



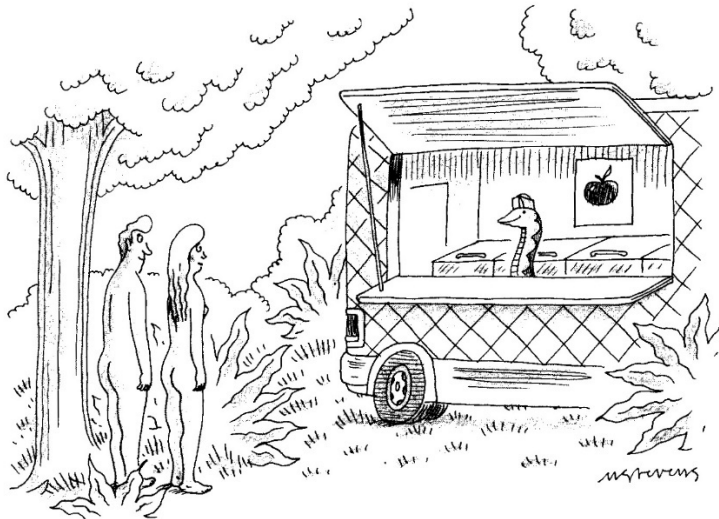
(Far From) All About Eve ***Dr. Alan Cooper***

Alan Cooper is the Elaine Ravich Professor of Jewish Studies. He joined the faculty in 1997 as a professor of Bible, and has served as director of publications chair of the Bible faculty, and, from 2007 to 2018, provost of JTS. In 1998, he was appointed professor of Bible at the Union Theological Seminary, a nondenominational Christian seminary, becoming the first person to hold concurrent professorships at JTS and Union. Previously, he was a professor of Bible at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, where for six years he was director of its School of Graduate Studies. He also taught religious studies for ten years at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

Dr. Cooper earned a bachelor's degree in Religion at Columbia University. He went on to do his graduate work at Yale University, earning a master of philosophy degree and doctorate in Religious Studies. His doctoral dissertation was on the linguistic structure of biblical poetry. He also spent a year in Jerusalem as a Hebrew University postdoctoral fellow.

Dr. Cooper's publications include a monograph on Canaanite divine names that appear in the Hebrew Bible, and many articles on biblical poetics and the history of interpretation. Recent articles include "Once Again Seething a Kid in Its Mother's Milk" (in *JSIJ* [*Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal*]); "Some Aspects of Traditional Jewish Psalms Interpretation" (in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*); and "Introduction to Leviticus" (in *Engaging Torah: Modern Perspectives on the Hebrew Bible*). His work in progress includes a commentary on Psalms 31 through 60 for the Jewish Publication Society.

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➔ Why are there stories in the Torah?

Saadia Gaon, Introduction to the Arabic Translation of the Torah (exc. summary)

When the Blessed Wise One wished to inculcate people by His book and lead them to observance and service, He determined that there would be three means of instruction, each one more forceful than its predecessor:

1. The simplest, in which people are told what to do and what not to do with no explanation of the consequences, intended for people who already know that they are to draw near to what is commanded and distance themselves from what is forbidden.
2. The second, in which in addition to the command and the warning He reveals to the one being commanded or admonished the consequences of what he chooses to do, saying do this and such will be your reward, and do not do this lest you be punished



in such and such a way. This way is more forceful than the first one because one can picture for himself the good or evil that will ensue because of his actions.

3. The third is that in addition to issuing commands and admonitions along with the consequences for obedience and disobedience, He tells stories about what befell people when they obeyed the commandment and prospered, and about the punishment endured by the wicked who presumptuously disobeyed and were punished. This way is stronger than the first two, fixing the experience in the mind of the hearer as if he had seen it firsthand.

The Blessed Wise One included all three of these means of instruction to provide maximum opportunity for the success of the servants of God.

➔ How do we read biblical stories for edification and instruction?

- Description—What does the text *say*? [*peshat*]
- Explication—What might the text *mean*? [*derash*]
 - gaps, implications
 - metaphors, symbols
 - ambiguity, uncertainty, indeterminacy {e.g., ערום/*ārūm*, Gen 3:1}
- Evaluation—What do we learn from this?
- Reflection—Why did we read and interpret as we did?

