Eve’s Rib & Eve’s Curse

Eve’s Rib

Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p.242
See ADAM, FORBIDDEN FRUIT, WOMAN. Scant knowledge is available to us of Eve (the wife of Adam) and her achievements in pre-existence and in mortality.

Without question she was like unto her mighty husband Adam in intelligence and in devotion to righteousness during both her first and second estates of existence. She was placed on earth in the same manner as was Adam, the Mosaic account of the Lord creating her from Adam’s rib being merely figurative. (Moses 3:20-25.)

Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Vol.1, Ch.5, p.87-89
My story begins with Adam and Eve, the archetypal man and woman, in whom each of us is represented. From the most ancient times their thrilling confrontation has been dramatized in rites and ceremonies throughout the world, as part of a great creation-drama rehearsed at the new year to celebrate the establishment of divine authority on earth in the person of the king and his companion. There is a perfect unity between these two mortals; they are ‘one flesh.’ The word rib expresses the ultimate in proximity, intimacy, and identity. When Jeremiah speaks of “keepers of my isela (rib)” (Jeremiah 20:10), he means bosom friends, inseparable companions. Such things are to be taken figuratively, as in Moses 3:22 and Genesis 2:22, when we are told not that the woman was made out of the rib or from the rib, but that she was the rib, a powerful metaphor. So likewise “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23), “and they shall cleave together—as ‘one flesh’”—the condition is that of total identity. “Woman, because she was taken out of man” (Moses 3:23; italics added) is interesting because the word woman is here mysteriously an extension of man, a form peculiar to English; what the element wo- or wi鲱 means or where it came from remains a mystery, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Equally mysterious is the idea of the man and woman as the apple of each other’s eye. Philological dictionaries tell us that it is a moot question whether the word apple began with the eye or the fruit. The Greek word is κόρα or korasion, meaning a little girl or little woman you see in the eye of the beloved; the Latin equivalent is pupilla, from pupa or little doll, from which we get our word pupil. What has diverted me to this is the high degree to which this concept developed in Egypt in the earliest times. The Eye of Re is his daughter, sister, and wife—he sees himself when he looks into her eye, and the other way around. It is the image in the eye that is the ideal, the wδιατ, that which is whole and perfect. For “it is not good that man should be alone”; he is incomplete by himself—the man is not without the woman in the Lord. (See 1 Corinthians 11:11.)

The perfect and beautiful union of Adam and Eve excited the envy and jealousy of the Evil One, who made it his prime objective to break it up. He began by making both parties self-conscious and uncomfortable. ‘Ho, ho,’ said he, ‘you are naked. You had better run and hide, or at least put something on. How do you think you look to your Father?’ They had reason to be ashamed, because their nakedness betrayed their disobedience. They had eaten of the forbidden fruit. But Satan wanted to shock them with his pious show of prudish alarm—he had made them ashamed of being seen together, and that was one wedge driven between them.

His first step (or wedge) had been to get one of them to make an important decision without consulting the other. He approached Adam in the absence of Eve with a proposition to make him wise, and being turned down he sought out the woman to find her alone and thus undermine her resistance more easily. It is important that he was able to find them both alone, a point about which the old Jewish legends have a good deal to say. The tradition is that the two were often apart in the Garden engaged in separate tasks to which each was best fitted. In other words, being one flesh did not deprive either of them of individuality or separate interests and activities.

After Eve had eaten the fruit and Satan had won his round, the two were now drastically separated, for they were of different natures. But Eve, who in ancient lore is the one who outwits the serpent and trips him up with his own smartness, defeated this trick by a clever argument. First she asked Adam if he intended to keep all of God’s commandments. Of course he did! All of them? Naturally! And what, pray, was the first and foremost of those commandments? Was it not to multiply and replenish the earth, the universal commandment given to all God’s creatures? And how could they keep that commandment if they were separated? It had undeniable priority over the commandment not to eat the fruit. So Adam could only admit that she was right and go along: “I see that it must be so,” he said, but it was she who made him see it. This is much more than a smart way of winning her point, however. It is the clear declaration that man and woman were put on the earth to stay together and have a family—that is their first obligation and must supersede everything else.

And then there is another deep sleep. He woke from a deep sleep in the first place when he woke up being Adam after being Michael. And now he goes into another deep sleep. Then he wakes up and finds Eve there. Now it’s time to be properly married. This life ends with another sleep. Notice, it says a deep sleep, a passage. He marries Eve in the covenant, verse 22 following. They are very close, as close as you can get here. The rib in Arabic is the urka or silka. It is the expression for anything as close to you as a thing can possibly be.

