

# Genesis 2:16-21

Exegesis by Nate Wilson

2.16 וַיִּצְוֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָאָדָם לֵאמֹר<sup>2</sup> מִכָּל עֵץ-הַגֶּן אָכַל<sup>3</sup> תֹּאכְלֶה:

2.17 וּמִעֵץ הַדְּעִת טוֹב וְרָע לֹא תֹאכְלֶה<sup>4</sup> מִמֶּנּוּ

כִּי בַיּוֹם אָכַלְתָּ<sup>5</sup> מִמֶּנּוּ מוֹת<sup>6</sup> תָּמוּת<sup>7</sup>:

2.18 וַיֹּאמֶר<sup>8</sup> יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֹא-טוֹב הָיִיתָ<sup>9</sup> הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ

אֶעֱשֶׂה<sup>10</sup> לּוֹ-<sup>a</sup>עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ:

2.19 וַיִּצְרֶה<sup>11</sup> יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים<sup>a</sup> מִן-הָאֲדָמָה<sup>b</sup> כָּל-תְּיַת הַשָּׂדֶה

וְאֵת כָּל-עֵרֶף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיָּבֵא<sup>12</sup> אֶל-הָאָדָם לְרִאֲוֹת<sup>13</sup> מֶה-יִקְרָא<sup>14</sup> לּוֹ

כֹּל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא<sup>15</sup> לּוֹ הָאָדָם כְּנֶפֶשׁ תִּיְהִי<sup>c</sup> הוּא שְׁמוֹ:

2.20 וַיִּקְרָא<sup>16</sup> הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת לְכָל-הַבְּהֵמָה וְלָעֶרְף<sup>a</sup> הַשָּׁמַיִם וְלִכָּל

תְּיַת הַשָּׂדֶה וְלָאָדָם<sup>b</sup> לֹא-מָצָא<sup>17</sup> עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ:

2.21 וַיִּפֹּל<sup>18</sup> יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים תְּרַדְמָה עַל-הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן<sup>19</sup> וַיִּקַּח<sup>20</sup>

אֶחָת מִצְלַעְתָּיו וַיִּסְגֶּר<sup>21</sup> בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָה:

## VERBALS

#	Root	Parsing	Meaning	Syntax
1	צוה	Pi. Impf. (no Qal form) 3ms + v.c. (ל"יה)	commanded	M.V.
2	אמר	Qal Infinitive Construct + ל (פ"א)	saying	Ident. Act.
3	אכל	Qal Infinitive Absolute (פ"א)	eating	Intensive
4	אכל	Qal Imperative 2ms (פ"א)	eat	M.V. of Dir. Disc.
5	אכל	Qal Inf. Const + 2ms subj. pronoun (פ"א)	eating	Temporal
6	מות	Qal Infinitive Absolute (ע"ו)	dying	Intensive
7	מות	Qal Imperative 2ms (ע"ו)	die	Causal
8	אמר	Qal Imperf. 3ms + vav consec. (פ"א)	say	M.V.
9	היה	Qal Infinitive Construct (all weak)	being	M.V. of Dir. Quote
10	עשה	Qal Imperf. 1cs (ל"יה, פ')	make	M.V. of Dir. Quote
11	יצר	Qal Imptv. 3ms + vav consec. (פ"י)	formed	M.V. (Result?)
12	בוא	Hiph. Imptv. 3ms + v.c. (ל"יא, ע"ו)	cause to go	M.V. (Result?)
13	ראה	Qal Infinitive Construct + ל (ל"ה)	see	Purpose
14	קרא	Qal Imperfect 3ms (ל"יא)	call (name)	D.O. of #13
15	קרא	Qal Imperfect 3ms (ל"יא)	call (name)	Rel. Clause (Appos.)
16	קרא	Qal Imperfect 3ms + vav consec. (ל"יא)	called	M.V. (Logical Result)
17	מצא	Qal Perfect 3ms (ל"יא)	found	M.V. (Logical Result)

18	נפל	Hiphil Imperf. 3ms + v.c.	(ל"א פ"נ)	cause to fall	M.V.
19	ישן	Qal Imperf. 3ms + v.c.	(פ"י)	sleep	Result (Temp?)
20	לקח	Qal Imperf. 3ms + v.c.	(ל')	took	M.V.
21	סגר	Qal Imperf. 3ms + v.c.	(strong)	closed up	M.V.

