

Linguistic Connection Between "Hedone" and "Eden" ?

Post by "Cassius" of June 26, 2019 at 8:19 AM

NB: I notice a linguistic connection between the ancient Greek word 'hedone' and the Hebrew word from which we derive 'Eden'. It seems that 'Eden' can be translated as 'Delight' and 'Pleasure'. (The Hebrew language provides different vocabulary to denote 'holiness', 'righteousness', or 'sanctity'). An Aramaic root indicates that which is "fruitful, plentiful," or that which is "well-watered", thus, linking the idea of 'that which is pleasant' to 'healthy, living beings'.

Prior to their adoption of monotheism, and before their monolatrist period of YHWH-privileged worship, did Hebrew populations explore philosophical materialism? I found one reference to 'pleasure' as being a desirable reward for following the precepts of the deity (Talmud Kidushin 82:b). We also find language in 'Ecclesiastes' and 'Song of Songs' that use sensual imagery to express religious belief.

I wonder how influential philosophical materialism was on early Judaism--at the same time, I remind myself that Hellenistic Jews demonized Epicurus and his followers (סורוקיפא or 'Epikoros') as irreligious heathens. However, it seems to me that their demonization was based on Epicurus' rejection of an afterlife, and necessarily on his hedonism. Of course, physical pleasure is not seen as the goal of Hebrew worship, just a bonus to worshipping correctly.

Still, I think the more important point is that we find 'pleasure' as a necessary starting point in every tradition, even those that try to avoid it. Throughout the Middle Eastern world, monotheists acknowledge that our ancestors were born into a natural paradise; those same monotheists continue to privilege this lush, fertile, pleasure-filled period as the golden age of humanity.