

# Was Adam with Eve at the Scene of Temptation?

## A Short Note on “With Her” in Genesis 3:6

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The Hebrew text of Genesis 3:6 appears to imply that Adam was with Eve<sup>1</sup> in the scene of temptation. The King James Version, offers this word-by-word rendering: “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband *with her*; and he did eat.” The New International Version goes further and translates: “She also gave some to her husband, *who was with her*, and he ate it.”<sup>2</sup>

At first glance, it appears that Adam and Eve were together when Eve interacted with the serpent and eventually ate from the forbidden fruit. Such a view, however, raises a problem: it implies that Adam would have watched everything without interfering to prevent Eve from being deceived by the serpent. If one considers that it was Adam who first received the instructions about the forbidden tree (Gen 2:16–17), it becomes even more puzzling to explain why he remained passive and left Eve alone in the face of temptation.

### Two Views on the Issue

#### Adam was Absent from Scene of Temptation

John Calvin addressed this issue and admitted that although some people interpreted the passage to mean that Adam was with the woman, such interpretation “is by no means credible.” He then suggested “it might be that he [Adam] soon joined her, and that, even before the woman tasted the fruit of the tree, she related the conversation held with the serpent, and entangled him with the same fallacies by which she herself had been deceived.”<sup>3</sup> John Wesley in turn asserted that “he [Adam] was not with her when she was tempted; surely if he had, he would have interposed to prevent the sin; but he came to her when she had eaten, and was prevailed with by her to eat likewise.”<sup>4</sup> C. Leupold conjectured, “when the temptation began, Adam was not with Eve but had only joined her at this time.”<sup>5</sup> More recently, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary insisted that the expression “with her does not imply that he had been with her all the time, standing mute at the scene of temptation. Instead, she gave him of the fruit upon rejoining him that he might eat it “with her” and thus share its presumed benefits.”<sup>6</sup>

#### Adam was Present in the Scene of Temptation

Recent commentators are more inclined to the view that Adam and Eve were together in the temptation scene. Some scholars point out Adam’s strange silence,<sup>7</sup> glaring omission, and passivity as Eve interacts with the serpent and eventually succumbs to the temptation. R. Kent Hughes exclaims, “Here is a shocker: Adam was apparently privy to the conversation between Eve and the snake!”<sup>8</sup> John Walton rhetorically inquires, “Where was Adam through all of this?” And he insists the “text tells us, but for some reason we have been reluctant to accept what the text says: Adam was there with Eve.”<sup>9</sup> More recently Julie Faith Parker lambasted the Jewish Publication Society translation for failing to convey the view that Adam was present in the scene of temptation, which according to Parker reflects a trend “to blame only Eve for succumbing to temptation in the garden, even though Adam is present in Gen 3:1–6 and shares responsibility for disobedience.”<sup>10</sup> However, as David E. Stein shows in a rejoinder, the matter is much more complicated than Parker may have presumed.<sup>11</sup> Admittedly, either view is fraught with difficulties. If Adam “was nearby his silence is inexplicable; if he was not near, his apparent immediate, unquestioning acquiescence to his wife’s suggestion is equally inexplicable.”<sup>12</sup>

Nonetheless, in spite of such evident difficulties, this essay undertakes an examination of the text in an attempt to determine which of the views mentioned above is more plausible from a narrative point of view. In this effort, two lines of investigation will be pursued. First, this study gives attention to the syntax and meaning of the prepositional phrase “with her” (*immah*). Second, this investigation deals with the plural pronouns in Genesis 3:1–5 and the quotation formulas in order to ascertain whether or not the serpent was addressing more than one individual.

### **Prepositional Phrase “with her” (*immah*)**

As already noted, the Hebrew text literally reads: “She also gave to *her husband with her*, and he ate.”<sup>13</sup> Some scholars, although assuming that Adam was not present, suggest that the phrase “with her” indicates the association between Eve and Adam in the act of eating the fruit. They also mention a few instances of similar expressions to support this interpretation. Nonetheless, examination of such occurrences in context fails to provide a syntactic parallel equivalent to Genesis 3:6 to be useful.<sup>14</sup> So it appears that a more fruitful option is to search for a clue within the immediate context of Genesis 3.

At closer inspection, it turns out that an equivalent phrase appears in Genesis 3:12. Confronted by God, Adam retorted: “The woman whom you gave to be *with me* [*immadi*], she gave me of the tree, and I ate” (Gen 3:12). Adam does not say, “the woman you gave *me*,” which would appear more natural. He said instead: “the woman whom you gave to be *with me*.”<sup>15</sup> This expression most probably alludes to the intimacy between man and woman<sup>16</sup> as inferred from Genesis 2:22–24 (“one flesh”), which indicates that the man had received the woman to be with him as a helper and companion. Now it must be noted that the phrase “with me” (*immadi*) in Genesis 3:12 parallels “with her” (*immah*) in Genesis 3:6. By the same token, “with her” most likely alludes to Eve’s relationship with Adam, the man to be “with her” in partnership and mutuality.

