

This photo is available in the print version  
of *Moral Landscape of Creation*

The landscape of creation is powerful by its absence. In self-reproach and shame Eve is isolated from Adam, the beautiful garden, and most of its inhabitants. Only the serpent is present.

*Moses Jacob Ezekiel (1844-1917). EVE HEARING THE VOICE, Modeled 1876, cast c. 1904. Bronze, over life-size. Cincinnati Art Museum, Gift of Dr. Merlyn McClure and the Family of Dr. George W. McClure. Photograph © Cincinnati Art Museum.*

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# Isolation

BY HEIDI J. HORNICK

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Rarely is Eve depicted alone in visual representations of the Garden of Eden stories. Where is Adam in this powerful bronze? Where is the glorious landscape of Paradise? Of all the creatures in the garden, only the serpent is barely visible at the base.

Moses Jacob Ezekiel wrote that his sculpture represents “Eve when she hears the voice of God in the garden and is ashamed.” Eve’s self-reproach shows in the exaggerated theatrical gesture which is not typical of the academic-classical style Ezekiel had studied. He once told of a lady who arrived in a fine carriage at his studio in Rome. He did not know her, but she seemed to think that everybody did. Seeing this statue, the lady “at once criticized the thumb as being bent too far back and said that, when a woman’s thumb is bent back in that way, she must have an immoral character.”<sup>†</sup> For the high lady there was this subtler token of shame!

Ezekiel, the first celebrated American Jewish sculptor, was one of 14 children in a Sephardic family of Dutch descent in Richmond. He attended the Virginia Military Institute in 1862, fought as a Confederate cadet, and befriended Gen. Robert E. Lee in 1866. He studied at the Royal Academy of Art in Berlin from 1869 until 1871. After winning the Prix de Rome in 1873, he worked in that city for most of the rest of his life. Among his best-known works are eleven full-length portraits of artists for niches in the Corcoran Gallery (today the Renwick Gallery) in Washington, D.C. (1877-84) and the Confederate Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery (1914). At his request, Ezekiel was buried beneath that memorial in a ceremony that mirrored the complexity of his life: an art-historian Rabbi from Cincinnati paid tribute, the Washington lodge conducted a Masonic interment, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy led a separate ceremony.

This complicated artist sculpted a strikingly simple and powerful image: the shameful figure of Eve in isolation from her mate, the beautiful garden, and most of its inhabitants. Because of her sin Eve is separated from her landscape.

## NOTE

<sup>†</sup> Moses Jacob Ezekiel, *Memoirs From the Baths of Diocletian*, ed. Joseph Gutmann and Stanley F. Chyet, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 179-81.