

BH Porter
Moses 4: 5-11
Lens of Scripture
Pt 2

We have gotten through the first four verses so far...we're moving right along. It is my hope that you will see something and remember something from this next section as we move along here in Chapter 4. Again, the character we are seeing is the serpent, by whom Satan is speaking. Generally speaking whenever we teach about Adam and Eve in the Garden, and because we participate in the Endowment, we always assume Satan is actually there because he is always depicted as a man. (They couldn't really bring an actual serpent onto the set to play the part.) I want you to see what the scriptures say, what's really going on here in our Pearl of Great Price. We need to allow the scriptures to speak for themselves! They are more important than any interpretation or opinion or anything else.

So in those previous four verses, Satan was introduced to the story; evil was introduced when Satan was cast out of the presence of God for his rebellion. Those verses were insert verses connecting the end of Chapter 3 with our story line continuing here in v 5. Before Moses could discuss the Fall, evil is introduced to provide the context for Adam's and Eve's actions in the Garden. We see the same thing in **Revelation 12**. John sees in his vision about the great apostasy and probably asked the question concerning how long such wickedness will last in the world, and he is told about the war in heaven. He inserts the story about the war in heaven in **verses 7-12**. Moses introduces evil and the war in heaven in his first four verses of chapter 4...we're ready to continue on.

5 And now **the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field** which I, the Lord God, had made. 6 And Satan put it **into the heart of the serpent**, (for he had drawn away many after him,) and he sought also to beguile Eve, for he knew not the mind of God, wherefore he sought to destroy the world.

7 And **he said unto the woman**: Yea, hath God said—Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (And **he spake by the mouth of the serpent**.)

8 And **the woman said unto the serpent**: We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; 9 But of the fruit of the tree which thou beholdest in the midst of the garden, God hath said—Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

10 And **the serpent said unto the woman**: Ye shall not surely die;

11 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

We see the dialogue between the serpent and the woman: the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field. Satan speaks to the woman by the mouth of the serpent; the woman speaks to the serpent, and the serpent speaks again to the woman.

Satan was cast out from the presence of God because he was evil and wicked. No unclean thing can remain in the presence of God. Satan is not in the Garden because when God walks in the Garden "in the cool of the day", no unclean thing can be there.

A little later in v 19-20, we see more references of the serpent.

19 And **I, the Lord God, said unto the woman:** What is this thing which thou hast done? And **the woman said:** The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

20 And **I, the Lord God, said unto the serpent:** Because thou hast done this thou shalt be cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life;

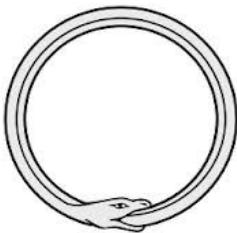


[In the Joseph Smith Papyri, it showed a drawing of the serpent with legs (this was before the fall).]

So, just remember, no unclean thing can be in the presence of God. Satan was not in the Garden, but Satan put it into the heart of the serpent, and he spoke by the mouth of the serpent. The woman said she was beguiled by the serpent, and the Lord cursed the serpent.

Question: Do serpents only represent evil?

Depends on the culture you are in. In our western culture, the serpent does represent evil, but in other cultures it can represent resurrection or immortality, because the serpent renews his body every time it sheds its skin. In some cultures it can represent eternity, especially when depicted in this format below.



When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, and the fiery serpents bit them, Moses fashioned a Brass Serpent and placed it upon a pole for the Israelites to look upon, and if they did so, they would be healed. This serpent became a type, and it represented Christ. (See Numbers 21: 6-9; 1 Ne 17:41; 2 Ne 25: 20; Al 33: 18-22)

5 And now **the serpent** was more subtle than any beast of the field which I, the Lord God, had made. 6 And Satan put it into the heart of the serpent, (for he [Satan] had drawn away many after him,) and he (1) **sought also to beguile Eve**, for (2) **he knew not the mind of God**, wherefore (3) **he sought to destroy the world**.

7 And **he said unto the woman:** **Yea, hath God said—Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?** (And he spake by the mouth of the serpent.)

This is an important exchange. See the subtlety of his words. He is getting the woman to engage in a dialogue with him about the fruit.

8 And **the woman said unto the serpent:** **We may eat of the fruit** of the trees of the garden; 9 **But of the fruit of the tree which thou beholdest in the midst of the garden, God hath said—Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.**

10 And **the serpent said unto the woman:** **Ye shall not surely die;**

The Serpent is probably hanging all over the tree and the fruit when he is speaking to the woman.

