

## Two Trees.

In the beginning, God created man and woman and placed them in a paradise garden where God and humans walked together. God gave man and woman all sorts of plants for food, and the fruit of trees in abundance. There were two ancient trees at the center of this garden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God gave man and woman any plant or tree for food, but to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not permitted for them.

One day, God's prosecutor spoke with man and woman. "If you really want to be in God's image, eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. After all, the knowledge of good and evil is something God created, and he has given it to me when I was created in order to accuse all violations in the heavenlies. How can you claim to be in God's image when you are innocent, like these animals you supposedly have dominion over?" Day after day, he followed them, making his case, saying things like, "Don't you want to be able to make decisions and judgments for yourselves? Doesn't God do the same? How long do you want to be mere children of God? Grow up and be gods yourselves!!" The man asked, "What about the tree of life? God has not refused it from us, shouldn't we eat from that, instead?" The prosecutor replied, "What is there to gain from something that you already are allowed to have?"

Finally, they were persuaded to go against God's command and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They immediately became VERY aware of themselves, that they were naked, and they were ashamed. The man knew he was uncircumcised, and took two rocks to try to remove his foreskin. He made a bloody mess and gave up, ultimately giving in to the woman's idea of making clothes out of vines and leaves. They then felt guilty because they did this on the seventh day. They had worked on a day on which they had always seen God rest, so it must be wrong to do so. As the sun began to set on the seventh day, God met them as they walked. As he appeared, they dove into the underbrush and screamed, "Don't destroy us, O Righteous God!" God asked, "Who told you you were unrighteous??" They responded, "No one. We simply knew." "And why are you unrighteous?" He asked. The man responded, "Because I am uncircumcised, and we did work on your seventh day." God asked, "Who told you these things were evil?" "No one." they replied, "We simply knew."

God spoke, "You already had in innocence what you have now lost in your pursuit of the so-called knowledge of right and wrong. Since it is the knowledge of good and evil you desire, so shall you have. But no longer shall you live forever, heaping up infinite feelings of guilt, and knowledge of transgression for eternity. Truly, I would seem unbearable to you, then. But here is what will happen. You have no more than 120 years in a life to assuage your own conscience by your knowledge of good and evil. Try to live by your knowledge of what is good and evil and see if you can make the ground give you food, much less make it back to this garden and the tree of life! But you will fail, so you may know that the knowledge of laws of good and evil does not give life, nor does it make you like Me. But in time, when you are utterly helpless and spent in your desire for the knowledge of good and evil, I will bring the tree of life to you. Take, and eat, and you will be like me, if you still want it on that day....."

Before God sent the man and the woman out of the garden, he took animals and tore their skins off. He wrapped the bloody, still-warm hides around the man and the woman, and said, "You will need these to make it out of the garden alive. If my Prosecutor sees what you have done, he will kill you, and rightly so. But these will disguise you and make you appear as wandering animals."

So the man and the woman wandered out of the garden, still clinging to the animal hides that hid them from the prosecutor. For their fear, they refused to take off the skins and convinced themselves they were animals.

They began to have children, to farm, and to live as clans. While they forgot God, they remembered the knowledge of good and evil. They learned to manipulate this knowledge to declare war on competing clans with accusations of violating the gods of "justice" and

"fairness" and "fortune." They set up courts of law to protect their goods. They haggled over what was good and evil as they traded and bartered.

The Prosecutor looked from the garden at what men and women had become: "They are no better than animals." he told God in his accusation. "Why should they be spared a fate any different than brute beasts?" In response, God pulled one leaf off of the tree of life and let it fall to the earth. Immediately, the souls of all people ached, like recalling a vague memory and a love whose name they had forgotten, and silence fell over the earth for a time as they sought for a word to call out. When no word came forth, they went back to warring and farming and buying and selling goods. And God told his Prosecutor, "Though they have become to look like beasts, and have forsaken true knowledge from the tree of life, I will not destroy them. You have failed to make your case."

The Prosecutor grew angry, and roamed to and forth on the earth to find a way to tempt the humans into God's anger. He settled on a plan to further tempt men and women into God's wrath. He called forth those created with him to assist him with this venture. "Human-kind having the knowledge of good and evil from the forbidden tree is not enough for me to convict them. I need more. Have you seen anything more lovely than the females of human-kind?"