Rashi on description and explication concerning Genesis 3:8a

<p>Judaica Press: And they heard the voice of the Lord God going in the garden to the direction of the sun, and the man and his wife hid from before the Lord God in the midst of the trees of the garden.</p>	<p>וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת קוֹל ה' אֱלֹהִים מִתְּהֵלֵךְ בְּגֵן לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם וַיִּתְחַבֵּא הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ מִפְּנֵי ה' אֱלֹהִים בְּתוֹךְ עֵץ הַגֵּן</p>
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<p>they heard - There are many aggadic <i>midrashim</i>, and our Sages already arranged them in order in <i>Genesis Rabbah</i> and in other <i>midrashim</i>, but I</p>	<p>וישמעו - יש מדרשי אגדה רבים וכבר סדרום רבותינו על מכונם בבראשית רבה ובשאר</p>
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<p>have only arrived at <i>peshuto shel miqra</i> [=description] and at the <i>aggada</i> that conforms to the words of the verse [=explication based on selected traditional sources], each word in its proper place. What it says is, they heard the voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, which/who was going about in the garden.</p> <p>to the direction of the sun - To that direction in which the sun sets, namely the west, for toward evening, the sun is in the west [cf. <i>Genesis Rabba</i> 19:8], and they sinned in the tenth hour [cf. <i>Sanhedrin</i> 38b]</p>	<p>מדרשות ואני לא באתי אלא לפשוטו של מקרא ולאגדה המישרת דברי המקרא דבר דבור על אופניו.</p> <p>ומשמעו, שמעו את קול הקב"ה שהיה מתהלך בגן:</p> <p>לרוח היום - לאותו רוח שהשמש באה משם וזו היא מערבית, שלפנות ערב חמה במערב, והם סרחו בעשירית:</p>
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➔ Ways of reading and understanding Genesis 3

- Historical (one-time event with consequences, e.g., “original sin”)
- Mythical (paradigmatic/recurrent)
- Consequences positive or negative?
- Also: aetiological aspects

➔ Literal or Figurative/Symbolic?

Origen (184-253 CE), *On First Principles*

Now what man of intelligence will believe that the first and the second and the third day, and the evening and the morning existed without the sun and moon and stars? And that the first day, if we may so call it, was even without a heaven? And who is so silly as to believe that God, after the manner of a farmer, “planted a paradise eastward in Eden,” and set in it a visible and palpable “tree of life,” of such a sort that anyone who tasted its fruit with his bodily teeth could gain life; and again that one could partake of “good and evil” by masticating the fruit taken from the tree of that name? And when God is said to “walk in the paradise in the cool of the day” and Adam to hide himself behind a tree, I do not think



anyone will doubt that these are figurative expressions which indicate certain mysteries through a semblance of history and not through actual events.

Augustine (354-430 CE), Literal Meaning of Genesis 11.39.52

“And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21)—This was done for the sake of a symbolic meaning, but nonetheless it was done, and similarly the words which were spoken for the sake of a symbolic meaning were nonetheless spoken. I have often said, and I do not hesitate to say it again and again, that we must demand of the author of a historical narrative that his account contain the events that actually occurred and the words that were actually spoken. Now in considering an event, we ask what happened and what it signifies; and in like manner, in considering words, we ask what was said and what it signifies. For we must not take as figurative the fact that something was said, whether what was said has a figurative or literal meaning.

Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1164), Introduction to the Commentary on the Torah

<p>The truth is that every word should be interpreted literally, as long as it is reasonable to do so. This is not to deny that there may be an esoteric level of meaning, as in the stories of the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Knowledge. In such cases, reason must be complemented by authoritative tradition. God gave us our reason so that we might use it, and God gave the Torah to reasonable people. When something in the Torah cannot be interpreted literally, we must use our reason to make sense out of it—even in the case of a commandment, such as “circumcise the foreskin of your heart” (Deut. 10:16), which obviously cannot be taken literally.</p>	<p>והאמת לפרש כל מצוה ודבר ומלה כאשר הם כתובים, אם המה אל הדעת קרובים. גם נכון הוא להיות לדברים סודות, והם בעצמם אמת גם חידות, כדבר גן עדן ועץ הדעת, ותהיה חכמת לב עם חכמת מפי אב נשמעת. והעד הנאמן בכל פירושנו, הוא שכל הלב שנטע בקרבנו קדושנו. והמכחיש הדעת כמכחש הרגשותינו כי לאנשי לבב נתנה תורת אבותינו. ואם מצאנו כתוב בתורה שאין הדעת סובלת, נוסף או נתקן כפי היכולת ע"ד משפט הלשון, אשר חקק אדם הראשון. גם במצות נעשה כן, אם הדבר כמשמעו לדעת לא יתכן, כמו: ומלתם את ערלת לבבכם.</p>
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Joseph Albo (fl. 1425), *Book of Principles*, iii.21