## CRITICAL NOTES:

### 18<sup>a</sup> sic L, mlt Mss Edd הַ

Multiple Hebrew codex manuscripts and editions (including Leningradensis B 19<sup>A</sup>, Kennicott, de Rossi, and Ginsburg) add a cohortative הַ to the end of this verb. It emphasizes the wish or will to do something, but other than emphasis, it really does nothing to change the meaning. There is a dagesh in the הַ here, which could indicate doubling, which could perhaps be the reason for adding the extra הַ at the end, but apparently the most reliable mss. don't have the extra הַ. Interestingly enough, the LXX takes it a step further and makes it a hortatory (ποιησωμεν = "Let us make"). This could be an attempt to harmonize the creation of woman with the creation of man (Gen. 1:26 "Let us make"), but the plural isn't actually in question in this critical note, which may mean it so so obviously a corruption from the Hebrew test that the LXX is not considered a significant variant.

### 19<sup>a</sup> u u + עוֹרָ (Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint add "again/further")

"God [again] formed from the ground." Some people view this passage as being in chronological order: Day 5 = animals created, Day 6 = man created, then more animals created to show none were for man's counterpart. Others say it is in logical order with a focus on man (since the creation of animals has not been mentioned in this second creation account, logically it has to be mentioned that they have been created before they can be paraded in front of Adam). Inserting the "again" would emphasize God's creative work on animals happening a second time, but we trust the Masoretic Text is more accurate. Leaving out the "again" can keep it ambiguous, allowing this passage to be treated chronologically or in logical order.

### 19<sup>b</sup> ins c u אַת (Samaritan Pentateuch inserts with a Direct Object indicator)

This is not a strong source compared to the Masoretic Text, so the M.T. should not be changed on the basis of the Samaritan Pent. Besides, the phrase "all living things" is obviously the Direct Object of "God formed" so it doesn't matter.

### 19 c-c frt add. ("This was perhaps added.")

It is awkward wording, but the phrase "living creature" helps to keep all the pronouns straight since both the man and the animal are being referred to in third person "he/his." Without any textual witnesses to its omission, it would be unwise to omit the phrase on the suggestion of a 19<sup>th</sup> century editor!

### 20<sup>a</sup> l c nonn Mss u S T<sup>j</sup> V וְלִכְלֵ-עוֹף

"And to all birds" is read with several Hebrew codex manuscripts, the Septuagint, Syriac, Pseudo-Jonathan Targums, and the Vulgate. The Hebrew witnesses to this are few, and the rest are all translations; the "all" is not in the Masoretic Text. Did a scribe accidentally omit it? You'd think somebody would have caught that, as obvious as the parallel construction is "all cattle ... [all] birds ... all creatures of the field." I think that the omission was original, but makes little difference because it is implied by the parallel construction. Besides, what does it matter if Adam left a few birds unnamed? He apparently didn't name the fish...

### 20<sup>b</sup> l אִלָּא (read "and not")

This could make an interesting difference. Note that the Zaquet accent in the Masoretic Text is over the word "and to the man," not over "the field." Inserting a conjunction before the verb "He found" could complete the separation, so instead of reading "And the man called out names to all the four-footed animals, to birds of the heavens, and to every land animal. But the man did not find for himself a helper..." it would read "And the man called out names to all the four-footed animals, to birds of the heavens, to every land animal, and to man. But he did not find a helper..." Instead of emphasizing that the man couldn't find a helper, it would have Adam naming the class of mankind. Actually the emphasis on not finding a helper would remain, since there is a change in verb tense. This also resolves

some grammatical difficulties, making the verse easier to translate, without a significant change in the meaning. If there were any textual support, I'd actually prefer it!