The leader of the sons of heaven, Samyaza, spoke up: "What is it you are proposing, Accuser?"

"I am proposing a trade" spoke the Prosecutor. "I will acquit you of leaving your charge so you can take wives from the daughters of men. In return, teach men to war and smelt iron and summon the forces of the earth in order to bring heaven's wrath on them. After all, God has spared them, even though they ate of what they were forbidden. Do you think that God will destroy you for doing the same? God is just and unwavering – what God does for one, he will do for another."

So Samyaza bound all of the sons of heaven together by oath with the Prosecutor to undertake this task. They descended to earth upon Mount Armon. They called themselves "gods" as they spoke to the men, who were so fearful that they bowed in veneration. The sons of heaven required wives, and took the strongest men to teach them forbidden arts. They taught them to smelt ore to make iron weapons. They gave them the gift of fire. They taught them to manipulate the weather by calling on the names of the Winds, and to block out the sun through magic, and to steal other men's souls for trade. Men grew fierce and strong through the knowledge given them from their self-proclaimed gods. Wars broke out and much blood was spilled on the earth, defiling it.

The Prosecutor smiled at the result, and again approached God. "Have you seen what they have done? They have worshipped beings that you created and have learned even more than they possibly could, as if they ate every leaf and twig off of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil!!!"

God replied, "Don't think that your treachery has escaped my eyes. In violation of your oath, you must bind the sons of heaven in chains of darkness and place them in custody in Tartarus. Do you have any shame for what you have done??" But the Accuser knew no shame, and placed his partners in chains in the lowest pit of Hades.

Meanwhile, human-kind codified the knowledge of good and evil into the Book of the Law, and codified the forbidden knowledge of the sons of heaven into the Book of the Science. Cities were built. Languages flourished. Jinn on the earth whispered poetry into the ears of children. And a green earth became scarred with the spread of application the Book of the Law and the Book of the Science. Animals feared humans who once were their protectors. And the Prosecutor was cast from heaven down to the earth. He made himself their god, and increased their trade and their wars.

But in the fullness of time, God took a seed from the tree of life, and dropped it to the earth on the only green hill left. It sprouted and bore fruit. Men scratched their heads at it because its shape and fruit was something entirely beyond anything in the Book of the Law and the Book of the Science. It did not require water, but instead caused a stream of pure water to flow from under the roots. Adventurous women made a tea from the leaves that healed the sick. When they broke the branches in the presence of feuding parties, the aroma caused them to find reconciliation. The poorest of the earth, when they had exhausted all of the food they had, dared to try the fruit. When they ate, they never required food or drink again, and were endowed with the prophetic spirit. They challenged the Prosecutor, defying his claim to be the god of humankind, and telling all humankind that they were deceived by the Book of the Law and the Book of the Science, and that the Accuser was not the Judge, but a fraud.

But the Prosecutor goaded those most learned in the Book of the Law and the Book of the Science to put them to death through cruel devices. He called up all of his armies, and they assembled with their standards and weapons around the tree. At his command, they took their axes and swords and chopped limbs off of the tree. They hacked at the roots and tied ropes around the trunk. They pulled at the ropes with horses and uprooted it from the ground. Finally, they set fire to it. They threw a party and vowed to send gifts to friends in honor of the day that the mysterious tree was felled. The Prosecutor, satisfied that this anomaly in his order was removed, and that all who ate of its fruit were killed, returned to his throne while the ashes smoldered.

But a wind blew from heaven, and scattered the seeds from the burned fruit. The seeds took root wherever there was good soil, and the saplings grew quickly. Their roots grew deep, all the way to Tartarus, and crushed those in chains under their weight. These trees bore fruit just as the first tree of life did. All who ate of this fruit again took up the prophetic spirit against the Accuser. They took him by force and threw him into the bottomless pit, and climbed the highest branches of the trees of life into the very paradise of heaven. They took axes and chopped at the ancient tree of knowledge of good and evil, and threw the branches down to the earth below. They made bonfires from the branches, and burned every copy of the Book of the Law and the Book of the Science.

After this, there was no more war and no more pain. All who were willing drank freely from the streams that came from the roots of the trees of life. The leaves were used to heal the nations. Since Hades had been crushed under the roots of the trees of life, there was no more death. Time ceased, and the dwelling of God was returned to its place with the sons of man and woman.

- Son of Fred