as early as the second century BCE. The Greek preposition *kat*, “opposite, over against,” was used to translate the phrase in Genesis in the Septuagint, around 250 BCE. Since the Greek translation (most likely made in Alexandria) represents a Jewish understanding of the text at the time of the translator, it is likely that the shift in meaning had occurred by then.

These late meanings of *neged* that evolved as part of a complicated extension of earlier uses and a remapping of its semantics and applications gave rise also to the senses “hostile” and “legal adversary.” They may not be read back into a story written about a thousand years before in a much earlier form of Hebrew. Such backreading results in an anachronistic comprehension of what was meant.

Hebrew underwent significant changes after 586 BCE, when Jerusalem was destroyed and its elite groups of temple officials, royal administrators, and scribes were deported to Babylonia. The evolved form of the spoken language that emerged as a literary language circa the first century CE is usually referred to as Rabbinic, Tannaitic, or Mishnaic Hebrew even though it was in use before there were Tannaim, rabbis, or the written Mishnah. Hillel and Jesus and Paul may have read and studied biblical Hebrew, but when speaking to their followers and fellow Jews, shopping in the market, and conversing about religious ideas, if they spoke in Hebrew, and not Aramaic or Greek, they spoke this evolved form of the language. See E. Y. Kutscher, *A History of the Hebrew Language*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Leiden: Brill, 1982, pp. 87–146; M. Bar-Asher, “Mishnaic Hebrew: An Introductory Survey,” *Hebrew Studies* 40 (1999): 115–51.


19. The difference between the two words involves a slight change in the point of articulation of the middle consonant on the hard palate. The different pronunciations arose to distinguish between the significantly different types of kin referred to by the original *neged*. In other words, when used to refer to descendants, *neged* became *neked*. From Rabbinic through Modern Hebrew, *neked* refers to a direct descendant of the third generation, a grandchild.

Chapter 12. The First Lady


2. T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament*, New York: Harper and Row, 1969, pp. 21, 330 (where the literature covering the history of this proposal and arguments both for and against it are cited). S. N. Kramer continued to cham-


5. This citation from *Bereshith Rabbah* is excerpted from one of the harshest descriptions in rabbinic literature of disadvantages accruing to women as a result of Hawwa’s actions. For an extensive discussion of the larger text in the context of rabbinic culture, see J. R. Baskin, *Midrashic Women: Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature*, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2002, pp. 65–73.

6. L. B. Arey, *Developmental Anatomy*, Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1954, pp. 332–35; K. L. Moore, *Clinically Oriented Anatomy* (third edition), Baltimore, MD: Williams and Wilkins, 1992, pp. 149, 297, 313. Hypospadias occurs in one out of five hundred newborn males. A similar, readily observable raphé is found along the join where the two parts of the hard palate meet in the roof of the mouths of both males and females. This may be checked with a mirror.


8. This midrash also occurs in a slightly different formulation in *Bereshith Rabbah* 18:2, where it is quoted in the name of R. Levi, the teacher of R. Joshua, and where the language has been changed: “and not from the hand . . . and not from the foot . . . but from the place which is modest [minmeqōwm šehūw’ sānūwa’] in man. Even when man stands naked, that place is covered.” Here R. Joshua’s midrash has been combined with that of R. Hanina. My late colleague Eliezer Slomovic drew my attention to R. Joshua’s midrash after perusing a very early draft of this chapter.

A thematically similar interpretation is found in Thomas Aquinas (1224–74) but to a different end: “It was right for the woman to be made from a rib of man. First, to signify the social union of man and woman, for the woman should neither use authority over man, and so she was not made from his head; nor was it right for her to be subject to man’s contempt as his slave, and so she was not made from his feet. Secondly, for the sacramental signification; for from the side of Christ sleeping on the Cross the Sacraments flowed—namely, blood and water—on which the Church was

9. CAD, s.v. šēlû; Leslau, Comparative Dictionary of Ge’ez, p. 54. The Ge’ez word for rib is gabô.

10. The Arabic consonant ẓ sometimes corresponds to Hebrew ˢ. This sense for the Arabic is confirmed by another Hebrew cognate, the verb šālā’, “to limp,” which refers to a type of hobbling gait involving lateral deviation from the direction of movement.


12. Similar circumlocutions are attested in Hittite. The vulva is referred to by an expression that translates literally as “what she has below,” while the penis is referred to by one word that translates as “manhood” and another as “stem” or “stalk.” See H. A. Hoffner, “From Head to Toe in Hittite: The Language of the Human Body,” in J. E. Coleson and V. H. Matthews, eds., Go to the Land I Will Show You: Studies in Honor of Dwight W. Young, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996, p. 249.

13. A number of the passages cited below in the chapter are difficult with regard to both their syntax and lower critical issues; commentaries should be consulted.


