



FORMING FEMININITY IN ANTIQUITY

Eve, Gender, and Ideologies in the
Greek Life of Adam and Eve

VITA DAPHNA ARBEL

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For Menashe with love

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PREFACE

This book investigates representations of the emblematic first woman by examining one of the earliest and most influential accounts of Adam and Eve subsequent to the Hebrew Bible, namely the apocryphal Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* (GLAE) from antiquity. It further considers the cultural and ideological significance of these representations.

Treating the figure of Eve as a culturally constructed representation of woman, this book employs observations from contemporary sociological perspectives, traditional biblical scholarship, studies of the Books of Adam and Eve, as well as critical feminist theory to demonstrate that the GLAE is not a single-voiced source representing one authoritative/dominant tradition. Rather, it incorporates a range of conventional, authorized traditions as well as unofficial countertraditions about the archetypal first woman, paradoxically associating her with notions that are considered to be both loathed and laudable in theological and social circles. Further, the book shows that these representations of Eve betray not only overlapping literary traditions; rather, they are closely linked to larger voices, concepts, and values of the broader hybrid Greco-Roman cultural world in which they emerged, both corresponding and responding

to contemporaneous exegetical views as well as cultural norms of the time.

The last few decades of scholarship have yielded exciting, significant studies on gender, women, and the biblical figure of Eve, as well as on the complex literary, theological, and cultural features of the *GLAE*. However, comparatively little attention has been devoted to the salient and diverse representations of Eve in the *GLAE* and their cultural and ideological implications. Similarly, comparatively little attention has been paid by feminist critics to the representation of femininity in the *GLAE*, even though the work seems to be a major turning point in the ongoing discourse on Eve and women in antiquity. This book aims to advance these relatively unexplored areas and thus to contribute to the ongoing study of the *GLAE*, its representations of Eve/femininity, and the ideological, rhetorical, and cultural significance of these representations.

The book offers a nuanced examination of the *GLAE*'s multifaceted and at times contradictory depictions of Eve and femininity. It further situates these literary depictions within the hybrid Greco-Roman cultural world in which they emerged and looks at the extent to which they both reflect and construct contemporaneous concepts in regard to Eve's and women's standing, role, authority, and realms of experiences. Finally, the book considers how the *GLAE* narrative endows the biblical story of Eve with new details and meanings that resonate with both contemporaneous and later traditions. Aiming to introduce a dynamic study of the *GLAE*'s Eve, each chapter investigates a distinct representation of the first woman, revealing a web of traditions and voices—be they official, dogmatic, popular, or subversive—that converge in a multivocal dialogue on Eve and femininity in the cultural landscape of antiquity.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung</i>
ARN	<i>Armenian Life of Adam and Eve</i>
b.	Babylonian Talmud (Talmud Bavli)
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
Bar.	Baruch
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BCE	Before the Common Era
BDAG	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>

ABBREVIATIONS

BW	Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1–36)
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CE	Common Era
CIS	<i>Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum</i>
CJ	<i>The Classical Journal</i>
Cor.	Corinthians
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium
Dan.	Daniel
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
En.	Enoch
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
Ezek.	Ezekiel
Ezr.	Ezra
Gen.	Genesis
GLAE	Greek <i>Life of Adam and Eve</i>
GosMar	Gospel of Mary
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
Isa.	Isaiah
j.	<i>Jerusalem Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi)</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
Jer.	Jeremiah
JFSR	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSJH	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods</i>
JSJSup	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series

ABBREVIATIONS

JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series</i>
JSQ	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
JSP	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
m.	Mishnah
Nah.	Nahum
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NT	New Testament
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OTP	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> (J. H. Charlesworth, ed., 1983, 2 vols., New York)
Prov.	Proverbs
RB	<i>revue biblique</i>
RelSRev	<i>Religious Studies Review</i>
Rev.	Revelation
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
Rom.	Romans
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBLSP	<i>Society for Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series
STDJ	<i>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</i>
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
Tim.	Timothy
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
VC	<i>Vigiliae christianae</i>