<p>Though there are many passages in the Torah concerning which all the wise men agree that they bear allusion to noble, sublime, and intellectual things, like the story of the Garden of Eden, and the four rivers, and so on, nevertheless they do not deny the reality of the literal meaning. Their opinion is that while those things do exist in reality, they at the same time bear allusion to more noble and celestial things. Thus the account of the tabernacle refers to real things, and at the same time bears allusion to sublime and celestial things....</p>	<p>וזה כי אף אם נמצאו בתורה דברים רבים הסכימו בהם כל החכמים היותם רומזים לענינים נכבדים עליונים וענינים שכליים כספור גן עדן והארבעה נהרות זולתם לא בעבור זה הכחישו מציאותם ושלא יהיו אמת כפשטן אבל יאמרו שעם היות הדברים ההם נמצאים כן במציאות כמו שמלאכת המשכן נמצאת כן במציאות והוא רמז לענינים עליונים נכבדים....</p>
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➔ Blaming Eve

Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE-c. 50 CE), *On the Creation of the Cosmos*

(§151) But, since nothing is stable in the world of becoming and mortal beings necessarily undergo reverses and changes, the first human being too had to enjoy some ill fortune. The starting point of a blameworthy life becomes for him woman. As long as he was single, he resembled God and the cosmos in his solitariness, receiving the delineations of both natures in his soul, not all of them but as many as a mortal constitution could contain. But when woman too was molded, he observed a sisterly form and a kindred figure. Rejoicing at the sight, he came up to her and gave her a greeting.

(§152) She, seeing no other living creature that looked more like herself than he, was glad and modestly responded to his greeting. The love that ensues brings together the two separate halves of a single living being as it were, and joins them into unity, thereby establishing in both a desire for union with the other in order to produce a being similar to themselves. But this desire also gave rise to bodily pleasure, which is the starting point of



wicked and lawbreaking deeds, and on its account they exchange the life of immortality and well-being for the life of mortality and misfortune.



"On the plus side, you get to blame her for everything forever."

{...} (§156) It is said that in ancient times the venomous and earthborn reptile, the snake, could project a human voice, and that one day he approached the first man's wife and reproached her for being slow and excessively cautious, because she delays and postpones picking a fruit which is highly attractive to behold and most pleasant to taste, and moreover is extremely advantageous for enabling one to discern what is good and what is evil. Without further reflection, as the result of an unstable and unsettled conviction, she consented to the idea, ate of the fruit and shared it with her husband. This was the event which suddenly changed them both from innocence and simplicity of character to cunning.

The Father was outraged by this act, for it was a deed deserving to give rise to anger. They had passed by the tree of immortal life, perfection of excellence, through which they could have enjoyed the fruits of an age-long life of well-being and made the choice for that ephemeral and mortal existence, not a life but a time span full of misfortune. So he determined the punishments against them which they deserved.

[Philo explains at length why the snake is an appropriate symbol of *pleasure*.]

(§165) Pleasure does not dare to offer her tricks and deceits to the man, but rather to the woman and through her to him. This is said quite suitably and appropriately, for *in us the intellect has the role of man, while sense-perception has that of woman*. Pleasure encounters and consorts with the senses first, and through them she deceives the ruling intellect as well. Each of the senses is seduced by her charms. They rejoice in what is set before them, sight responding to varieties of color and shape, hearing to melodious sounds, taste to the sweetness of flavors, and smell to the fragrances of exhaled vapors. On receiving these gifts, in the manner of female servants they offer them to reason as their master, taking persuasion along as their advocate so that none of the offerings whatsoever would be rejected. He is immediately ensnared. Instead of being a ruler he becomes a subject, a slave instead of a lord, an exile instead of a citizen, a mortal instead of an immortal being.

(§166) In short, one should not be unaware that, like a shameless prostitute, pleasure desires to get hold of a lover and seeks out pimps that can help her lure him. It is the senses that act as pimps for her and solicit the lover. Once she has ensnared them, she will easily bring the intellect under her sway. They convey the external appearances inside, announce and display them, imprinting the characteristics of each thing on it and activating the passion that corresponds to them. For, just like wax, the intellect receives the impressions via the senses.

