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The Divine Exile from Original Affluence: A Revelatory Reinterpretation of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel from the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible

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Abstract

Over 12,000 years ago, humanity underwent the most monumental transition in the entire history of the world. This event radically augmented the economic, social, political, and philosophical capabilities never before witnessed in any other life-form. An event that led humanity to obtain a higher form of consciousness unique to the species. This event was the dawn of agriculture, the technology differentiating humans from every other lifeform. The beginning of Genesis from the Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible, heavily implies that a metaphor for the dawn of agriculture and, as a result, the institution of civilization is the intended interpretation of the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel. To prove this claim, a textual analysis of the first four chapters and additional context on the anthropological elements of agriculture, civilization, and their effects on early humans are given. Additionally, theories on the overarching message of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel with the context of the allusion to agriculture are provided. This key reinterpretation of the most famous story of all time will have significant social and philosophical repercussions inside and outside the fields of the Abrahamic religions.

Key words: Adam and Eve, Agriculture, Anthropology, Christianity, Civilization, Islam, Judaism, Old Testament, Political Structure, The Bible

Introduction: Historical Context of the Transition to Neolithic Humans

The Agricultural Revolution was the most consequential event in the history of humanity and one of the most consequential events for life itself. The proceeding events following the Agricultural Revolution would change the previously observed conception of life by creating the means for civilization. This eventually led to a society of people who are philosophically separated from animals. The Agricultural Revolution is the event that created the distinction between the shepherds and the sheep, in which humanity is able to utilize the natural world to an unprecedented scale. This way of life for humanity is relatively new, only launching 12,000 years ago. Due to that short timescale, humanity has been dealing with the newfound and complex consequences of the Agricultural Revolution, epitomized in the story of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel.

The Agricultural Revolution began approximately 13,000 years ago in the Levant. Due to the region belonging to the fertile crescent, it was sustainable to grow food and settle there for early humans. This resulted in the population sharply increasing, as the influx of food started the trend of exponential growth for humanity. With this spike in human population, labor diversity, and specialization were introduced to compensate for the needs of people. No longer were there only three jobs of humanity: hunting, gathering, and child-rearing. In civilization, each person received compensation for a specific task that contributed to the civilization. For example, one of the major reasons why humanity transitioned into civilization as swiftly as it did was the demand for security. Hunter-gatherer life for humanity was riddled with war in specific regions, especially within the Levant (Glowacki, 2016). Civilization provided humans with protection with specific humans specializing in the protection of the community, creating the first soldiers.

Additionally, due to the influx of people, technology was conceived at an exponential rate as well. The people of the earliest known civilization, Sumer, were able to produce an unprecedented number of inventions to assist them with their daily lives, including the wheel, writing, and mathematics (Mark, 2019). This was the start of technological specialization, in which certain individuals devoted their labor to a complex task that provided for the civilization. Due to the complexity of these specialized tasks, extensive education was required, starting the human institution of education. This exponential rate of technology largely continued until today, allowing for the technologically advanced civilized life that humans experience a short 12,000 years later.

The Agricultural Revolution came with an immediate consequence to its creation, the work of farming is much more rigorous and took longer than hunting and gathering (Dyble et al., 2019). Neolithic humans devoted much more time attending to work that was considered extremely strenuous. The average working time for hunter-gatherers was about 6.5 hours a day, while the average working time for Neolithic humans was about 8.8 hours a day (Sackett, 1996). Even as technology improved, humans were working to an extent that was unfit for them. As such, a culture of ultimate devotion to work was developed, eventually partially leading to the acceptance of horrid working conditions for humans for the next several thousand years.

The advent of agriculture demanded physically exhausting work that required the unnatural use of human muscles. As a result, due to their increased muscle mass, men were in much more demand for agricultural labor. Also, due to the explosion of the human population, women were having many more children, and allocating more of their time to child-rearing. This was the beginning of the labor division between men and women, as generally, hunting, gathering, and child-rearing were done by both men and women (Hansen et al., 2012). So, due to men tilling the soil and women being focused on child-rearing, men gained sole control of the most important resources in society: food and land. It's important to note that agriculture at the time was heavily land-based, so societies needed to acquire as much land as possible for maximum growth and more food. So, with men in control of both the land and food, they began to rule over women, as they've effectively seized political and economic control over their lives (Hansen et al., 2012). This is why patriarchal societies developed in nearly every civilization across the world, as men have exerted political and economic control through the discovery of agriculture.

Another notable political-economic consequence of the discovery of agriculture was the beginning of wealth inequality. Before the introduction of agriculture into human society, hunter-gatherer societies were mainly politically and economically communal. Karl Marx referred to this era of human organization as "primitive communism," as it was the dominant form of political-economic organization for 99% of human history (Kohler, 2017). It's been previously mentioned that the primary resources of civilization were heavily concentrated through the land. So, whoever controls the land controls the people in it as well. This was the start of a human economic hierarchy based on land ownership, in which the owner of the most land, or all of the land, was considered the king. Those close or important to the king or any other landowners were considered nobility, the rest of the citizens were considered peasants under the rule of the king. There's also another notable economic class that originated from the agricultural revolution: slaves. The conquest of other people from agricultural or hunter-gatherer societies was one of the primary driving factors behind the spread of civilization.