11 For **God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.**

The Garden Text

Satan, through the mouth of the serpent, is trying to get the woman to begin thinking differently. Most of the issues that arise in our lives that concern our faith will come because of the concepts taught here in the Garden. The way to teach obedience to children is taught here in the Garden Text. The way Satan gains power over us is taught here in the Garden Text. This is what I hope you will see and understand.

7 And he said unto the woman: **Yea, hath God said—Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?** (And he spake by the mouth of the serpent.) [**He is trying to get her to begin thinking differently. He is trying to get to change her way of thinking.**]

8 And the woman said unto the serpent: **We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden;** 9 **But of the fruit of the tree which thou beholdest in the midst of the garden, God hath said—Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.**

This is the way she has been thinking up to this point. He begins to provide reasons why God did not want her to eat of the fruit in the verse below. She will not die as she has previously thought, and she will become as the the gods, knowing good from evil.

10 And the serpent said unto the woman: **Ye shall not surely die;** 11 **For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.**

He is creating the process by which she begins to change her way of thinking, as we see below in v 12. The phrase, “**when the woman saw**”, is the turning point. Her thinking has changed from not even touching the tree, to one of considering its value for food, and its obvious good looks, and obtaining the possibility for more wisdom.

12 And when the woman saw that the tree was (a) **good for food**, and that it became (b) **pleasant to the eyes**, and a tree (c) **to be desired to make her wise**, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and also gave unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

She now is seeing in her mind's eye that her homemaking counselor is going to love this fruit, that it will make a great center piece on her table, and her education councilor will also find it useful in making her wise. (*scattered laughs*)

In **Moses 3:15-17**, we see Adam being placed in the Garden and is given instructions.

15 And I, the **Lord God, took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden**, to dress it, and to keep it. And I, the **Lord God, commanded the man**, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat, **But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it**, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself, for it is given unto thee; **but, remember that I forbid it, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**

The Lord gives Adam instructions and a commandment. He gives him agency or power to choose, and He tells Adam the consequences if he is not obedient.

This is instructive for us to teach our own children obedience.

With these concepts taught here in the Garden Text we can learn how to teach our children obedience. This is why this story is in this text and it is why it is depicted in our endowment. Most of our problems in life can be dealt with from the information given us in this Garden culture. This story of the creation and the fall show up in all cultures. Our own life is about the creation and fall. When we let the scriptures speak for themselves things begin to open up, and we can see a lot more of what there is to learn.

Satan persuades the woman to come up to the tree, and she probably got close enough to smell the fruit, all the while he has been hanging on and slithering all over the tree and the fruit. This what we learn in this v 12.

12 And when the woman saw that the tree was **good for food**, and that it became **pleasant to the eyes**, and a tree **to be desired to make her wise**, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and also gave unto her husband with her, and he did eat.

Philosophy of Life

This is a key concept within this text. The woman changed her way of thinking. She went from not even touching the tree to seeing the possibility of the fruit being good for food, being pleasant to the eyes and being able to make her wise. Her whole philosophy of thinking changed. Thus Satan, with subtlety, (by speaking through the mouth of the serpent) convinced the woman to eat of the fruit, and she got her husband to eat of it also.

Everyone has a philosophy of life, and it is the filter that processes the information around you.

- **Your outlook on Life**
- **How you see the World**
- **Your set of Ideas**
- **Your set of Beliefs**
- **Your set of Values and Morals**

All of these have been given you by someone somewhere. They are not natural at birth; little children are whole and pure from the foundation of the world. Your own philosophy of life is taught; it does not come naturally. Satan is teaching Eve. He reasons with her to alter her way of thinking. Before, she would not even go near the tree – now she sees the possibility of having a new and different experience with the fruit of the tree. He tells her she will not die. Her thinking alters. The serpent was successful in getting her to think a different way about what God commanded.

The Lens through which we view the world

Your own philosophy of life comes from your parents, your religious organization, your teachers, the books you read, the music you listen to, the movies or the television you watch. This philosophy of your beliefs, values, ideas, morals, become the “lens” through which you view the world.

Eve looked through a different lens: The fruit looked good, it tasted good, and it was going to make her wise. She knew what the fruit was; she knew what the restrictions were; and when she began to look at differently, her philosophy began to change. Why obey God? Adam's philosophy was he intended to keep all of God's commandments.

The Philosophy of Men vs. the Philosophy of God

Which “lens” is the most correct? Only the creator of the earth and mankind can write the correct manual for your philosophy. Eve listened to the serpent and left God's philosophy behind. She “saw that it was good for food”.

The scriptures should become the lens through which we view life and salvation. Any other philosophy that is not from the creator Himself will have at best a blurred and perhaps a blinded point of view. This is because God is the same 'yesterday, today and forever'. His vision and view for what is best for mankind has not changed. God could not nor cannot do anything that is not in our best interest, benefit and spiritual progression. Our lives are those that we chose to participate in, and God would not do anything unless it was for our benefit.

