

Disasters inflicted by temptation in genesis and epic of gilgamesh

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Human beings have a natural tendency to seek out instant pleasure in order to fulfill their innate desires. Unfortunately, this aspired pleasure is often obtained through the process of temptation which in result, evokes a sense of guilt and shame within us. To indulge in such pleasure although gaining temporary satisfaction, leads to unfavorable permanent outcomes.

Throughout the works of Gilgamesh and Genesis, temptation acts as a central theme—having a significant impact on the dynamics of multiple characters: Adam, Eve, and Enkidu. Their inability to resist such gratification leads to their individualized downward spirals. Adam and Eve commit treachery and are forever allocated to gender specific punishments while Enkidu is seduced by a licentious prostitute and undergoes an extensive transformation responsible for his own death.

The stories of Genesis and Gilgamesh both display the unfavorable effects of temptation and the hardship brought upon by these decisions. On the contrary, the timelapse of the realization of sin and the type of knowledge the characters longed to acquire varies extensively. God punishes those who defy him and indulge in temptation. The book of Genesis conveys this notion, specifically the story of The Garden of Eden. God the creator of all things, deliberately instructs Adam to stray from the fruit on the tree of knowledge. This command was intended to test the loyalty of the human beings he had created, but Adam and Eve fail miserably. God punishes them both for going against his will, exiling them from Eden and dooming them to a life of misery. Their punishment is a heinous and permanent one forced onto their next of kin; painful childbirth and a life of submissivity for women, and a life of arduous labor in harsh conditions for men. Nevertheless, man had

undergone a transformation in the concept of just versus unjust, " See! The man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3: 22). In other words, man was once pure and innocent, similar to that of a newborn baby, unaware of evil and all things immoral that in the world, thus unable to differentiate between the two. Their decision to eat from the tree generates an epiphany, or a sudden realization of the body of man because he was responsible for his own wrongdoing and had single handedly displayed sinful behavior. Their decision to indulge in temptation leads to an extremely unfortunate life of hardship for not only themselves but the rest of humanity as well. Their future children will be forced to bear the consequences of their immoral acts which only enforces the idea of how the inability to resist temptation only results in pain and suffering. The emergence of shame is brought about by the commitment of sin. God created man with an image in mind, wholesome and unaware of their natural form. Adam and Eve's dishonorable behavior stimulates a full body awareness, arising a sense of vulnerability within their physical forms. As illustrated in the quote said by Adam, " I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid" (Genesis 3: 10). They have become cognizant of their bodies in their true form but they are now ashamed and uncomfortable in their own skin.

The result of their temptation only brought about physical shame and a sense of discomfort in their own bodies. Consequently, the sin of lust was thus instilled within them. The motif of lust can also be greatly attributed to Enkidu's experience with temptation throughout the work of Gilgamesh.

Enkidu is seduced by the sensuous Shamhat. He is attracted to her physical appearance and worldly outlook and is thus unable to resist the

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temptation presented before him, agreeing to have sex with the vibrant prostitute. This choice brought about a complete transformation of Enkidu, not just physically but his outlook on the world was altered as well. Prior to this event, Enkidu was once a “child of nature” (Gilgamesh 7), untamed as he shared more similarities with animals than he did human beings. Once he is tempted to have sex with Shamhat, Enkidu’s body is altered as he loses touch with his naturalistic roots, “Enkidu was weakened, could not run as before (Gilgamesh 8).” In other words, Enkidu’s body went under a major transformation which took a toll on his physical abilities; he is no longer able to keep up with the agile creatures of Uruk. In essence, Enkidu lost a piece of his identity, unattached to his origins once he transitioned to a civilized being.

Another major example that supports this claim is that the gazelles, creatures who once embraced Enkidu, now disown him. Not only does he lose sight of where he came from but he loses his purity and sense of morality after he sleeps with Shamhat, “Enkidu had defiled his body so pure” (Gilgamesh 8). These lost traits are stripped away from him after his indulgence and he will never be able to regain them. Despite this downfall, Enkidu doesn’t exhibit a sense of regret until later on in the epic when he becomes privy to his sealed fate of death. Initially, Enkidu is fully ensconced in the culture of civilization, eating bread and drinking beer. For the time being, Enkidu is more than content with his life, ensconced in the culture of civilization. Once Enkidu is informed of his approaching death he, not only regrets his decision to sleep with Shamhat but disowns her and curses her out. The Gods condemn Enkidu to death, enforcing the notion that they are

not in favor of him. Enkidu's decision to give into temptation ultimately leads to his own death and his short willed sense, "reason and wide understanding" (Gilgamesh 8) diminishes. Enkidu's journey is significantly different from that of Adam and Eve's as far as realization is concerned. His journey is much more multifaceted than that of Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve are punished immediately following their sin, whereas Enkidu feels rewarded for his decision due to the fact that he is transformed from a beast to a man. The contrast exists in the timespan of the recognition of their wrong doings. The character motivation behind the acts of temptation vary extensively between the two works of literature. All characters wish to gain knowledge or personal growth through self-gratification, but the result from which they are aspiring to obtain is what differentiates these stories. In Genesis, Adam is second to eat from the tree of knowledge after his wife Eve.

Adam's motivation primarily stems from his need to be with someone. Adam was told that if he eats the fruit, he will die. So when his destined soulmate Eve takes a bite of the fruit, Adam fears that he will forever be alone and ponders ride or die partner by his side. . Adam's thought process can be inferred this way due to the fact that God himself even stated that, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2: 18). Humans are inherently social beings, we continuously crave the presence and affection of others. In addition, God had even stated that there are no other creatures that can compare to the bond that exists to the one of two human beings. Only other humans are able to provide comfort to other beings. Essentially, Adam's motivation behind his decision to eat the fruit stems from his fear of being by

himself. Whereas Eve has an intense desire to gain wisdom resulting in her decision to eat from the tree of knowledge. Throughout the old testament, the idea of wisdom is often associated with women. Wise women were highly regarded in the time due to their veneration of both experience and judgement. Eve feels as though her life were being dictated under God's rule. She is also slightly tempted by the appearance of the fruit because it, "was good for food and pleasing to the eyes" (Genesis 3: 6).

Physical appearance is also leads Enkidu into temptation as well as he is infatuated with Shamhat, motivating him to follow through with his tempestuous desires. However, he is ultimately tempted by his desire of lust. Enkidu was created as a civilized beast, raised in nature with minimal human contact. He is thus easily seduced by Shamhat, unable to resist her humanistic feminine features. Enkidu's destiny to be a part of civilization is what leads him into his own trap of temptation. The outside force of evil will forever lurk over us, tempting us to engage in unrighteous behavior. Fortunately, every human being is given the freewill to make the decision of whether to sin or resist their inner desires thus remaining pure. Temporary pleasure, is just that temporary-while the everlasting effects of this momentary pleasure are strictly unfavorable. Gilgamesh and Genesis effectively depict the challenges that are brought about when faced with temptation. Both works illustrate the negative effects of ungodly actions and their relationship with shame. The story of the Garden of Eden in Genesis is more straightforward to the point while Gilgamesh demonstrates the complex nature of these obstacles. But ultimately the two stories exemplify how temptation results in a life of hardship and misery.

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