

3.15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; They shall strike at your head, and you shall strike at their heel."

3.16 And to the woman He said, "I will make most severe your pangs in childbearing; in pain shall you bear children.

Unlike the words He addressed to Adam and the serpent, God did not use the word "curse" in addressing the woman. While the woman is punished, she was not cursed.

Also, God did not say He will create pain in childbirth, but rather that He will *multiply* it (the translation here is "make most severe"), suggesting that some pain would have accompanied birth even in the Garden of Eden.

Essentially, God was telling the man and the woman He was no longer going to protect human beings from the harshness of nature. But this does not prevent people from trying to conquer the harshness of nature on their

own. Human progress depends on doing so.

THE WOMAN'S DESIRE FOR A MAN

3.16 (cont.) Yet your urge shall be for your husband,

This is a verse that understandably disturbs many moderns. The modern ideal is that a woman never depend on, let alone have an "urge" for, a man, a husband. A well-known feminist slogan of the 1960s put it this way: "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle." And, to be sure, a certain percentage of women do not yearn for a man. But most women's "urge" for a man to love and be loved by is a reality—even though much contemporary thinking denies it: "You don't need a man," "Never be dependent."

What we have here is another statement of the reality that accompanies leaving Eden. God is saying in the real world in which Adam and Eve will now live is now the reality. It is not necessarily either a curse or a

Back to 3

punishment. And it is certainly not a command. It is a description of what will ensue in the real world.

Only time will tell whether this denial of a woman's yearning for a man—and its replacement with a yearning for a career, for example—will produce happier women and a healthier society. If it does, this verse will no longer describe reality. On the other hand, if denying this verse does not lead to happier women and a healthier society, perhaps one day more people will look at the Garden of Eden story with renewed respect.

ESSAY: WOMAN'S DESIRE FOR A DOMINANT MAN

3.16 (cont.) and he shall rule over you."

The second, and considerably greater, problem for many people is this second part of the verse. At the very least, it contradicts egalitarian thinking.

The reality is most women do seek a man stronger than they are. It is why, for example, most women

seek a man who earns more money than they do. Even very wealthy women generally seek a man at least as wealthy as they are (whereas wealthy men generally do not seek a wealthy, let alone a wealthier, woman). And they seek professional ambition in men more than most men seek this trait in a woman. If you ask most single men seeking a wife, "Are you interested in meeting a woman who is beautiful, very kind, and very smart, but not professionally ambitious?" most men would respond in the affirmative. But if you ask most single women seeking a husband, "Are you interested in meeting a man who is very handsome, very kind and very smart, but not professionally ambitious?" most women would respond in the negative.

This is true not only regarding ambition and wealth. No matter how smart a woman is, most women are more attracted to a smarter man; no matter how tall, most women are more attracted to a taller man; no matter how successful, most women are more attracted to a more successful man.

Back to 3

Even a completely secular, evolutionary understanding of male and female natures argues for female attraction to dominant males:

“Evolutionary psychologists claim that women prefer dominant partners because such men have superior genes. Evidence has shown that women prefer more dominant men when they themselves are at the most fertile point of their menstrual cycle, whereas most men do not similarly seek out dominant women.”⁴

To deny this female desire is to deny reality. Even in our time, when men and women are raised on “gender equality” and most university-educated men and women strongly affirm a desire to make a home that is egalitarian, few marriages are egalitarian. Scores of studies in many countries conclude no matter how much both a husband and wife affirm equality, even if both spouses earn roughly the same amount of money, wives do more housework than their husbands.⁵

Again, my understanding of the Garden of Eden story is that it reflects the choice we humans make to be fully

human: awareness over immortality. This verse seems to suggest that part of the sexual awakening resulting from eating of the Tree of Knowledge was a woman's urge for a more dominant partner. For most women, a man whom she can dominate is not alluring while a dominant man is alluring—assuming, of course, he treats her with love and respect. This is in no way a defense of any form of male abuse of a woman—whether physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, or economic. Abuse is evil. But in the complex interaction of male and female, a dominant male is sexually alluring for most women.

Of course, many will argue that most modern women want neither a dominant nor a dominated man—just an equal. But the Torah has already stated that the sexes are equal. That a woman will be more attracted to a dominant man does not negate that equality.⁶

This seeking of a dominant man is the unhappy reason many young women are drawn to “bad boys,” males who will mistreat them and who mistreat others. But a dominant man is not necessarily a bad man. A

dominant man can be and must also be loving and kind. The man who embodies all three traits, for most women, is the best man.

Finally, this consequence of eating from the Tree of Knowledge is descriptive, not prescriptive. Women are entirely free to choose a non-dominant man.

3.17 To Adam He said, “Because you did as your wife said and ate of the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’

Adam faced harsh consequences not because “you did as your wife said” but because he listened to his wife rather than God. In a later instance, when Abraham did not listen to his wife, Sarah, God specifically instructed him to listen to her (Genesis 21:12).

3.17 (cont.) cursed be the ground because of you; By toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life:

Unlike the serpent, Adam was not cursed directly; the

ground was cursed, and as a result, he will have to toil all the days of his life.

The consequences the man must face are macro and broad, pertaining to the earth and to work; the consequences to the woman are micro and personal, pertaining to feelings, pain, and desire. This also reflects the natures of men and women. Men tend to be more preoccupied with the macro and women with the micro. That is why women are more likely than men to enter fields that deal with children (from teacher to pediatrician to child therapist); more likely to vote for candidates who advocate policies that expand the state's role in taking care of its citizens; and more likely, when witnessing a car accident, to notice the pain and suffering of those hurt than to notice the make and color of the car.

The micro and macro are of equal importance, but the two must balance one another. Too much focus on either leads to a dysfunctional society. That is one reason why men need a woman; women need a man; and society