An immediate consequence of civilization is the deterioration of health among Neolithic humans which largely lasted until the Industrial Revolution. During humanity's extensive history as hunter-gatherers, there was a diverse food selection in which people could receive all the necessary nutrients that they needed. After the discovery of agriculture, Neolithic humans immediately found that growing one or two reliable crops to feed an exponentially growing human population was a successfully consistent food source. However, through the remains of these Neolithic humans, many lacked vital nutrients due to the lack of diversity in their diet (Larsen, 2006). Neolithic humans relied on maize-based crops for their diet, which tended to lack iron, isoleucine, and tryptophan. Meanwhile, humans relying on rice lacked vitamin A. Additionally, due to the lack of meat consumption, humans commonly lacked zinc, vitamin A, and vitamin B12 and due to the lack of milk in the Neolithic era, humans suffered from a lack of calcium and vitamin D. As a result, osteoporosis and osteopenia were widespread in Neolithic agricultural societies (Ulijaszek et al., 1991).

One of the alternatives to an agricultural crop-based society was a pastoral society. A pastoral society largely receives its food and resources from animal husbandry and usually consists of nomadic behavior. There are still pastoralist societies; however, it's important to

note that they have been largely dominated by agricultural societies, usually by military conquest during the Bronze Age. While humans in pastoralist societies are better nourished, these societies have a much less stable source of food and don't support the exponential growth that crop-based societies did. As a result, pastoralist societies don't expand widely and are vulnerable to foreign invaders.

The last several points of context are necessary to truly understand the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel. These stories reference a period of change that occurred as a result of the Agricultural Revolution. However, before the central analysis of the stories, it's important to note that there is no evidence that the creators of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel had knowledge of the agricultural revolution. By approximately 550-250 B.C., when the book of Genesis was estimated to be first written, hunter-gatherer societies were a rarity, especially in the Levant, where the book of Genesis was written. However, it's certainly clear that the authors of the book of Genesis were referencing a period of transition that humanity has gone through that's relevant to the society that they lived in (more on this in the conclusion). To preface the analysis for now though, it's very possible that the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel were referencing a broad period of transition toward their unique position as humans in the context of life. It's very possible that the metaphor for this transition is explicitly agriculture.

Verse Analysis

"To the woman He said, 'I shall surely increase your sorrow and your pregnancy; in pain you shall bear children. And to your husband will be your desire, and he will rule over you.'" (Genesis 3:16).

This verse is likely referencing the beginning of the patriarchy and the spike in birthrates that occurred after agriculture. The specific punishment of women who give birth is an allusion to the many babies that were born after the advent of agriculture. These babies inherited the punishment of Adam and Eve and the gift of knowledge that was given by the forbidden fruit. In this case, under this interpretation, this represents the elements of civilization (technology, labor, etc.) affecting the future generations of humans. The forced submission of women to their husbands is also striking, as this is exactly what happened when agriculture came about.

"And to man He said, 'Because you listened to your wife, and you ate from the tree from which I commanded you saying, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed be the ground for your sake; with toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life./And it will cause thorns and thistles to grow for you, and you shall eat the herbs of the field./With the sweat of your face you shall eat bread'"(Genesis 3:17-19).

This section of line 3:17 is strikingly eerie, as the "toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life" is implying that, to this day, humanity is still eating from the "tree of knowledge". Knowing that the forbidden fruit represents divine knowledge through technology resulting from civilization (Genesis 3:22), the interpretation from this is that humanity is divinely advancing while obtaining more consequences. The line of 3:18 represents the suffering that eating "the herbs of the field" will incur, implying the use of farming as a distinction from the

“tree of knowledge”. This is further proven to be the case in line 3:19, in which God explicitly states that obtaining bread, the most common food from the Levant, will be difficult and incur consequences. The difficulty of the task is notable with the “sweat of your face” phrase in particular because of the harder work that civilization brought.

“Now the Lord God said, “Behold man has become like one of us, having the ability of knowing good and evil, and now, lest he stretch forth his hand and take also from the Tree of Life and eat and live forever”(Genesis 3:22).

The first part of the verse is particularly interesting due to the implication that humans obtain morality and ethics by eating from the fruit. This may be a reference to the introduction of laws and personal morality that arose from civilization due to the increased spread of information. Additionally, this statement was made by an angel, and by implying that “man has become like one of us,” they imply that this transition has allowed humanity to transition to an evolved or divine form of life. The idea that the forbidden fruit is a reference to knowledge or technology is further proven by the statement of living forever. This represents that through technology (eating the original forbidden fruit), humanity will eventually reach the state of living forever.