## **ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS:**

NAW: 16 And Jehovah-God gave an order<sup>1</sup> to the man, saying<sup>2</sup>, "From every tree of the garden, eat<sup>4</sup> freely<sup>3</sup> 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, do not eat<sup>4</sup> from it, for in the day of your eating<sup>5</sup> from it, you will surely<sup>6</sup> die<sup>7</sup>." 18 And Jehovah-God said<sup>8</sup>, "The man by himself is<sup>9</sup> NOT GOOD; I will make<sup>10</sup> a helper corresponding to him." 19 Now Jehovah-God had formed<sup>11</sup> from the ground every land animal and every bird of the heavens and brought<sup>12</sup> *each* to the man to see<sup>13</sup> what he would call<sup>14</sup> it. And whatever the man would call<sup>15</sup> the form of an animal, that would be its name. 20 And the man called out<sup>16</sup> names to all the four-footed animals, to birds of the heavens, and to every land animal. But the man did not find<sup>17</sup> for himself a helper corresponding to him. 21 So Jehovah-God caused a deep sleep to fall<sup>18</sup> over the man so that he slept<sup>19</sup> and He removed<sup>20</sup> one of his ribs and then closed up<sup>21</sup> the flesh underneath there.

KJV: 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. 18 And the LORD God said, *It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. 19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought *them* unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that *was* the name thereof. 20 And Adam gave names to all the cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found a help meet for him. 21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.

ASV:16 And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. 18 And Jehovah God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him. 19 And out of the ground Jehovah God formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof. 20 And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field; but for man there was not found a help meet for him. 21 And Jehovah God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof:

NASB: And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." 18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." 19 And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. 20 And the man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place,

NIV: 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." 18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." 19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.

## Syntactical-Logical Flow:

- 5 No land plant was yet in the earth...
- 7 and Jehovah-God formed man ...
- 8 And Jehovah-God planted a garden...
- 15 And Jehovah-God took the man and put him in the garden...
- 16 And Jehovah-God gave an order<sup>1</sup> to the man, saying<sup>2</sup>,  
 “From every tree of the garden, eat<sup>4</sup> freely<sup>3</sup> 17  
 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, do not eat<sup>4</sup> from it,  
 for in the day of your eating<sup>5</sup> from it, you will surely<sup>6</sup> die<sup>7</sup>.”
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- 18 And Jehovah-God said<sup>8</sup>,  
 “The man by himself is<sup>9</sup> NOT GOOD;  
 I will make<sup>10</sup> a helper corresponding to him.”
- 19 Now, Jehovah-God had formed<sup>11</sup> from the ground every land animal and every bird of  
 the heavens  
 and brought<sup>12</sup> each to the man  
 to see<sup>13</sup> what he would call<sup>14</sup> it.  
 And whatever the man would call<sup>15</sup> the form of an animal, that would be  
 its name.
- 20 And the man called out<sup>16</sup> names to all the four-footed animals, to birds of the heavens,  
 and to every land animal.  
 But the man did not find<sup>17</sup> for himself a helper corresponding to him.
- 21 So Jehovah-God caused a deep sleep to fall<sup>18</sup> over the man  
 so that he slept<sup>19</sup>  
 and He removed<sup>20</sup> one of his ribs  
 and then closed up<sup>21</sup> the flesh underneath there.
- 22 And Jehovah-God built into a woman the rib  
 which He had taken from the man  
 and brought her to the man...

## Commentary:

PROPER NAMES: An interesting issue is whether to translate “ha-adam” as “the man” or transliterate it as a proper name, “Adam.” At this point there really was no need for a proper name, because there was only one man, so he could just be called “the man” and everybody would know exactly who “the man” was. Even after “the woman” was made, she didn’t need a proper name either, because there was only one woman. Adam apparently called her “the woman” until some time after the Fall, (The name “Eve” doesn’t appear until Gen. 3:20.), so I think we’re safe to go with “the man” in chapter two and perhaps even into chapter three. In doing so, I do not imply that this passage is figurative and not a historical event (See Vos’s *Biblical Theology*, p.29ff for a thorough refutation of the mythical interpretation). I respect, however, the fact that the KJV translates “ha-adam” with the proper name “Adam,” because a proper name *does* emerge in chapter two – God’s name. The first Toledoth (Gen. 1:1-24) uses the simple word “God,” but here in the second Toledoth, the compound, personal name “Jehovah-God/ LORD God” is used. The Jewish Soncino commentary shows us a case of isogesis: they traditionally substitute the word “Lord” for “Jehovah,” so their commentators say that the word “Lord” is now used because there is a created order subject to His lordship now! Higher critical scholars believe that this name change indicates a change in authorship from the first section of Genesis (IVP Tyndale Commentary, K&D). I believe, however, that it describes the beginning of the personal relationship between God and Man, and thus uses a personal name for God. Keil & Delitzsch add that the compound name emphasizes that this Jehovah who interacts with man is the same God who created the heavens and the earth. The name “Jehovah” may not have come into use until the time of Moses, so here we may have Moses, the writer of the Pentateuch, asserting that the God who worked wonders in Israel is the same God who created the world.

