In this note I shall offer an alternate translation for a verbal form which occurs in Gen 2,25. By doing so, I hope to permit additional perspectives on a well-known episode in Hebrew Scriptures.

The syntax of Gen 2,25 is complex and obviously forces proportioning the sentence into three discrete units, and the Masoretes punctuated accordingly. wayyiheyû šenîyhem ʿarûmmîm, “Now both of them were naked”, is given a zァqェph qァn; ḥאʿadאמ weʿištו, “the man and his spouse”, is halted by an ʿatnזh, a major disjunctive accent; wلىyitbォsァsゥ, the focus of our study, has a sillゅq before sォph passゅq. The vocabulary in 2,25 permits the sentence to act as pivot from episodes concerned with the creation of Adam’s mate and with the lesson that can be gathered through this singular event — man will cleave to his wife in sexual embrace —, to those which introduces the serpent, its deception and the inevitable consequences. This program is conducted thematically by using the word ʿištו, “his spouse”, and parasonantically by playing on ʿarûmmim, a word which rather unsubtly focuses attention upon the serpent’s wily attribute: ʿארumont. For this reason, it would be insensitive to regard Gen 2,25 solely either as end to chapter 2 or as beginning for the “fall”. It does both, as is common to Hebrew narratives wherein are strung multiple scenes(*).

wلىyitbォsァsゥ needs further comments, however. The conjunction here obviously establishes a disjunctive relationship with the previous statements and ought, therefore, be rendered by something more striking than a mere “and”. Some have therefore opted for “yet”, others for “but”, either one of which will adequately permit the reader to realize that the author’s observations regarding wلىyitbォsァsゥ are not necessarily supplementing his comments regarding the pair’s nakedness; rather it fosters a sharp shift from vocabulary describing the protagonists’ physical state to one which gives access to their inner contemplation and reactions.

The verbal form yitbォsァsゥ is in the imperfect, but as noted by grammarians and commentators, its use is frequentative(2). That is, it connotes a

(1) See my comments to the last verses for each chapter in the book of Ruth, Ruth. A New Translation, with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation (Baltimore 1979) 226. B.N. WAMBAČČ argues for taking Gen 2,25 as inaugurating the “Fall” rather than ending the “Creation of Woman” episode, “Or tous deux étaient nus, l’homme et sa femme, mais ils n’en avaient pas honte”, Mélanges bibliques en hommage au R.P. Béda Rigaux (Gembloux 1970) 553-556.

(2) E.g., J. SKINNER, Genesis (ICC; Edinburgh 1930) 50, endnote.
The stem of *yitbōšāšū* is of most interest to me here. The root *bōs* has received adequate treatments in the dictionaries(4). In the G (qâl), the verb carries a range of meaning which conveys "to feel shame". As in most verbs that are "middle weak" (CW/YQ, the hitpa‘el appears as a hitpolel or as a hitpo‘el, with the final vowel in mostly finite verbal forms lengthening to a qâmeš when in pause. Lexically, the hitpolel partakes of the D (pi‘el) stem's intensive and factitive qualities, the latter of which seems to obtain most in "middle weak" verbs: e.g., ḡûm, "to rise", *ḥitqômëm, "to make oneself rise (usually against someone)"; ḇîn, "to discern", *ḥitbônën, “to make oneself discern = to show interest, to be attentive”. The -ta- infixed within this stem allows the hitpolel often to express the distributive and the reciprocal (i.e. "to one after the other, to each other") rather than only the reflexive ("to oneself") or the selfish ("for one's own interest"). In the case of *yitbōšāšū* of 2,25, some renderings allow for the infix and offer "They felt no shame in front of each other" (BI) or translate by means of the nebulous "but they had no feeling of shame towards one another" (NEB). Almost all

(4) WAMBACQ, ibid., 549-553, studies the mention of nakedness in the OT and argues that it is not to be associated with sexuality, but rather with human frailty and misery: "Les premiers hommes n'en rougissaient pas, parce qu'ils n'en étaient pas conscients, du fait qu'ils vivaient dans l'amitié et la protection divine" (553). But as is common to many literatures, ancient as well as modern, nakedness can be made symbolic of various emotions, and only the contexts will determine whether that emotion represents pride, humility, rebirth (spiritual), protest, disinterest, asceticism, seduction, etc... see the rich article of J.Z. SMITH, "The Garments of Shame", History of Religions 5 (1965) 217-237, especially 223 n. 23. When Wambacq inspects the prophetic literature, therefore, nakedness is bound to be conventional for humility. It is otherwise when it is found in the narratives (e.g. Gen 9,22-23; 1 Sam 20,30); cf. BDB sub ‘ārâh, ‘er-wâh, ‘ūr, ‘érôm, ‘ărôm. Moreover, Wambacq finds it difficult to explain the ensuing narrative of the Fall. "C'est une première tentative de se réhabiliter" (ibid.) is not a satisfying answer to why Adam and Eve's first act upon partaking the fruit is to clothe themselves.

(4) See the articles of H. SEEBASS, TWAT I, 568-578 and of F. STOLZ, THAT I, 269-270, sub bōš.