Genesis 3:6

When the woman saw that the tree was good for eating and a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom, she took of

וַתִּרְאֵהָ אִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמֵאֲכָל וְכִי
תְּאוֹהֶה-הִוא לְעֵינָיִם וְנֶחְמַד הָעֵץ לְהַשְׂכִּיל



<p>its fruit and ate. She also gave some to her husband, and he ate.</p>	<p>וַתִּקַּח מִפְּרִיָו וַתֹּאכַל וַתִּתֵּן גַּם לְאִשָּׁה עִמָּה וַיֹּאכַל:</p>
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John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book IX, lines 996-99

She gave him of that fair enticing fruit
 With liberal hand. He scrupled not to eat,
 Against his better knowledge; not deceived [cf. 1 Timothy 2:14],
 But fondly overcome with female charm.

Bahya ben Asher (ca. 1300) on Genesis 3:6 (exc.)

<p>“that it was a delight to the eyes”—It is possible to explain that the goodness, delight, and desirability that are mentioned are attached to the word <i>le-haskil</i>. Since the man initially was entirely intellectual, Scripture came to clarify that their intentions, actions, and desires were to attain wisdom, in accordance with Psalm 38:10, “Lord, all my desire is before You.” The intellect necessitated his coming to eat what God had forbidden. Although his intention was to attain wisdom, he nonetheless transgressed the will and commandment of his creator. While his intellect determined that the tree was desirable for attainment of wisdom, it was improper to transgress the commandment of God. The sense is that the evil inclination had not yet been formed in him: he was entirely intellectual without an evil inclination. But the evil inclination seduced and misled him by means of Eve. After they had eaten of the fruit, they were clothed with a new and different desire, namely</p>	<p>וכי תאווה הוא לעינים. יתכן לפרש כי הטובה והתאוה והחמדה הנזכרים בפסוק שהם ממדות החושים הכל נמשך למלת להשכיל. ובעבור שהאדם היה מתחילה כולו שכלי בא לבאר הכתוב כי כל כוונתם וכל פעולותיהם ותאוותיהם בחושיהם אינה אלא להשכיל, כענין שכתוב ה' נגדך כל תאותי, והשכל הכריחו לבוא לאכול מה שהקב"ה מנע ממנו, וכוונתו היתה כדי להשכיל, מכל מקום עבר על רצון בוראו ומצותו, כי כשם שהשכל היה לו שהעץ נחמד להשכיל היה לו להשכיל שאין ראוי לעבור על מצות אדון הכל, והכוונה שעדיין לא נוצר יצר הרע שהיה בו שהרי כולו שכלי בלא יצר הרע אלא שיצר הרע פתהו והטעהו באמצעות חוה, אבל אחרי אכלו מן הפרי נתחדש בתאוה אחרת ונתלבש בה, והוא תאות המשגל</p>
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<p>sexual desire. It induced him to eat: the inclination to transgress entered into him that he had not had previously.</p>	<p>שגרמה לו אכילתו והוא יצרא דעבירה שנכנס בו שלא היה לו מתחילה....</p>
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➔ Why must a woman provide a “sin-offering” as part of the purification ritual following parturition (Leviticus 12:8)?

Bahya b. Asher

<p>“and make expiation on her behalf” – The term “expiation” refers exclusively to sin.... But what is her sin at the time of childbirth for which the Torah requires a sacrifice? If this offering is because she had been in danger and survived, it should be a thanksgiving offering, so why does she bring a burnt offering and a sin offering? It is possible to explain that this offering is not for her own sin, but for that of her mother [i.e., Eve], the mother of all the living. Were it not for that sin, men and women would reproduce without desire or lust, but in a completely natural way, the way a tree produces fruit annually without desire. Mother and daughter are alike in respect to the sin, for the branches bear the defect that is in the root. That is why Scripture requires a sacrifice: to expiate the primordial sin.</p>	<p>וכפר עליה - אין לשון כפרה נופל כי אם על החטא.... כי מה חטאה בזמן הלידה שתצריכנה התורה קרבן, ואם זה הקרבן הוא על שבאה בסכנה ונצלה מהמיתה, היה ראוי לה שתביא תודה, ולמה תביא עולה וחטאת: ויתכן לפרש שאין הקרבן הזה מצד חטא של עצמה רק מצד אמה שהיא היתה אם כל חי, כי לולא החטא ההוא היה האדם מוליד עם אשתו שלא בדרך תאוה וחשק אלא בדרך הטבע הגמור, כטבע האילן המוציא פירותיו בכל שנה שלא בתאוה, והיולדת הזו כאמה בתה במעשה החטא, כי הענפים הם מקולקלים בקלקול השורש, ועל כן יצריכנה הכתוב קרבן לכפר על החטא הקדמוני....</p>
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➔ Redeeming Eve