17. This noun, occurring only once in the Bible, is derived from the root b-w-š, “to be embarrassed, ashamed.” In Deuteronomy 25:11 it appears in a form that may be either plural or dual with a possessive pronounal suffix. It could be translated as “his testicles” (if dual) or “his genitals” (if an abstract plural). It is a stretch to render it “penis.” Martin Luther rendered it Scham, “shame,” in the singular. The Samaritan Pentateuch reads mbšrw in this passage that may refer to “his meat.” See the next word on the list. I thank Mordechai Rotenberg of the Hebrew University for reminding me of this word (private communication, March 11, 2008).
18. See also Ugaritic bûr, “meat, flesh” with the sense “penis” in KTU 1.24:9. It refers to female genitalia in Leviticus 15:19.

19. In a form derived from the base *yarekāh or *yerēkāh, it occurs once in the singular (Gen 49:33) and twenty-seven times in the dual absolute—for example, Exodus 26:23; 36:28; Ezekiel 46:19—and construct to indicate distance or remoteness, for example, Judges 19:18; 1 Samuel 24:4; Isaiah 14:15; Amos 6:10; Jonah 1:5. Although the masculine dual, referring to “hips” or “loins,” occurs twice (Exod 28:42; Song of Songs 7:2), this is rare. The dual of *ḥâlās, halâšayim is used for this more commonly, a total of ten times—for example, Isaiah 5:27; 32:11; Jeremiah 30:6. The word halâšayim is also used figuratively, referring to the male source of virility (Gen 35:11; 1 Kings 8:19; 2 Chr 6:9), but not specifically to the penis. (The asterisk above indicates that this form of the word has been reconstructed by scholars on the basis of other attested forms.)

Such observations lead A. T. Reisenberger to conclude that “side” was the primary meaning of šēla’a and that the noun indicates that the woman was created as the man’s equal. Reisenberger is the first contemporary scholar of whom I am aware to question the rib meaning of šēla’a, but her conclusion as to what it means is inexact. See A. T. Reisenberger, “The Creation of Adam as Hermaphrodite and Its Implications for Feminist Theology,” Judaism 42:4 (1993): 449, 451–52.

20. The word yârek may refer to female genitalia in the prescriptive ritual of the “cursing waters” ordeal (Num 5:21, 22, 27), but the details of what happens to the woman suspected of adultery as a consequence of that ritual are far from clear.

21. This interpretation of the expression was first ventured by S. Gevirtz, who supported it with his provocative suggestion that the term giyd hannâšeh (Gen 32:33)—usually taken as a reference to the sciatic nerve or a muscle in the thigh—may contain a pun between the sound /nâš/ in nâšeh, “sinew,” and words for man—in Hebrew, ’enōš; in Ugaritic, bns; and in Aramaic, ’enâš—and that the term referred to penis, that is, the “sinew of the male.” See S. Gevirtz, “Of Patriarchs and Puns: Joseph at the Fountain, Jacob at the Ford,” Hebrew Union College Annual 46 (1975): 52–53.

22. Among pre-classical Greeks, some myths attest to the notion that it was possible to be born from various parts of the male body: head, thighs, and knees. An underlying idea seems to have been that “seed” was located either in body cavities or in parts of the body filled with fluid or with marrow. See R. B. Onians, The Origins of European Thought, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 174–84. In Hittite, an Indo-European language connected both to Greek and to Sanskrit that was used in what is now central Turkey, the word genu, connected etymologically to English genuflect, means both “knee” and “penis.” The notion may have also originated from the observation of extraneous limbs or attached birth—Siamese twin—phenomena in which it appears that one body part or even a whole body grows out of another part. This is referred to technically as polymelia.
23. The human system involves increased blood flow into the corpora cavernosa, two tubes of spongy tissue that extend the length of the penile shaft.


25. My daughter called me one evening to share a story about my then three-year-old grandson. Earlier that evening, while bathing, he examined his penis closely, looked up to her, and commented, “You know, Eema, my penis doesn’t have a bone.” Could the etiological story have its roots in a similar conversation that took place three thousand years ago?


28. Monkeys were known only as rare, exotic imported animals (1 Kings 10:22). They were most likely imported either overland from Lower Egypt or via the Red Sea trade routes.

29. Robinson Jeffers portrayed male animal–female human sex as a mystical union in his powerful poem “Roan Stallion.” Jeffers’s stark, powerful, and somewhat unsettling work may be used imaginatively to try to grasp intuitively how such unions may have been understood by Greek mythographers when thinking religiously, not raunchily.


Chapter 13. Why “Therefore”?

1. Technically, the first italicized Hebrew word in the passage should be vocalized as ya‘azob, indicating a short o-qāmas, as in the Hebrew text, where it is bound with the following noun: ya‘azob-‘iyš. I transliterate it as a freestanding form for the sake of convenience.


3. Calvin, Commentary on Genesis.

4. Rashi’s “incest” interpretation is prompted by eisegetical comments in the Babylonian Talmud, edited about four centuries before his time: