

You Must Not Eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

2: 15-17

DIG: What is **the Covenant with Adam**? How was man to take care of the garden of Eden? What was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Why was he forbidden to eat of it? What was the test? Did Adam have the ability to choose right from wrong? Or did Elohim make him sin? Why is this distinction so important? What were the consequences of his decision?

REFLECT: Could ADONAI have decided not to give Adam the ability to choose? What would be the implications of that? Can you make someone love you? Even if you could make someone love you, would it be a satisfying experience? How much does it hurt when you love someone and are rejected? How much do you think it hurts God?

This is the second part of **the Covenant with Adam**. The first part was seen in 1: 28-30. The first four provisions were listed there, and the next three are listed here, making a total of seven provisions. The fifth provision is given in 2:15. **Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.**

There are several Hebrew words in this verse that we need to take a closer look at. The Hebrew word for **put** is the root word for *resting*. This is the same root that also makes up the name Noah, which means *rest*. For **Adam**, being in **the garden** was being in a place of *rest*. But **Adam** was not only to *rest* in **the garden**, he was **put** there to **work it** (*abad*), which normally means *to serve*. In other words, **Adam** was there, not to be served, but to be a servant of **Elohim**. It is interesting that even in a perfect world, **work** was necessary for **man's** own good. Work enters the picture before sin does, and if **man** had never sinned he would still be working.⁴⁶ And lastly, he was placed in **the garden to take care of it** (*smr*), in the sense of *obedience*, and to *guard it*. The same Hebrew word is used in 3:29 where the **cherubim** were placed to **guard the way to the tree of life**.

The sixth provision is in 2:16-17a. **And the ADONAI, God, commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."** The word **command** is mentioned here for the first time. **God's** first **command** to **man** concerned life and death, **good and evil**. As with subsequent commandments, there were positive blessings and negative prohibitions. All earthly goods and pleasures were at **man's** disposal, except **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, which was forbidden.⁴⁷ Its purpose was to test **their** obedience to the will of **God**. **Adam** was

not to assume that because **he** was given authority over the earth that **he** was independent of **God** and exempt from **His** authority. The question was whether **man**, like **Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12-15)** would reject **God's** right to rule and declare himself independent of **God**. **Adam** was living in the garden in a sinless state, a state of probation. But **he** hadn't been tested yet. Although **he** was created in a perfect state, **he** had the ability to make an imperfect choice. In other words, **he** had free will.

Man must choose to love and obey God on his own. **Man** was created with the ability of contrary choice, or *having the ability to choose contrary to his nature*. Before the Fall, **man** had the ability to choose to sin; after the Fall, **man** has the ability to choose *not* to sin if saved. **Elohim**, however, does not have the ability to sin. **He** does not have the ability to choose contrary to **His** holy nature.

Had **Adam** passed the test, **his** holiness would have been confirmed, **he** would have been unable to sin, and would have lived eternally. This is similar to the resurrection. At the resurrection, all believers will have their holiness confirmed. They will no longer have the capacity to sin and will live for all eternity. The angels have already made this choice. They had been created with the ability to sin. They also had the ability of contrary choice. The Bible teaches that **one-third** of the angels sinned (**Revelation 12:4**), and these angels are now confirmed in their unholiness. But two-thirds of the angels passed the test; their holiness has been confirmed because they are in the presence of **God** in heaven.

The seventh provision was spiritual death in **2:17b**. **For when you eat of the forbidden fruit you will surely die**. Spiritual death could come on the same day as disobedience. We know that **the LORD God** was talking about spiritual death because **Adam** lived over 900 years. So **he** did not **die** physically that day, but **he** did **die** spiritually. Spiritual death means separation from **Elohim**. The Hebrew here is a special construction called *mot tamut*. It uses the same Hebrew root twice together, making it emphatic. That is why it says: **You will surely die**. Literally it means, *in dying you will die*. This is original sin, and on the day **Adam** took the fruit and ate it, **he** died spiritually. And not only that, the moment **he** disobeyed, the principle of death and decay would take hold and it would begin to operate in **his** body. Consequently, all those who are descendants of **Adam** and Eve (in other words, the entire world) are born spiritually dead (**Romans 5:12**).

Judaism does not believe in original sin. They have to explain this verse in some other way. So the rabbis teach that on the day Adam ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he became mortal. In addition, they teach that it was necessary to use simple words like: You will surely die, because prior to his eating of the tree of knowledge man was as unsophisticated as a child who knows nothing, and he could not have comprehended a more elaborate warning.⁴⁸ These are the great lengths that **Judaism** goes to deny the doctrine of original sin.