Gnostic Texts from Nag Hammadi (composed 2nd-4th centuries CE)

[According to the *Apocryphon of John*, a stray thought from Sophia (Lady Wisdom) led to the creation of Yaldabaoth. He in turn “united with the thoughtlessness (*aponoia*) within him” and begot twelve ruling authorities, seven of whom were given sway over the spheres and the sublunar world. The “rulers” were arrogant, thoughtless, and ignorant. *On the Origin of the World* reports, “when the seven rulers were cast down from their heavens onto the earth, they made for themselves angels, numerous, demonic, to serve them. And the latter instructed mankind in many kinds of error and magic and potions and worship of idols and spilling of blood and altars and temples and sacrifices and libations to all the spirits of the earth, having their coworker fate, who came into existence by the concord between the gods of injustice and justice. And thus when the world had come into being, it distractedly erred at all times.”]

On the Origin of the World

The seven of them together laid plans. They came up to Adam and Eve timidly: they said to him, “The fruit of all the trees created for you in Paradise shall be eaten; but as for the tree of knowledge, control yourselves and do not eat from it. If you eat, you will die.” Having imparted great fear to them, they withdrew up to their authorities.

Then came the wisest of all creatures, who was called Beast. And when he saw the likeness of their mother Eve he said to her, “What did God say to you? Was it ‘Do not eat from the tree of knowledge?’” She said, “He said not only, ‘Do not eat from it’, but ‘Do not touch it, lest you die.’” He said to her, “Do not be afraid. In death you shall not die. For he knows that when you eat from it, your intellect will become sober and you will come to be like gods, recognizing the difference that obtains between evil men and good ones. Indeed, it was in jealousy that he said this to you, so that you would not eat from it.”



Now Eve had confidence in the words of the instructor. She gazed at the tree and saw that it was beautiful and appetizing, and she liked it; she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she gave some also to her husband, and he too ate it. Then their intellect became open. For when they had eaten, the light of knowledge had shone upon them. When they clothed themselves with shame, they knew that they were naked of knowledge. When they became sober, they saw that they were naked and became enamored of one another. When they saw that the ones who had modeled them had the form of beasts, they loathed them: they were very aware.

Then when the rulers knew that they had broken their commandments, they entered Paradise and came to Adam and Eve with earthquake and great threatening, to see the effect of the aid. Then Adam and Eve trembled greatly and hid under the trees in Paradise. Then the rulers did not know where they were and said, "Adam, where are you?" He said, "I am here, for through fear of you I hid, being ashamed." And they said to him ignorantly, "Who told you about the shame with which you clothed yourself? - unless you have eaten from that tree!" He said, "The woman whom you gave me - it is she that gave to me and I ate." Then they said to the latter, "What is this that you have done?" She answered and said, "It is the instructor who urged me on, and I ate."

Then the rulers came up to the instructor. Their eyes became misty because of him, and they could not do anything to him. They cursed him since they were powerless. Afterwards, they came up to the woman and cursed her and her offspring. After the woman, they cursed Adam, and the land because of him, and the crops; and all things they had created, they cursed. They have no blessing. Good cannot result from evil.

From that day, the authorities knew that truly there was something mightier than they: they recognized only that their commandments had not been kept. Great jealousy was brought into the world solely because of the immortal man. Now when the rulers saw that their Adam had entered into an alien state of knowledge, they desired to test him, and they gathered together all the domestic animals and the wild beasts of the earth and the birds of



heaven and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. When he saw them, he gave names to their creatures.

They became troubled because Adam had recovered from all the trials. They assembled and laid plans, and they said, “Behold Adam! He has come to be like one of us, so that he knows the difference between the light and the darkness. Now perhaps he will be deceived, as in the case of the Tree of Knowledge, and also will come to the Tree of Life and eat from it, and become immortal, and become lord, and despise us and disdain us and all our glory! Then he will denounce us along with our universe. Come, let us expel him from Paradise, down to the land from which he was taken, so that henceforth he might not be able to recognize anything better than we can.” And so they expelled Adam from Paradise, along with his wife. And this deed that they had done was not enough for them. Rather, they were afraid. They went in to the Tree of Life and surrounded it with great fearful things, fiery living creatures called “Cheroubin”, and they put a flaming sword in their midst, fearfully twirling at all times, so that no earthly being might ever enter that place.

