Almost from the beginning, the Hebrew Bible makes food an object of divine command for humans and animals. The creation of Adam as male and female is followed at once by God’s blessing of them; His command to them to reproduce, to fill the earth and subdue it; and His grant of authority to them over other living things. God then explicitly states that He has given to human beings ‘every plant producing seed which is upon the surface of the earth, and every tree in which is fruit of a tree yielding seed’ (Gen. 1:29). Following at once on this decision about food for human beings, God declares that He has granted to the animals ‘every green plant for food’ (Gen. 1:30). As Rashi notes in his commentary on these verses, Scripture puts animals and humans on the same level as regards food: all alike were to eat plants. Nonetheless, there is an imbalance between the information provided by the two Scriptural verses. Gen. 1:29 is quite detailed in its prescription of human food, speaking of trees as well as plants, and taking up more than twenty Hebrew words to describe the divine gift to humans of the trees which yield fruits and seeds. By contrast, Gen. 1:30 is strikingly terse, limiting animal food to ‘every green plant’.

Mention of the ‘tree’ at Gen. 1:29 as a source of human food comes into its own, of course, in the following chapter, which tells how God, following the creation of ‘the man’, put him into the garden of Eden which He had planted (Gen. 2:9). At once we note that this garden is a sacred space: the Divine Presence is manifest there, and God speaks

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2 The Bible’s emphasis on trees at this point clearly impressed PJ, which adds the note that God granted to humans for building purposes and for fire-wood trees which do not bear fruit: see the discussion in M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis Translated, with Introduction and Notes* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1992), p. 20.
directly with the first human being and with his wife, who is eventually created in this garden (Gen. 2:21–23). God put the Adam into this garden ‘to work it and to keep it’ (Gen. 2:15), a requirement traditionally understood in ancient Judaism as meaning that the Adam was to labour in the Torah and to observe its commandments. At the same time, the human being is granted leave to eat of every tree of the garden, except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Consumption of that tree will end in death (Gen. 2:16–17).

The sequel is well known. At the instigation of the serpent, a canny speaker endowed with a certain rhetorical gift, the woman succumbs and eats of the prohibited tree, sharing the fruit with Adam (Gen. 3:1–7). The divine condemnation of the three actors in this drama is swift. The serpent is cursed henceforth to walk on its belly, and a new command is given about its food: dust is what it shall eat (Gen. 3:14). The Bible strongly implies that the serpent had hitherto walked with upright posture: this was not lost on the ancient interpreters, who concluded that God had punished the serpent by chopping off its feet. Eve is given over to the pangs of childbirth and an unequal relationship with her husband (Gen. 3:16). Adam’s punishment, like the serpent’s, involves his food. God now decrees (Gen. 3:18) that the earth is to be cursed because of Adam, and that from now on he will eat of it in toil. This is spelled out in detail:

And thorns and thistles it shall sprout for you; and you shall eat plants of the field (or: plants of the open country, Hebrew ēseb hassādeh).

To this decision the following verse (Gen. 3:19) adds a supplement, which might appear to modify, or even to contradict what God has just laid down as Adam’s penalty. The traditional vocalization of the Hebrew of Gen. 3:19, as given by the Masoretic Text, shows how God ordered Adam:

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3 See, for example, b. Sanh. 38a; Men. 110a; Sifre Deut. 41 end; Gen. Rab. 14:9; 16:5–6; PRE 12:1; PJ, TN, FTP, FTV of this verse. The tradition is also mentioned in 2 Enoch 31:1. See further J.L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible. A Guide to the Bible as it was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 120–121, and discussion of Second Temple attitudes towards the notion of the keeping of commandments before the Giving of Torah examined by G.A. Anderson, ‘The Status of Torah before Sinai’, *Dead Sea Discoveries* 1 (1994), pp. 1–29.

4 See Apoc. Mos. 26:2–3; Josephus Ant. I.50; Gen. Rab. 20:5; PRE 14:3; ARNb 42:117; PJ of Gen. 3:14.