

Tree of Knowledge
Genesis 2,3
May 28, 2017

You've heard of me, but you've probably never heard FROM me, so allow me to introduce myself. You may know me as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but the Flora and Fauna in the garden know me as the Tree of All-Knowledge. Not the No-It-All Tree; I don't flaunt my position, but Creator has enabled me to know as the Maker of Heaven and Earth knows. Not just to distinguish opposites, but to know and stand over all knowledge. Knowledge is more than making the right decision, it's the ability to understand all that is as part of a whole

I live in the middle of the Garden of Eden, surrounded by a rainbow of beauty, all of it coordinating with perfection.

There is enough water to flourish with the four rivers flowing nearby.

There is enough sunlight, but not so much my leaves shrivel.

There is fertile soil: Creator has the original green thumb.

We are loved into life, new each morning--

I am beautiful, but not like the dogwood blooming in early spring.

I am tall, but not like the Sequoia.

My canopy is broad, but not like the banyan.

My roots are deep but not like the White Oak.

My leaves are large, but not like the fig.

I emit a spicy aroma, but not like the cedar.

My fruit is large, but not like breadfruit;

it is sweet but not like mangos.

I attract birds to my branches and deer eat my leaves, but every creature knows to not eat fruit from the Tree of All Knowledge because to know too much is dangerous.

Why surely you know that—there is a time for innocence, and a time for knowing.

A five year old need not know about the horrors of war;

A seven year old hear about explicit language,

A nine year old see photographs of torture.

An eleven year old about violent sex;

Gaining Wisdom is a process. So my fruit, which delivers all-knowledge, all wisdom too soon IS dangerous, and the Creator of All knows that. Made it that way!

And that brings us to the story I want to tell you. You've read it, many think their version is accurate, but I was there. My branches are broad, so I could see; I live in the middle of everything and both see and listen to the Creator every day.

Adam, and then Eve arrived in the Garden—that's how much God loved Adam—found him the perfect two legged, large-brained, articular partner. Yes—the Maker is kind, wise, loving and a fine architect. Thinking of Creator's love for all of us makes my leaves flutter in joy and my roots tingle with gratitude. They were innocents,

like 2 year olds, comfortable and content in a clothing optional paradise.

Now Creator had given Adam a *job*: He didn't just loll around all day every day and prepare 3 locally-sourced-organic-meals every day. Adam's vocation was to cultivate and encourage, protect and nurture life.

Then Creator gave Adam *permission*: Permission to eat from any tree, any plant, except from me- the Tree in the Middle of the Garden.

But Creator gave Adam one *prohibition*: Just one.

Don't eat from the Tree of All-Knowledge.

Its fruit is lethal to you. Adam briefed Eve on all this—we all knew it.

You know what happens if you tell a three year old they can have any cookie but the one with the pink icing? They eat the one with the green icing as soon as you leave the room.

Well, the serpent came along encouraged Eve to grab that green iced cookie—my fruit.

Let me tell you something about the serpent. It wasn't Satan. A serpent isn't evil. It is shrewd, yes, and thrives on lies. You know other humans like that too. The serpent's trick was to make the bad look like the good. Making the bad look good. (Now don't be smug. Don't you speed on the highway when you know there isn't a police officer within miles?)

Eve is human. Eve is curious. She's confronted with an option – like we are so often. She gets to choose.

Serpent sees her hesitancy.

“Oh, you won't die, Creator wouldn't do that! You'll just know everything, like... like you are divine!

Eve took a moment to reason. I saw her pause!

She looked at me. I looked safe, no noxious odors, no poisoned or dead animals under my branches. My fruit appeared delicious for eating;

She looked up at the sky through my branches and saw my beauty.

She wanted to be smart, intelligent, wise. What's wrong with that? She raised an eyebrow and shrugged her shoulders, "Yes, why not?"

Could you blame her? What's so awful about being curious? learning? Becoming smarter? Wiser?

So she picked a ripe-looking fruit, took a bite and picked another for Adam. She didn't dangle it before him and beckon him over with her finger. She didn't have to cajole or convince. He didn't hesitate a moment as if to say, if it's good enough for her, it's good enough for me. No contemplation. No real moment of decision. Seemed more like instinct. They ate together.

Yes, curiosity is a positive trait, but not when it's coupled with disobedience. Boundaries save.

What I saw next brought tears to my eyes. No, they didn't fall to the ground dead. They didn't become sick to their stomach or break out in boils. What died was their innocence. From a child to adult in one bite. Too much too fast.

Their eyes were open. They didn't become divine, they became aware. Aware of a larger reality of life: including their sexuality. They saw themselves as they truly were. And so they were embarrassed. The Garden's Clothing Optional policy was no longer comfortable, they grabbed the largest leaves they could find--- just over there.... Fig leaves. To cover up.

So there they are, Adam and Eve in their little fig leaf loincloths, red in the face. And they realize they have disobeyed God, experience guilt and realizing Creator could be watching they hide in the

blueberry bushes. Of course no one can hide from God. (That doesn't mean people don't try).

Creator shows up. Speaks: "Where are you?"

"We're hiding... we heard you coming and we were afraid because we're naked."

Creator: "Who told you about 'naked'? Did you do the one thing I told you not to?"

Adam blames Eve.

Eve blames the serpent.

To Creator's credit, they aren't killed.

They aren't reamed out.

They aren't told they are being punished.

There is not one word about sin. Other story-tellers will insert that later. They *are* told that their actions have consequences.

Consequences to the serpent.	Crawling on his belly, eating dirt.
Consequences to the woman	Painful childbirth
Consequences to the man.	Work will become sweaty, endless.

I have to tell you, the Maker didn't sound angry. Disappointed, yes.

And explanatory. "This is the way it's going to be from now on."

Sometimes stories are told for the purpose of explaining the way life is. Descriptive:

Why do snakes crawl on the ground, not have legs?

Why is human childbirth more difficult than any other mammal?

Why is making a living from the soil so toilsome?

No, Creator was neither furious nor punitive. In fact, I saw nothing but Love that day even after Adam and Eve disobeyed. Creator made sure their dignity was restored and sewed clothing for them out of skins. The kind of warm clothing humans need outside of this climate

controlled perfect garden. Did you know Creator was a seamstress?

A good one too.

So you ask why did the Maker insist that they leave Eden? Some say it was their punishment. Some that it was the beginning of the human journey. I hear it was for their protection. There's another one-of-a-kind tree here. It's called the Tree of Life. Those who eat it will live forever. If the humans had chosen in their newly aware, knowledgeable state to eat of it, they would have become immortal. Think about it. All-knowing sexual beings and immortal? We'd have a population problem in the Garden real soon!

I haven't seen Adam and Eve since that day, and often wonder how they fared East of Eden:

Did they learn that obeying Creator is the beginning of wisdom?

Did they learn that, no longer children, they are accountable for their actions?

Did they ever learn of Creator's unconditional love for them? What would it take?

The Tree of Life over there tells me that one-day Adam and Eve and all their off-spring will return here. I hope that's true. What a reunion that will be! I hope you come. I'll save a spot under my branches for you.