

Devotion – Fourteenth Week after Pentecost

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This week I'd like to look at Hebrew words again. The familiar language of Genesis 2 is not as poetic when we only look at the names of the main characters in English. The name Adam comes from *adamah*, or "dirt/soil," and the singular term means "earthling" or "humanity." The name Eve comes from the verb *havah* – "to breathe, to live, or to give life," and the noun means "life." The Hebrew for the word Eden means "a delightful place, paradise." Adam and Eve's first two sons have names that are meaningful as well. Cain means "spear," and Abel means "fleeting breath."

So this story is about a couple who incorporate all of living humanity, and God places them in the most beautiful place on earth – a paradise. The man comes from the very earth itself, and the woman is the bearer of children. But after they disobey and are thrown out of that Eden, they have two sons, and one kills the other. Cain and Abel's names are no mistake – Cain's name symbolizes a weapon, and Abel's name symbolizes the fleeting time he was on the earth before his brother kills him.

A summary might look like this in a Hebrew translation: Humanity and the Giver of Life initially live in the Garden of Delight. But they disobey and must leave that garden. After God kicks them out, Spear kills his brother in a fit of rage, Fleeting Breath, so that son leaves no one behind to carry on his name.

This story in Genesis 2 is full of poetry and symbolism, which is so much easier to understand in the Hebrew. Think about the meaning of those names as you read this scripture, which I call God's original love story:

The Lord God formed Adam (humanity) from the *Adamah* (dust of the ground) and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the Adam became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden (paradise), in the east; and there God put the Adam whom had been formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made 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.

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the Adam should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the Adam to see what he would call them; and whatever the Adam called every living creature, that was its name. The Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the Adam there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the Adam, and he slept; then God took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the Lord God took the rib taken from the Adam and made it into a woman (*ishah* in Hebrew) and brought her to the Adam. Then the Adam said,

"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;

this one shall be called Woman, (*ishah*)

for out of Man (*ish*) this one was taken...."

The Adam named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

I am struck by God breathing life into dry dust and bringing forth humanity, and for the gift of fertility and ongoing life through the woman. God loved them so much that they were placed in paradise. God would come in the evening when the breezes were pleasant to enjoy the garden and these earthlings. We all know the end of that story, but we can still sit and just digest these beautiful words of creation, from a creator who formed us all out of love, who wants to walk in the evening breeze on the good earth made for us and have a relationship with us.

May your week be one of grace and peace.

Jeanne