

## Story of Garden of Eden

## Situation out of which it arose:

The Story of the Garden of Eden, ch. 3 (and possibly the Creation story in ch. 2, and the Tower of Babel Story in ch. 11) arose in an agricultural community and expressed the stolid resignation - with occasional bitter outbursts - of the peasant contending with thorns and thistles, and by the sweat of his brow wearily extracting a meager sustenance from a soil that seemed accursed (3.17-19) (162)

The stories originated in different environments over a considerable area around the Dead Sea, but were apparently collected in Edom (162)

S expresses a pessimistic view of life and his stories are pre-veaded by an atmosphere of gloom, a sense of God's indifference to human beings. The theme of S is "paradise Lost" (165)

S contemplates the human family battling with a world in which it receives no favors and gives no quarter. S was not a creative literary craftsman but a collector of ancient and legendary tales. His masterpiece is the story of the Garden of Eden (165-6)

Document in which it is placed: S

When it was composed: Not earlier than Saul or David. Most likely in the time of Solomon in the 10th century (166)

## Purpose of composition:

The stories of Gen. 2-11 undertake to explain . . . why serpents have no legs and must crawl in the dust (3.14), and why women give birth in great pain (3.16), why cultivation of the soil is laborious and precarious (3.17-19), ever since man's expulsion from the earthly paradise (3.23) (162)

It is in open defiance of the deity that man takes the first step upward, from primitive barbarism toward an ever higher level of civilization according to the editor of S. The eating of the forbidden fruit of knowledge gave to man both the urge and the capacity for cultural advancement. At the same time, it created a state of hostility between man and his Maker. The sad lot of mankind . . . is a punishment for its daring boldness in attempting to ascend from the level of brutes to that of gods. The underlying thought is not unlike that expressed in the myth of Prometheus who, by his theft of fire, made possible the progress of arts, and crafts among men (164). Acquisition of knowledge, with its resulting divine curses . . . is preferable to the placid stupidity and moronic innocence which man could have enjoyed in Eden, in accordance with the wishes of the deity (164)