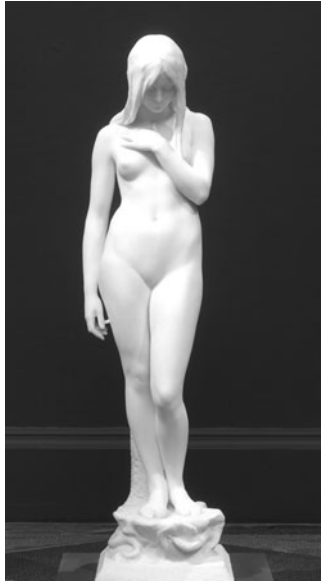
ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Vita</i>	Latin <i>Life of Adam and Eve</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>VTSup</i>	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
<i>WUNT</i>	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>Zech.</i>	Zechariah
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>

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Traditions of Eve in Antiquity: The Greek *Life of Adam and Eve*



Sir Thomas Brock, *Eve* (1899).

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*And when he [Satan/the Serpent] had received the oath from me [Eve], he came and entered and placed upon the fruit the poison of his wickedness—which is (the sense of) desire, for it is the beginning of every sin—and he bent the branch on the earth and I took of the fruit and I ate.

(GLAE 19.3)

INTRODUCTION

*For when he [Adam] came, I [Eve] opened my mouth and the Devil was speaking...

(GLAE 21.3)

*And speedily I persuaded him, and he ate and his eyes were opened and he too knew his nakedness.

(GLAE 21.5)

*And Adam said to Eve: "O Eve, What have you done to us? You have brought great wrath upon us which is death which will rule over our entire race."

(GLAE 14.2)

*And Eve wept and said: "My lord Adam, rise up and give me half of your pain and I will endure it; for it is on my account that this has happened to you, on my account you have these troubles."

(GLAE 9.2)

*Now then, my children, I have shown you the way in which we were deceived; and do guard yourselves from transgressing against the good.

(GLAE 30.1)

*[And Adam said to Eve]: But when I die, anoint me and let no man touch me till the angel shall say something concerning me.

(GLAE 31.3)

*And she [Eve] gazed steadfastly into heaven, and beheld a chariot of light, borne by four bright eagles, (and) it was impossible for any man born of woman to tell the glory of them or behold their face, and angels going before the chariot.

(GLAE 33.2)

These quotations reveal glimpses of intriguing traditions about the first woman. Typically unfamiliar to most modern readers, these traditions were not only well known in the ancient world, but are also significant for understanding both early Jewish and Christian accounts of the biblical figure of Eve, and broader cultural

conceptualizations of womanhood. These early Eve traditions are the focus of this study. As has long been noted by scholars, after the early chapters of Genesis the figure of Eve does not play any role in the Hebrew Bible. No narrator, prophet, or psalm makes any recognizable reference to her or to her sin in the Garden of Eden.¹ Sometime in the period of 100 to 300 CE, in the context of “pagan,”² Jewish, and Christian cultures, the apocryphal³ narrative known as the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* (GLAE) introduced one of the earliest and most influential narratives about Adam and Eve after the Hebrew Bible.⁴

Depending on and departing from Genesis chapters 2 through 4, this work recounts the life of the first humans, endowing the biblical story with new details and meanings and, in turn, establishing building blocks for later Jewish, Christian, and Islamic discourses.⁵ As emerges from the preceding citations, this narrative betrays an interest that goes beyond Eve’s accountability for the sin in Eden. Moreover, it juxtaposes a number of overlapping conceptions of the first woman. Several narrative scenes represent Eve as a transgressor of God’s way, as the Devil’s vessel, as associated with the Devil’s illicit sexuality and desire, as Adam’s deceitful wife, and as a wicked figure who brought death upon Adam and all humanity. Other scenes, in sharp contrast, surprisingly represent Eve as Adam’s devoted wife, as an ethical and moral teacher committed to God’s good path, as one who anoints and takes care of Adam after his demise, and as a worthy beholder of astounding divine visions. These and other parallel and, at times, conflicting representations of Eve will be the focus of this book.