What can get closer to your side than your rib. Your rib is your side. You might be able to get along without it, but the rib is about as close to a person as you can get. It is a usage. The metaphor is used in language: As close as my rib and as intimate. It means ‘bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh,’ as intimate as you can be.

Milton R. Hunter, Pearl of Great Price Commentary, p.146
The Church looks upon the story of the creation of woman as symbolizing the unity of man and woman under the holy covenant of celestial marriage. The man was appointed by the Lord and foreordained to be the head of his household; hence the symbolism in the creating of Eve from Adam’s rib and his statement that woman was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

Eve’s Curse

Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, Vol.1, Ch.5, p.89 - p.91

Now a curse was placed on Eve, and it looked as if she would have to pay a high price for taking the initiative in the search for knowledge. To our surprise the identical curse was placed on Adam also. For Eve, God said, "will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." (Genesis 3:16.)

The key is the word for sorrow, atsəv, meaning to labor, to toil, to sweat, to do something very hard. To multiply does not mean to add or increase but to repeat over and over again; the word in the Septuagint is πληθυνομαι, as in the multiplying of words in the repetitious prayers of the ancients. Both the conception and the labor of Eve will be multiple; she will have many children. Then the Lord says to Adam, "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (that is, the bread that his labor must bring forth from the earth). The identical word is used in both cases; the root meaning is to work hard at cutting or digging; both the man and the woman must sorrow and labor. (The Septuagint word is λύπασσαι, meaning bodily or mental strain, discomfort, or affliction.) It means not to be sorry, but to have a hard time. If Eve must labor to bring forth, so too must Adam labor (Genesis 3:17; Moses 4:23) to quicken the earth so it shall bring forth. Both of them bring forth life with sweat and tears, and Adam is not the favored party. If his labor is not as severe as hers, it is more protracted. For Eve’s life will be spared long after her childbearing—"nevertheless thy life shall be spared"—while Adam’s toil must go on to the end of his days: "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life!" Even retirement is no escape from that sorrow.

The thing to notice is that Adam is not let off lightly as a privileged character; he is as bound to Mother Eve as she is to the law of her husband. And why not? If he was willing to follow her, he was also willing to suffer with her, for this affliction was imposed on Adam expressly "because thou hast hearkened unto... thy wife and, hast eaten of the fruit."

And both their names mean the same thing. For one thing they are both called Adam: "And [he] called their name Adam" (Genesis 5:2; italics added). We are told in the book of Moses that Adam means "many," a claim confirmed by recent studies of the Egyptian name of Atum, Tem, Adamu. The same applies to Eve, whose epithet is "the mother of all living."

And what a woman! In the Eden story she holds her own as a lone woman in the midst of an all-male cast of no less than seven supermen and angels. Seven males to one lone woman! Interestingly enough, in the lost and fallen world that reverses the celestial order, the ratio is also reversed, when seven women cling to one righteous man. This calls for an explanation: God commanded his creatures to go into the world "two and two," and yet we presently find the ancient patriarchs with huge families and many wives. What had happened? To anticipate our story, it so happened that when the first great apostasy took place in the days of Adam and Eve, the women, being wise after the nature of Mother Eve, were less prone to be taken in by the enticements of the Cainite world. For one thing they couldn’t— they were too busy having children to get into all that elaborate nonsensical mischief. Seven women could see the light when only one...
Hugh Nibley, *Ancient Documents and the Pearl of Great Price*, p.14

Now we come to the fourth chapter. How are you going to explain the Fall and the problem of evil? Of course, you begin with Satan. He’s the one that loused it all up. He’s the one that’s responsible. Naturally, we begin with an account of how he got started, so we are back in the Council in Heaven again. We don’t dramatize it again, but here it is. You will find it in Revelation 12:3-4 and 7. The only references we have to the fall of Satan, his rebellion and casting out of heaven, are in the New Testament in Revelation. There are many accounts in the apocryphal writings, especially the Coptic writing called the *Abaton*. You will also find it in Luke 10:17-20. Those are the only mentions you find in the Bible. They can stand analyzing too. There are some very interesting things about them. I had hoped to get onto that today, but if we keep moving fast we may cover some ground.