**v.16** The Hebrew literally reads that God gave an order “over” the man. I broke with the tradition of English translations using “commanded” in order to get a sense of the preposition (“gave an order to”), but my translation still doesn’t capture the sense that the Hebrew word “over” indicates: the command will entail a *prohibitive* (DFZ, Soncino). However, it starts with a strong *positive* command to “eat” from the trees. The command is made emphatic by stating the verb twice, literally “eating EAT.” It is in the second person *singular*, so we can infer that it was given to Adam before Eve was made. (This placed the responsibility upon Adam to teach this law to his wife.) Also, the command is not a *permissive* “you may eat” but an *imperative* “you must eat!” and so, in my translation, I omitted the “you may” which is in all the other English translations. Dr. Zeller translates it, “you will surely eat,” to parallel the next verse, “you will surely die.”

**v.17** The second half of the command is the prohibitive part: “do not eat.” Hebrew sentences usually start with the verb, but here the subjects are placed first in both halves of the command, placing an emphasis on them. God is calling Adam’s attention to the *trees*. “There are LOTS of TREES here in this garden, Adam, and I really want you to EAT from them,” says God, “but there is this one TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL -- don’t eat from that one.” Not only is emphasis placed on the tree by its emphatic placement as subject, but also by the repetition of the phrase “from it” – “you shall not eat from it, for in the day of your eating from it...” This tree was the centerpiece of God’s first covenant with man, and so God was calling special attention to it.

Jewish commentators explain that the word “knowledge” here means “desire for” (Soncino), and Keil & Delitzsch (cf. Vos) note that the mere existence of this tree along with the command not to eat from it would produce a knowledge of good and evil within man, whether or not the man ate from it, for even if he didn’t eat from it, he would be practicing his knowledge that to disobey God is evil and to obey God is good. Good and evil came into existence, not with the eating of the tree, but with the command concerning the tree.

God gives a darn good reason for not eating from the tree: death will be the punishment if the man eats from it. God emphasises this in the same way He emphasized the command to eat in v.16, by a repetition of the verb, literally, “dying you will die.” This is a strong warning, translated “you will surely die” in all the English versions.

We can call this command a **covenant** because it involves a paradigm set up by God which includes a command to man which will be rewarded with blessing if he obeys (the enjoyment of eating freely of the trees in this special garden) and cursing if he disobeys (death if he eats from the tree God singled out). This is called the Covenant of Works. It is the only place where man would be saved by his works of obedience. This is the only point at which a human had the free will to fully obey God or to disobey God (or, as Augustine put it, *posse non peccare*, “able not to sin” cf. Pink, Vos on freewill and probation). As long as there was even one law of God, there was the possibility for man to sin. The question may well be asked, “Can we apply the term ‘covenant’ to this passage if the word ‘covenant’ is not used until Noah?” O Palmer Robertson, in *The Christ of the Covenants*, answers the question clearly in the affirmative, defining a covenant as a “bond in blood, sovereignly administered,” and showing that this command carries all three marks of a relational bond, a life-and-death situation, and a unilateral imposition from God. (This passage also touches on the second ordinance of what Robertson terms the Covenant of Creation, with its three ordinances concerning the Sabbath, marriage, and labour. )

“The contracting parties in this covenant were God and Adam. First, God as supreme Lord, prescribing what was equitable: God as *goodness* itself, promising communion with Himself... but God also as *justice* itself, threatening death upon rebellion. Second, Adam considered both as man and as the head and representative of his posterity.” (A. W. Pink, *The Divine Covenants*, p.38, 1973)

“The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their

blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant. The first covenant made with man was a *covenant of works*, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience. Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the *covenant of grace*; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ..." (Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter VII, 1648)

The temporal "in the day of your eating" appears to mean that the effect would be immediate. We know from the next chapter of Genesis that Adam ended up disobeying this law, but he and Eve didn't drop dead when they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. Does this mean that God did not fulfill His threat of sure death on the very day that man would eat from the tree? Not necessarily. Deathly effects did take place immediately:

- mankind immediately became separated from God for the first time,
- mankind immediately became mortal, and
- the process of bodily decay went into effect, ultimately ending in death. (DFZ)

**v. 18** But we are getting ahead of ourselves. In verse 18, mankind has not disobeyed yet; the command has only just been given. God surveys his creative work of establishing man in the garden and (if we take this passage as fitting chronologically into the 6<sup>th</sup> day of creation), after five days of pronouncing that His work was "good," God makes His first pronouncement that something is "not good." Verbal #9 is an Infinitive used as a copulative Main Verb (DFZ). We would normally think of an Infinitive as a Noun rather than a Verb (i.e. "Not good, the being alone of the man"), but in Hebrew, the Infinitive can be used as a Verb in a Quote: "The man by himself is not good." All English Bibles translate the word לְבַדּוֹ as "alone," but since the word technically contains a preposition and a third person pronoun, I like "by himself."

God makes a plan for fixing this problem of the solitary man, "I will make a helper corresponding to him." This is a fascinating description of the woman. The word "helper" is usually used in the O.T. to designate military assistance from another nation or from God, but is also used (esp. in the Psalms) to designate material and spiritual assistance given to an individual (Harris, Archer, & Waltke). It is used both of persons of inferior rank and of superior rank (Holliday), so this is not necessarily an indication of the woman being subordinate to man. It has more to do with the *actions* God intended her to do; God intended woman to be a "helper" to man. I can certainly attest that I could not handle all the responsibilities of my work, my personal care, and the raising of a family without the help of my wife!

The second descriptor of the woman is even more fascinating: כַּנְנֵדוֹ "meet for him" (KJV & ASV), "suitable for him" (NASB & NIV). Every lexical aid I looked at centered on the word "corresponding," so that is the word I chose in my translation. The root meaning of the Hebrew word has to do with standing "in front of," or "opposite to" the man. It is describing a person who is different, yet corresponding to the man. There is enough difference to make contrasts, but enough similarity to make comparisons. God was going to find a perfect counterpart to this man! (And what an awesome counterpart He came up with in creating woman!) I thought the Jewish commentator Rashi's comment was funny, "literally 'a help against him,' i.e. if he is worthy, she will be a help; if not, she will be against him" (Soncino).

**v.19** "So Jehovah-God formed from the ground..." The word for "ground" here is very similar to the word for "man." Man was formed from dirt (K&D specify "fine dust") and the name stuck; here, however, we are dealing with the creation of *animals*. This is not to say that animals were created after man; it is a Semitic historical device somewhat equivalent to our Perfect tense: "and God had formed" (K&D – see I Ki 7:3 & Judg. 2:6 for other examples of this special use of the vav consec.). The wording "God formed" is exactly the same as in the first Toledoth to describe the making of the creatures which came out of the earth (1:24-25). I believe it is just a recap of an event already described in Gen.1, but it is mentioned in a

different context here in the second Toledoth. Here, the point is that no animal on the earth could fulfill the need for the woman.

God made “every beast of the field and every bird of the sky” (NASB). Keil & Delitzsch’s contrary assertion notwithstanding, the word translated “field” here in all the English versions can, according to the lexicographers (BDB, Holliday), be used to refer to cultivated fields, flat land, wilderness, or to land as opposed to sea. It’s pretty obvious to me that this phrase is contrasting land and air, not grainfields with some other sort of land, so I translated it “every land animal and every bird of the heavens.”

“and He brought [each] to the man to see that He would call it and whatever he would call it, that would be its name.” God’s sovereignty and interest in man’s dominion over the animal world is reinforced by the fact that he literally “caused to go” each animal before Adam for Adam to name. The word “each/them” is not in the Hebrew text. I don’t understand why all the English versions supply a plural “them” when all the other pronouns are singular! I also don’t understand why all the English Bibles switch tenses between “what he would call them and whatever he called them” – they are the same tense in Hebrew – unless the vav which occurs two words before the second verb (“and whatever”) can somehow be applied to the verb to turn it into a narrative past tense. I interpreted both in an imperfect sense, “whatever he would call it, that would be its name” (cf. K&D). It is interesting that God allows man to participate in the creative process by creating names for each animal.