In the past few decades, significant scholarly attention has been devoted to critical issues such as the dating of the GLAE, its authorship, provenance, multiple text forms, manuscripts and translations, and its relationship to other Adam and Eve accounts. Surprisingly, however, these studies have not yet offered a comprehensive examination of its salient, complex portrayal of the emblematic first woman, even though the work is a major turning point in the ongoing discourse on the metonymic Eve and, by extension, all women.⁶ This book takes up the challenge. Treating the figure of Eve as a

culturally constructed representation of woman, it will attempt, for the first time, to develop a comprehensive and nuanced investigation of the *GLAE*'s imperative discourse of Eve in antiquity and to explore the cultural and ideological significance of the multifaceted traditions and diverse ideologies the *GLAE* seems to incorporate.⁷

The overarching thesis of this study is that the *GLAE* is not a single-voiced source representing one dominant tradition about Eve. Rather, it incorporates into its one narrative a range of varied representations, assumptions, traditions, and countertraditions about the metonymic first woman, paradoxically associating her with notions that are considered theologically and socially both loathed and laudable. Further, the study posits that these different representations betray not only overlapping literary traditions; rather, they are bounded by larger voices, concepts, and values of the broader culture in which they emerged, both corresponding and responding to contemporaneous exegetical views as well as to gender ideologies and cultural norms of the time. Accordingly, aiming at a dynamic comprehension of the *GLAE*'s Eve, in each chapter I center on a distinct representation of the archetypal first woman, attempting to shed light on the array of multiple traditions, cultural voices, gender conceptions, and ideological positions.

FOUNDATION OF THIS INVESTIGATION: THE *GLAE*

The *GLAE* belongs to a cluster of narratives, designated by Michael Stone as the primary Books of Adam and Eve, which have survived in Greek, Latin, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic, and Coptic.⁸ Inspired by the biblical story of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2–4) as well as departing from it, these works narrate rich and intriguing tales about the life of the first two people after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The primary Books of Adam and Eve were probably composed between the third and seventh centuries yet contain certain literary units that are older. These narratives gained enormous

popularity and influence in antiquity and also had a considerable impact on later works in the medieval world, especially in European art, literature, and theology.⁹

As most scholars have long maintained and Johannes Tromp has recently substantiated, the earliest text forms of the Books of Adam and Eve were in Greek, from which all other versions in other languages stem. But as Tromp and others have further shown, there is no fixed Greek text, but rather a series of extant witnesses to a textual tradition, since the apocryphal nature of the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* and its huge popularity resulted in numerous copies.¹⁰ The present form of the work is the result of a complex redactional process that integrated different source materials into a single story.

The Greek material was first published by Constantin von Tischendorf in 1866, on the basis of one manuscript with reference to a few others.¹¹ More recent textual scholarship by John Sharpe (1969) and especially by Marcel Nagel (1974) indicates the existence of many additional manuscripts belonging to different manuscript families, and in 1987 Daniel Bertrand attempted a full reconstruction of the *GLAE* based on Nagel's work.¹² John Levison's contribution, *Texts in Transition* (2000), has introduced a different perspective to the textual study of the *GLAE*. By identifying four text forms, printed accordingly in four parallel columns, Levison demonstrates how various texts represent different stories and should be treated independently.¹³ Recently, in *The Life of Adam and Eve in Greek: A Critical Edition* (2005), Tromp has undertaken a detailed examination of the manuscript tradition and the relationships among the individual versions and has used this work to produce a single critical edition perceived to be as close as possible to an original text.¹⁴