“And the Lord God sent him out of the Garden of Eden, to till the soil, whence he had been taken” (Genesis 3:23).

The “Garden of Eden” can be defined as a place where everything is provided for the needs of humanity. In this case, the Garden of Eden is comparable to the state of humanity before agriculture, where through nature, all of the needs of humanity are provided. As a result, humans before transitioning into agriculture lived much more fulfilling lives catered to their sensory experience. So, the punishment of “sending him out” of hunter-gatherer society to “till the soil” can represent this transition.

“And she continued to bear his brother Abel, and Abel was a shepherd of flocks, and Cain was a tiller of the soil” (Genesis 4:2).

For the story of Cain and Abel, this line has an incredible amount of symbolic significance. It establishes the metaphor that Abel was a “shepherd of flocks” or a Pastoralist, and that Cain was a “tiller of the soil” or a farmer of crop-based Agriculture. Widely interpreted as a story about jealousy, this is a strange fact to establish in order to support that narrative.

“Now it came to pass at the end of days, that Cain brought of the fruit of the soil an offering to the Lord/And Abel he too brought of the firstborn of his flocks and of their fattest, and the Lord turned to Abel and to his offering” (Genesis 4:3-4).

Seemingly, this is already the start of a competition between the two ways of life. There’s a reason that the authors of Genesis put Cain and Abel against each other, it represents crop-based agriculture and pastoral societies competing against each other for land, as they are both heavily land-reliant. So, why would God turn to Abel’s sacrifice? The theory of this interpretation is that meat is far more nutritious than the “fruit of the soil” and satisfies people much better than crop-based agriculture does.

"When you till the soil, it will not continue to give its strength to you; you shall be a wanderer and an exile in the land" (Genesis 4:12)

After Cain murdered Abel, which represents the dominance of agricultural societies, God says this statement as punishment. However, this specific phrasing of crop consumption not giving its "strength to you" could represent how unhealthy an entirely one-plant diet was at the time. Due to the lack of iron and calcium, weakness was very common in agricultural societies. This is what this interpretation believes to be the real "Curse of Cain," in which those who eat fruit tilled from the soil don't receive strength from the food source. This "Curse of Cain" has spread to his descendants, which is why they also don't receive strength from crop-based agriculture.

"...And Lamech took himself two wives; one was named Adah, and the other was named Zillah./Now Adah bore Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have cattle./And his brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all who grasp a lyre and a flute..."(Genesis 4:17-22).

Lines 4:17-22 may be the most significant lines in the story of Cain and Abel for this interpretation. These lines are the varying offspring that Cain has and the introduction of Seth. However, what's very important in these lines is an element that they add to each offspring: their occupations. So, these verses represent the introduction of labor diversity and specialization to each of the descendants as a result of humanity's transition into agriculture. They also represent the exponential growth in the population after the start of agriculture.

Conclusion: The Real Story behind Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel

What really is humanity? What really are God and the Angels? Why is life the way it is? These are questions that the stories of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel attempt to answer. In the following paragraphs, I am going to utilize the explanation of these two stories in an attempt to provide an answer to these central philosophical questions. To preface my explanation, there are elements of the story that still need to be defined. God is the omnipresent controller of all life, he created the universe, but he notably created humanity in "his image" (1:27). Angels are also implied by 3:22 to have some ability to divinely manipulate life. The Garden of Eden represents the natural hunter-gatherer society that is fit and created for the needs of humans. The forbidden fruit represents knowledge and/or technology, in which humans are able to augment their lives to their needs. The world in its current form, after the exile of Adam and Eve, represents agricultural society and the suffering that came from it. Lastly, humans are burdened with the sin of eating the forbidden fruit, representing an agricultural society that isn't made for their needs.

So, considering all of those definitions restated, the central message of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel is to show that humanity has gained a relatively newfound ability to manipulate life, allegorically to God and the angels, and that due to this ability that humanity has gained, humanity is suffering the consequences of this ability. Additionally, the story of Cain and Abel shows the results of adopting crop-based agriculture as the primary food source for humanity.

The knowledge gained by eating from the Tree of Knowledge was the manipulation of life itself through agriculture. The ability to manipulate life on a massive scale resulted in humanity changing from primitive instinctual animals to a divine life that has created an image of themselves onto the world. This resulted in drastic consequences including the subjugation of women, economic inequality, lack of nutrition, more complex and intensive labor, and a general standard of living that is separated from their organic and evolutionary-formed habitat.

While the authors of Genesis didn't have any direct knowledge of the Agricultural Revolution, they seemed to imply an awareness of the event. From their experience as humans experiencing the crux of civilization, they were able to derive a separation of humans from animals. When observing animals, it may not be a logical leap to assume that humans were also primitive and instinctual beings at one point. Based on that assumption, they would need to derive a cause for the shift in status. Due to the numerous references to agriculture within the two stories, it's likely that this transition was metaphorical for agriculture. Either way, the seemingly divine exile from original affluence greatly answered the questions that the authors of the stories intended to address.

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