The phrase here **נפש חיה** is translated “living creature” in all the standard English translations, whereas they all translate the **חיה** as “beast” in the previous verse. It literally has to do with “that which possesses life.” I chose the word “animal” because it conveys the meaning of life and animation rather than that of created-ness (“creature”) or dumbness (“beast”), and allowed me to translate the word consistently in both places in the passage (although it would give me problems in 2:7, “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a **נפש חיה**.) **נפש** is a noun with a root meaning of “breath” or “spirit,” but can denote the life of an individual, the self, including drives, desires, appetite, and will – the essential nature of a being (Harris, Archer, & Waltke). Since this word is in a construct form and since I’ve just been working on a similar word in Greek (**μορφη**), my translation “form of an animal” seemed to fit best. Keil & Delitzsch also translated it in construct, “breath of life.” Theirs is the only commentary I found which treated the two words together as a phrase. They said that this phrase “does not refer to the soul merely, but to the whole man as an animated being,” not distinguishing between body and soul or between man and beast, but giving “prominence to the peculiar sign of life, viz. breathing.”

**v.20** Adam must have had an incredible memory and imagination to be able to name every animal! He named all the “cattle/ four-footed animals/ large beasts,” the “birds,” and every “beast of the field/ land animal.” Although these are translated “cattle” and “beasts of the field” in every major English translation, I do not think that these animals are limited to cows and horses, as the connotation suggests. I’ve translated it “four-footed animals” and “land animals” to emphasize the full breadth of meaning that these words can possess. However, I recognize that more limited meaning is also within these words and could emphasize the sovereignty of man over the cattle and field animals that most men throughout the world and throughout history would be familiar with in the sphere of their agricultural and pastoral work. (See Textual Criticism notes on an alternative reading here where man also may have named himself.)

Anyway, the point of this animal parade was to underscore that that no animal made a suitable companion for man. The text calls attention to this point by a break in the verb chain by the appearance of a verb in the Perfect tense after umpteen Imperfect-tense verbs. “BUT HE DID NOT FIND,” shouts the text, “a helper corresponding to him.” (See notes from v.18 on the “helper.”)

**v.21** So God became the first anesthesiologist and surgeon. (The “deep sleep” that God dropped over Adam is the same word used in the book of Jonah when Jonah fell into a deep sleep on board the ship during his fateful journey.) While Adam was sleeping nice and soundly, God took one of his ribs right out of him and then closed the flesh back up. The NIV folks must have misread the initial Beth in **בשר** as the

preposition “with.” They agree with Owen and the NASB in translating the last word תחתנה as “place,” but I think that the more accurate interpretation of the word has to do with “underneath” (BDB & Holliday). The KJV and ASV render it in the figurative sense “instead,” but I say, why not translate it literally, “underneath”? The word has a curious ending with a nun energic (which basically means we’re giving a name to it, but we don’t know what it means -- DFZ) and a directive He, which indicates “there/in that direction.” God’s surgery is successful and He has the material to make the perfect being to correspond to man and help him – woman! “The woman was created, not of dust of the earth, but from a rib of Adam, because she was formed for an inseparable unity and fellowship of life with the man” (K&D).

## **Application:**

- Praise God that He involves Himself in a personal relationship with us – we know His proper name! Since He has done this, let us always seek to be in relationship with Him.
- Men are in a special place of relationship with God as head of a wife and head of a family; as such, we have the responsibility to teach God’s truth to our wives and children.
- Praise God that after Adam and Eve broke the covenant of works by eating of the forbidden tree, He enacted the Covenant of Grace by which He saves us from our sin and forgives us through Jesus Christ!
- God considered mankind “not good” until woman was made, so men should never say derogatory things about women, rather we should praise God for the loving concern He showed for men in making women!
- God conceptualized woman with the purpose of a helper, so women should not seek to *compete* with men but rather to be the *helper* God intended.
- God’s design is heterosexual. The man was not good by himself, God wanted his partner to be a *woman*. Praise God for His design of woman and what a perfect counterpart she is!
- Praise God for all the animals God made! Adam’s first act of sovereignty over the animals was to name them, and we should continue to exercise careful sovereignty over the animals.
- Marriage is a good thing; we should never think that marriage is somehow less spiritual than singleness. God made woman and man for each other in marriage. (This should not, how-ever, be carried to the opposite extreme of thinking that singleness is inferior to marriage!)
- God solved Adam’s problem while he was sleeping. We likewise would do well to rest in God’s provision for us when we are concerned about our problems. God cares for us!