Most scholars have situated the *GLAE* somewhere in the period of 100 to 300 CE.¹⁵ The provenance and religious-historical background of the *GLAE*, however, are debated. Several scholars have argued for a Jewish origin, while others have posited the work's Christian roots.¹⁶ Additional significant suggestions in regard to each of the fluid traditions of the *GLAE* and its nontheological concerns have been put forward recently by several scholars. Levison,

for example, has situated the *GLAE* at the crossroads of “pagan,” Jewish, and Christian cultures.¹⁷ In his view, the narrative is driven not only by theological concerns but also by the basic realities and experiences of human beings.¹⁸ In a similar vein, Tromp has directed attention to the role that oral tradition may have played in the origin and development of the *GLAE*, which in turn explains the tendency of this narrative to treat questions of everyday life and to defy classification as either a Jewish or a Christian text.¹⁹ Such observations are imperative to this study, as will be discussed in the following section and throughout the book.

PRESENT SCHOLARSHIP

The last decade has witnessed an extensive scholarly interest in this engaging narrative. In particular, detailed attention has been devoted to issues related to its original language, sources, multiple text forms, manuscripts and translations, affiliation, relations to other primary Adam and Eve versions, and links to a variety of Greek, Gnostic, Christian, early Syriac, and Jewish traditions.²⁰ In addition, scholars have examined several areas of theological concern, such as: immortality and resurrection; human sin and guilt; enmity among humankind, the Devil, and the animal world; the portrayal of God, the angels, and Satan; the deification of Adam as *imago dei*; the pardoning of Adam and the promise of resurrection; and the important role of paradise.²¹ Attention has also been directed to nontheological issues such as the *GLAE*’s literary complexity and plausible Jewish missionary intent, the significance and inevitability of pain and disease, and the questions of everyday life that are central to the narrative.²²

Some scholarly attention has also been directed to the figure of Eve in the *GLAE*, but comparatively very little. Moreover, much of the existing examinations of the *GLAE* Eve are occupied with notions related to Eve’s role in the first sin.²³ For instance, Anne Marie Sweet has examined the theme of Eve’s penance, noting the

GLAE's unique presentation of the first woman as a repentant sinner, a depiction that can hardly be found in parallel ancient Jewish and Christian sources.²⁴ Levison has persuasively demonstrated that the *GLAE* contains diverse depictions of Eve. As he has amply noted, the short textual unit in *GLAE* chapters 7 and 8, commonly referred to as Adam's account of the transgression, presents Eve as the primary agent of disobedience. In contrast, several text forms of *GLAE* chapters 15 through 30, known as Eve's account of the sin, convey diverse views on Eve and her sin, including exoneration and denigration.²⁵

In the context of broader discussions, Gary Anderson has examined issues related to Eve's sexuality, punishment, childbearing, and salvation.²⁶ Stone has briefly treated Eve's relations with Satan.²⁷ Michael Eldridge has observed that throughout the narrative Eve is portrayed as a dutiful and respectful wife and a resourceful figure. In addition, Eldridge has analyzed Eve's role from the perspective of speech act theory, suggesting that the *GLAE*'s implied author conveys an affinity for and approval of Eve, which in turn serve to enhance her authority as an internal narrator.²⁸ These studies have shed light on a variety of important aspects of the *GLAE*.

FOCUS OF THIS BOOK AND READING STRATEGIES

In addition to the gender of the text's implied authors and their positive and negative theological perspectives on Eve's theological standing as either exonerated or blameworthy, the *GLAE*'s representations of Eve raise other complex issues. These include, for example, the multiplicity of voices, cultural traditions, and countertraditions that seem to be embedded in the *GLAE* framework and their relations to power, ideological stances, and gender conceptualizations.²⁹ This book seeks to examine these issues. In the course of my investigation, the figure of Eve will be considered not as an unchanging theological symbol but as a construct of multiple cultural traditions, conventions, ideologies, and gender conceptions that convey (and in turn affect) a variety of views formed in a specific cultural matrix.