Therefore it seems reasonable to suggest that “with her” (*immah*) in Genesis 3:6 hints at the intimacy between Adam and Eve in the Garden (cf., Gen 2:22–25). This is a tentative paraphrase: “She also gave to the man, who was in close relationship with her, and he ate it.” In other words, the phrase “with her” does not convey that Adam was with Eve during the encounter with the serpent. Instead, the phrase qualifies the man as one in communion with the woman. Consequently, the prepositional phrase “with her” in Genesis 3:6 functions syntactically as an adjectival subordinate clause to qualify the term “man,” not to indicate that Adam was at her side in the temptation scene. Moreover, as one author perceptively noted, “in the narrative Adam is held accountable not for failing to stop Eve but for eating the fruit (v. 17).”<sup>17</sup>

### **Plural Pronouns and Quotation Formula in Genesis 3:1-5**

It has been argued that since the serpent addresses Eve by means of plural pronouns (vv. 1, 4–5) this must be an indication that Adam was with Eve.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the serpent always addresses the woman by means of the plural “you.” It must be pointed out, however, that the plural does not necessarily indicate that Adam was present in the scene of temptation. A single individual may be addressed by plural pronouns if associated with or representing others.

A case in point is found in the Jacob narrative, which reports a dialogue between Judah and Jacob concerning taking Benjamin to Egypt. It is worthy of notice that Jacob answers to Judah with a plural “you”: “And Israel said, ‘Why did you [pl.] deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you [pl.] had still another brother?’” (Gen 43:6). Thus, it seems that plural pronouns do not necessarily imply more than one addressee. It then becomes apparent that the plural pronouns used by the serpent are not mandatory for the presence of Adam in the scene of temptation.

Finally, it should be noted that twice in the story, the narrator introduces the speech of the serpent with quotation formulas that portrays Eve as the sole audience: “And he [the serpent] said to the woman” (Gen 3:1)

and “then the serpent said to the woman” (Gen 3:4). Nonetheless, the serpent’s speech implies that Eve was not alone. So a tension arises between the unequivocal statements of the narrator and the words of the serpent. An attempt to resolve this tension is to hypothesize that the serpent used plural pronouns in order to intentionally implicate Adam in the fray, even if *in absentia* as he was. By this the serpent hints that the couple, not Eve alone, was the target.

### Conclusion

The foregoing analysis indicates that Adam was not present with Eve in the scene of temptation. As argued, the phrase “with her” appears to convey the intimacy experienced by the first couple in the Garden rather than the spatial location of Adam in the scene. This coheres with the grammatical data and the plot of the Genesis narrative. Finally, two implications may be noted. First, it is significant to observe that Ellen G. White, although following the King James Version in most cases, departs from that version in her interpretation of Genesis 3 and clearly indicates that Eve was alone in the scene of temptation.<sup>19</sup> This may show that White did not follow the King James Version slavishly but was selective in her use of this version. Second, Adam and Eve were supposed to stay together in the Garden in order to mutually strengthen each other and resist temptation. The disruption of that togetherness paved the way for the entrance of sin into the world. Let husbands and wives be together, spatially whenever possible, but always emotionally, affectively, and spiritually.

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<sup>1</sup> Although it is anachronistic to refer to the woman as Eve prior to the Fall, for the sake of convenience this article uses Eve and Adam interchangeably along with woman and man, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Emphasis supplied. So do *NKJV*, *NASB*, *NRSV*, and *HSCB*. Interestingly, *RSV*, *DRB*, *Tanakh* (JPS), and *The Message* omit “with her” altogether.

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin and John King, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 151–52.

<sup>4</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament* (Bristol: William Pine, 1765), 1:15.

<sup>5</sup> C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1942), 152–53.

<sup>6</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (Review and Herald, 1978), 1:231. For the same view, see also John Peter Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Genesis* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 230 (first published in English by C. Scribner in 1868).

<sup>7</sup> Paul J. Kissling, *Genesis*, College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2004), 194

<sup>8</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 70.

<sup>9</sup> John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 206

<sup>10</sup> Julie Faith Parker, “Blaming Eve Alone: Translation, Omission, and Implications of עמה Genesis 3:6b,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no. 4 (2013): 729–747.

<sup>11</sup> David E. E. Stein, “A Rejoinder concerning Genesis 3:6 and the NJPS Translation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134, no. 1 (2015): 51–52.

<sup>12</sup> D. Stuart Briscoe and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Genesis*, The Preacher’s Commentary Series (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 1:50.

<sup>13</sup> Emphasis supplied. All biblical quotations are from the *NKJV*, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>14</sup> In regard to the prepositional phrase “with her,” Umberto Cassuto argues that expressions such as *’im* or *’eth* (“with”) “with pronominal suffixes occur as a rule when a person is said to associate himself in a given action with someone who leads him. Examples are: you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you (6:18); and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him (7:7); So Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the Negeb (30:1)” (U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part I, From Adam to Noah* [Genesis I–VI 8], trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1998), 148). A similar view is also expressed by Gordon J. Wenham: “She ‘gave it to her husband with her’: this last phrase emphasizes he [sic.] man’s association with the woman in the eating (cf. 6:18; 7:7; 13:1). Indeed, his eating is the last and decisive act of disobedience, for immediately the consequences of their sin are described” (*Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary [Dallas: Word, 1998], 1:75–76).

<sup>15</sup> Emphasis supplied in all three verses.

<sup>16</sup> Joel Rosenberg, “The Garden Story Forward and Backward: The Non-Narrative Dimension of Gen. 2–3,” *Prooftexts* 1:1 (1981): 13.

<sup>17</sup> Stein, 52.

<sup>18</sup> K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 1A: 238; Hughes, 70; David R. Helm and Jon M. Dennis, *The Genesis Factor: Probing Life’s Big Questions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 77–78.

<sup>19</sup> Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Pacific Press, 1890), 53–54.

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