasts that the ETERNAL God had made. It said to the woman, “Did God really say: You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?”

בראשית ב'כ"ה-ג'א'

(כה) וַיְהִיו שְׁנֵיהֶם עֲרוּמִים
הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְלֹא יִתְבַּשְׁשׁוּ: (א)
וְהַנְּחָשׁ הָיָה עָרוּם מְכַל חַיֵּית
הַשָּׂדֶה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה אַף כִּי־אָמַר
אֱלֹהִים לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִכָּל עֵץ הַגָּן:

The humans are עֲרוּמִים / arumim, naked, but they are not ashamed. Then the serpent is introduced as עָרוּם / arum, cunning, shrewd, or perceptive. The Torah is asking us to compare the serpent to the humans, but also to compare the serpent to every other animal of the field. If the serpent is the most עָרוּם / arum of the animals, then maybe Genesis is hinting that animal life itself belongs somewhere on this spectrum of awareness.

Genesis 3:4-5

(4) And the serpent said to the woman, “You are not going to die, (5) but God knows that as soon as you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God who knows good and evil.”

בראשית ג'ד-ה'

(ד) וַיֹּאמֶר הַנְּחָשׁ אֶל־הָאִשָּׁה
לֹא־מוֹת תָּמוּתוּן: (ה) כִּי יִדַע
אֱלֹהִים כִּי בְיוֹם אֲכָלְכֶם מִמֶּנּוּ
וְנִפְקַחוּ עֵינֵיכֶם וְהִיִּיתֶם כְּאֱלֹהִים
יֹדְעֵי טוֹב וָרָע:

Now the serpent gives the human a different way to understand the tree. God had said that eating from it would bring death that day. The serpent says that eating from it will bring knowledge that day. And the strange thing is that the serpent's claim does not sound random, even to us as readers, because the tree is called the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

So Genesis wants us to ask a question: how does the serpent know what the fruit does? The serpent speaks from inside the world Genesis has built, and it seems to

understand something about the tree. So now the Torah asks us to hold both claims together: God says the tree brings death on the day it is eaten, and the serpent says the tree brings knowledge. Who will Genesis vindicate?

Genesis 3:7

(7) Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they perceived that they were **naked**; and they sewed together fig leaves and made themselves loincloths.

בראשית ג'ז'

(ז) וַתִּפְקַחְנָה עֵינֵי שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיֵּדְעוּ
כִּי עֲרֻמִּם הֵם וַיִּתְּפוּ עָלֶיהָ
תְּאֵנִים וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם חֲגֹרֹת:

God said the tree would bring death on the day it was eaten, but the first thing Genesis shows us is that the tree gives knowledge. The Torah is not resolving the tension between God and the serpent. It is making sure we feel it.

Genesis 3:9-11

(9) The ETERNAL God called out to the Human and said to him, “Where are you?” (10) He replied, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” (11) **“Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat?”**

בראשית ג'ט'-י"א

(ט) וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים
אֶל-הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אַיֶּכָּה: (י)
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת-קוֹלְךָ שָׁמַעְתִּי בַגֶּן
וְאִירָא כִּי-עֵרָם אֲנֹכִי וְאֶחָבָא:
(יא) וַיֹּאמֶר מִי הַגִּיד לְךָ כִּי
עֵרָם אֶתָּה הִמְוִהֵץ אֲשֶׁר
צִוִּיתִיךָ לִבְלֹתִי אֶכְלֵ-מִמֶּנּוּ
אֶכְלֹת:

God's question is strange. The reader has just been told how the humans learned they were naked: their eyes were opened after they ate. But God does not ask, “How did you realize this?” God asks, “Who told you that you were naked?”

That question pulls us back into the scene. Who was there to tell them? Who already seemed to know what the tree would do? And why has Genesis placed nakedness, knowledge, and the serpent's awareness so close together?

The Torah is not resolving the tension yet. It is making the question louder.

Returning to the Question

Genesis does not merely give answers. It teaches us which questions to carry. Ramban helped us see a reading of “Let us make” in Genesis 1 that fits the creation pattern: God and the earth, together in the making of humanity. But Genesis has also taught us to keep watching how its questions return. Why does the serpent know what the tree does? Who could have told the human he was naked?

The Torah is not giving us disconnected puzzles. It is building a way of reading. Once a question appears, we do not simply solve it and leave it behind. We carry it forward and ask whether the story returns to it in a deeper form. And now, just when the garden story seems ready to close, Genesis brings us back to the question that started this whole journey.

Genesis 3:22

(22) And the ETERNAL God said,
“Now that humankind has become
like us, knowing good and evil,
what if one should stretch out a
hand and take also from the tree of
life and eat, and live forever!”

בראשית ג' כ"ב

(כב) וַיֹּאמֶר | יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים הֵן
הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאַחַד מִמֶּנּוּ לְדַעַת
טוֹב וְרָע וְעַתָּה | פֶּן־יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ
וְלָקַח גַּם מִעֵץ הַחַיִּים וְאָכַל וַחַי
לְעֹלָם:

Genesis 3:22 brings us back to the question Genesis 1:26 already taught us to ask. At the creation of humanity, God said, “Let us make humankind.” Now, at the end of the garden story, God says the human has become “like one of us, knowing good and evil.” The same strange plural returns.

That means Genesis 1 and Genesis 3 are not separate puzzles. They are part of the same story. The Torah opens the creation of humanity with an “us” question, and it closes the garden with that same question still alive.

Genesis has been building a world with astonishing cohesion: earth and humanity, food and life, knowledge and death, humans and animals, singular divine action and sudden plural speech. And when we follow the patterns instead of ignoring them, the story begins to hold together in ways we may have been trained to miss.

So maybe the Bible is not confused. Maybe we are the ones who stopped reading the story as carefully as it was written. That is where we will pick up next time: not by forcing the text to be consistent, but by discovering the consistency it has been showing us all along.

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