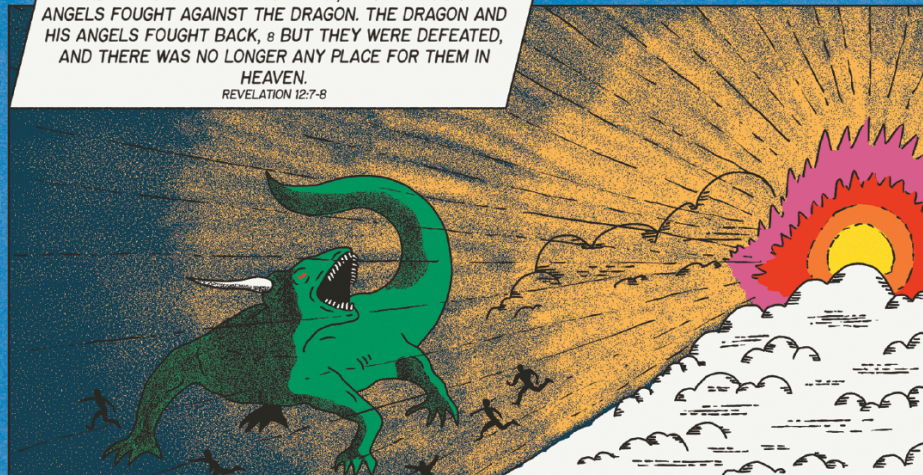


7 AND WAR BROKE OUT IN HEAVEN; MICHAEL AND HIS ANGELS FOUGHT AGAINST THE DRAGON. THE DRAGON AND HIS ANGELS FOUGHT BACK, 8 BUT THEY WERE DEFEATED, AND THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY PLACE FOR THEM IN HEAVEN.

REVELATION 12:7-8



THE DRAGONS HERE ARE CLEAR ENOUGH. GREAT BIG MONSTERS YOU CAN FIGHT (AT LEAST IF YOU'RE GOD.) BUT THERE ARE MORE DRAGONS HIDING IN THE BIBLICAL TEXT. ONES YOU CAN MISS IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL.



IN FACT, ONE IS LURKING JUST BENEATH THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE'S OPENING CHAPTERS.



LET'S TURN THERE NOW.

I'M DRAGON YOU DEEPER INTO THIS SHADOWY MYSTERY...



Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?'" : The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, : but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.' " : But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. : for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,[a] knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:1-5

IN ANCIENT HEBREW AND GREEK (THE PRIMARY SOURCE LANGUAGES FOR THE BIBLE), IT CAN BE SURPRISINGLY DIFFICULT TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SNAKE AND A DRAGON.



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ANCIENT WORDS FOR 'SERPENT' DIDN'T MAKE A SHARP DISTINCTION BETWEEN WHAT MODERN READERS WOULD CONSIDER A 'NATURAL' CREATURE AND A 'MYTHICAL' ONE.



DRAGONS AND SNAKES WERE ESSENTIALLY UNDERSTOOD AS DIFFERENT BUT RELATED CREATURES. CONTEXT WAS CRITICAL FOR UNDERSTANDING WHICH ONE WAS BEING REFERENCED IN A GIVEN TEXT.

THE CREATURE WHICH TURNS UP IN GENESIS CHAPTER 3 AND TRICKS ADAM AND EVE INTO EATING FORBIDDEN FRUIT IS AMBIGUOUS IN THIS WAY—THE WORD USED COULD CERTAINLY INDICATE A CONVENTIONAL SNAKE...YET THE CREATURE IN GENESIS TALKS, IT HAS A MYSTERIOUS KIND OF SECRET WISDOM, AND IT—IMPORTANTLY—IT HAS LEGS (UNTIL IT'S CURSED TO CRAWL ON ITS BELLY IN GEN 3:14).