Comment: There is a consequence for sin.

That is right. There is a Plan, and because there is a Plan, there is a consequence. That is what God tells Adam: “In the day that thou partakest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” (**Moses 3:17**) In our discussion this past year concerning the apostasy that is occurring, **this concept is key in that apostasy!** What is the philosophy or the lens through which those who are leaving the church viewing things? Where did they get that philosophy? What lens are they looking through?

7 And behold, ye do know of yourselves, for ye have witnessed it, that **as many of them as are brought to the knowledge of the truth**, and to know of the wicked and abominable traditions of their fathers, and **are led to believe the holy scriptures, yea, the prophecies of the holy prophets,**
which are written,
which leadeth them to faith on the Lord, and unto repentance,
which faith and repentance bringeth a change of heart unto them—

8 Therefore, **as many as have come to this**, ye know of yourselves **are firm and steadfast in the faith**, and in the thing wherewith they have been made free.
(**Helaman 15:7-8**)

When you come to realize that the scriptures are to become your lens, it will lead you to faith on the Lord **and** unto repentance, which is that change of character. This is the problem causing the apostasy. Those who are falling away are not using the lens of the scriptures. They are relying on something else for their philosophy. This is what Satan got Eve to do – to look at things differently. “You don't have to worry about what God said. This is good stuff.”

Comment: In **Moses 4: 4** we see that Satan is the father of all lies, and will deceive and blind men and will lead them captive to as many as will not hearken to the Lord's voice.

That is exactly right because the lens of the scriptures is the Lord's voice. The lens of scripture is the prophecies that are written that lead to faith on the Lord and to repentance, which will bring that change of heart, or that change of character. IF you were to do a scripture word search on the word "heart" you will find that in nearly every reference has to do with one's character. *[The Book of Mormon lists 11 references to having hearts softened, and it has 102 references for hearts becoming hardened.]*

For instance:

What if your philosophy is wrong?

What if the lens through which you view the world is wrong?

Then your morals, ideas and beliefs will not be seen correctly. If your lens is out of focus your responses may be wrong or your conclusions may be wrong. See? Eve's thoughts and conclusions about the fruit at first centered on her obedience to the Lord's commandment, but Satan got her to change her point of view. To view, think and see the right way, the vision must come through the lenses of the scriptures. You cannot be any smarter than the person you choose to believe. In Eve's situation, she listened to the voice that told her she would not die.

Arm of Flesh

Trust not in the arm of flesh — not even your own. (See **2 Ne 4: 34**) If you do, you will not like what you see. Most people trust in their own arm of flesh, their own education or their own understanding. The lens they are using is their own intellect, and there is no way for anybody because of that pride, to know enough to make correct decisions. **Proverbs 3: 5-6** provides insight:

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he will direct thy paths.

"The Only True Wisdom Is Knowing That You Know Nothing," Socrates said. This is true. You don't begin to learn until you realize how ignorant you are. Hugh Nibley said one time he'd rather teach a crying baby than a smart dean.

Philosophies of Man

Satan uses mankind to teach his philosophies and his way of thinking in order to lead people away from the lens of scripture. We see this in our Book of Mormon in the characters of Sherem, Korihor and Zeezrom. In our day we see the same thing in political leaders, judges, professors, Hollywood, and Oprah. They have their lens and they all want you to think their way. The most popular reality TV shows are looking through the lenses of the *Kartrashians*, or others like them. (*much laughter*)

Beware (Be on guard) lest any man spoil you
through philosophy **and** vain deceit,
after the tradition of men,
after the rudiments of the world,
and not after Christ. Colossians 2: 8

Traditions – Opinions – Interpretations

Let the scriptures speak for itself. Base your life on the words of God rather than the traditions, opinions and interpretations of men.

For instance: **How many wise men were there?**

Tradition says 3, but we really don't know.

Where was Christ born in Bethlehem?

Tradition says in a stable, but he was born in a cave. That's where the stables were. A manger was a hollowed out stone used as a trough.

How many saw the New Star?

Tradition says all saw the star, but in reality, only the wise men saw the star. (in the New Testament)

In our day we see traditions, opinions and interpretations filtering into our teachings, such as:

The washing away of sins at baptism
The forgiveness of sins by partaking of the sacrament
Being sealed into single family units for eternity
Adam and Eve knowing the Gospel before the fall

Elder Tom L Perry taught us:

“If we **hold tightly** to the Word of God, we will remain on the pathway to Eternal Life.”

Let's take a short break.