On the hapax *yitbōšāšū* and its meaning, see the bibliography in WAMBACQ'S article cited above, 584 n. 4. In "Notes de lexicographie hébraïque: *yitbōšāšū* (Gen. 2,25)", Bib 7 (1926) 74-75, P. JoüON points out that the reciprocity available to the -ta- infix was not translated by the ancient versions. He would therefore translate the hitpolel here no differently than he would the simple qâl: "... il ne s'agit pas de la honte, de la confusion ordinaire, mais de cette honte honnête que nous nommons la pudeur". However, it should be noted that reciprocity was presumed by all ancient commentators when they tackled this episode. Moreover, Joüon's own rendering "se montrer honteux... se sentir honteux... éprouver de la honte" does not translate a simple qâl, but actually recognizes the effect of the infix acting reflexively.
translations, however, ignore the implications of the hitpolel and render the verb as it were a qāl (e.g. Torah's: “they felt no shame”; RSV’s “and were not ashamed”) (5).

I would like to suggest a translation for lō’ yitbōšāšû which takes full cognizance of the factitive as well as the reciprocal qualities of the hitpolel: “yet, they did not shame each other”, or, more elegantly put: “yet, they did not embarrass each other”. As an alternate rendering for Gen 2,25, this translation is permitted, and in my opinion, even supported by morphology. Moreover, such a translation will allow interesting perspectives on the ensuing narrative. At the outset of the “seduction of Eve” episode, this translation implies the pair did not have the potential to find blemishes with each other because they did not perceive anatomical, sexual, or role distinctions within the species. This state of affairs will end at Gen 3,7, a verse which completes the inclusion by recalling the word ʾēyrummîm, an alternative adjectival form for ʿarûmmîm: “When the eyes of both were opened, they realized that they were indeed naked. They then stitched together fig leaves, making for themselves loincloths”. Note how this sentence splits the series of activities within two spheres. The first, at 3,7a, reverses the condition which had obtained ever since 2,25 since “The eyes of both were opened” fulfills the serpent’s prediction. Moreover, recourse to yēdeʾû, “they realized”, in the same phrase allows the pair to partake of the serpent’s assessment of God’s own mental processes as presented in 3,5 (“Since God realizes ʾyōde’a’) that as soon as you partake of it, your eyes will be opened”).

The second half of Gen 3,7, beginning just past the ʾatnāk, shifts the reader’s focus to the action of the protagonists at the point in which they had obtained understanding. They stitch leaves of figs — the forbidden fruit? —, and turn them into coverings. The language here, yaʿaʿāû lâhem, is not precise, but there is no reason to think that the undertaking was mutual. To the contrary, it is more suitable to imagine that Adam and Eve each made their own loincloth and wore it away from each other’s sight(6). It is at this point, therefore, that the pair began to recognize distinctions between each other and to establish separate identity, and I am encouraged to reason this way since precisely at this point begin the mutual accusations.

Adam and Eve, now fully able to embarrass each other, could not be

(5) Note, however, J. De Fraine, Genesis (BoeOT; Roermond-Maaseik) 52, who translates “ze voelden zich niet vernederd” (quoted by WAMBACQ, ibid., 548 n. 4).

(6) This is made plausible by Gen 2,25 wherein ḣāʾādām weʾisṭān invites the reader to recognize the protagonists’ individuality by effectively splitting the force behind ʾēnîyhem, “the two of them”. Thus when ʾēnîyhem makes its only other reappearance in this episode at 3,7 the memory finds it possible to assign the deed separately to each. The three attestations of ʿādām weʾisṭān, in fact, run as leitmotif throughout the scene in order to keep the movements of the pair separate. Thus it reappears in 3,8 when the two find individual hiding places, preparing for God’s interview of one out of the other’s hearing. [The snake is not questioned, but is summarily cursed.] ʿādām weʾisṭān is summoned one last time at the end of the scene, at 3,21, when God provides leather clothing leʾādām ʾāleʾʾisṭān, “to Adam and to his wife”.
abandoned to their own devices, and here God steps in. As I have develop-
ed it elsewhere, the so-called “curses” addressed to the serpent, to Adam,
and to Eve pursue at least two separate programs. One can be read as a
*parable* for the transformation of immortality: Once accorded to Adam and
his mate through easy access to the Tree of Life, immortality is now granted
to the entire species through the gift of birthgiving. That gift is the wo-
man’s; consequently she is alone *not* to be cursed by means of the verb
\( \text{עָרַר} \). The second program is to be read as a *paradigm* for the earthly cycle
of life: The serpent survives only by eating the dust of the earth. Its brood
is to be an implacable foe, to woman as well as to her descendants. But
when a human being’s earthly existence comes to an end, its flesh will serve
to feed the serpent. And thus will the fate of all three merge into eternal
interdependence (?).

Conception, and the physical intimacy that it will require, however, can
now be counted upon to blur Adam and Eve's newly found gender distinc-
tions. As if to underscore this reality, God himself prepares garments of
skins and clothes the pair; thus temporarily halting their propensity to em-
barrass each other.

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(? J. M. SASSON, “The ‘Tower of Babel’ as a Clue to the Redactional Struc-
turing of the Primeval History [Gen. 1-11:9]”, *The Bible World: Essays in Ho-
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