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The Seed in Genesis 3:15 : an Exegetical and Intertextual Study

Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole
Andrews University

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Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

**THE SEED IN GENESIS 3:15: AN EXEGETICAL
AND INTERTEXTUAL STUDY**

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole

May 2002

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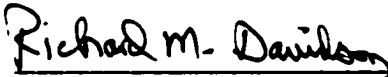
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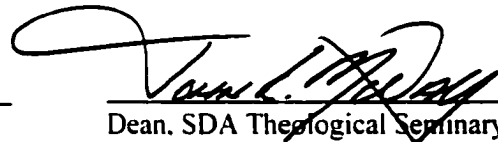
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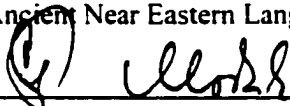
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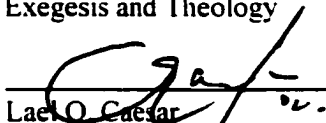
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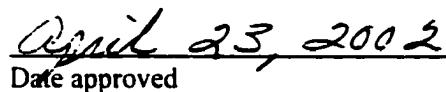
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ABSTRACT

**THE SEED IN GENESIS 3:15: AN EXEGETICAL
AND INTERTEXTUAL STUDY**

by

Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole

Adviser: Richard M. Davidson

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE SEED IN GENESIS 3:15: AN EXEGETICAL AND INTERTEXTUAL STUDY

Name of researcher: Afolarin Olutunde Ojewole

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Richard M. Davidson, Ph.D.

Date completed: May 2002

The Topic

This dissertation seeks to ascertain the meaning and referent of the “seed” and its related pronouns in Gen 3:15.

The Purpose

The meaning and referent of “seed” and its related pronouns in Gen 3:15 have been discussed throughout the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation. This dissertation analyzes Gen 3:15 exegetically, intratextually, and intertextually, tracing the meaning of this “seed” in Genesis, the rest of the Old Testament, and the New Testament.

The Introduction briefly surveys the centuries of the Jewish and Christian

interpretations of Gen 3:15 classifying them into related categories such as literal, naturalistic, historical, political, allegorical, figurative, eschatological, and Christological interpretations.

Chapter 1 surveys Gen 3:15 and its context. The textual analysis shows that the ancient texts significantly follow a Hebrew text similar to the MT. The literary, structural, thematic, terminological, syntactical, morphological, and semantic analyses of the context of Gen 3:15 demonstrate that this verse is the center of the message of Gen 3.

The narrowing movement in the Hebrew text of Gen 3:15 reveals the Messianic import of this watershed verse. The clash between the serpent and the woman becomes the long-lasting enmity between their respective plural collective seed comprising all human beings. This narrows down into a fatal clash between Satan, the singular serpent, and the Messiah, the singular, individual representative Seed of the woman.

Chapter 2 examines the intratextual use of the seed and its related pronouns of Gen 3:15 within the rest of the book of Genesis beginning from Gen 1:28. The narrowing from the plural collective seed to the singular, individual, representative Seed establishes a pattern for signifying Messianic intention in some of these seed passages, especially Gen 22:17-19 and Gen 24:60. The special Seed is already described as Messianic, royal, and priestly in Genesis.

Chapter 3 shows that the Pentateuch is consistent in its understanding and portrayal of the seed of Gen 3:15. The intertextual study of the seed shows that subsequent authors of the OT and NT recognized and followed the same understanding of the seed.

Chapter 4 examines the similarities and differences between Gen 3:15 and the

relevant ancient Near Eastern literature. This illuminates the figurative understanding of some of the expressions in Gen 3:14-15. Chapter 5 enumerates the theological implications of the seed of Gen 3:15 by showing the major themes and minor motifs.

Conclusions

This dissertation concludes that there is a Messianic intention in Gen 3:15 based on the narrowing phenomenon of the seed in the Hebrew text of this verse. The Seed and the serpent have a fatal and deadly clash in which the Messiah is eternally victorious on behalf of all the righteous seed.

**To my dear wife, Foluso,
and our darling children,
David and Dorcas**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature</i>
ANE	Ancient Near Eastern
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i>
ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BDB	<i>Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs.
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
<i>BN</i>	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>CAD</i>	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CBQMS</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly–Monograph Series</i>

CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
FG	<i>The First-Gospel: Genesis 3:15</i> , Dominic Unger
GKC	<i>Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , ed. Emil Kautzsch, trans. A. E. Cowley
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JATS	<i>Journal of the Adventist Theological Society</i>
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JEOL	<i>Jaarbericht . . . et oriente lux</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	<i>Supplements for Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>

KJV	King James Version Bible
<i>KTU</i>	<i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i>
LCC	Library of Christian Classics
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LWA	Luther's Work's, American Edition
MT	Masoretic Text
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis,</i> VanGemeren, ed.
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Or</i>	<i>Orientalia</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>OTS</i>	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de Science religieuse</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version Bible
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
<i>SEA</i>	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>

<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TOTC</i>	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
<i>TWAT</i>	<i>Theologische Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , Botterweck, Fabry, and Ringgren, eds.
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Workbook of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugaritische Forschung</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>VTSup</i>	Vetus Testamentum, Supplements
<i>WA</i>	Luther's Works, Weimar Ausgabe
<i>WBC</i>	Word Bible Commentary
<i>WO</i>	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>ZAH</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Althebräistik</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen</i>

PREFACE

Since I gave my life to Christ, I have always been fascinated with the gospel. I searched intently in the Scriptures to find all the hints of God's plan of salvation for His fallen children. I discovered that this plan precedes the creation and the fall of man. That is too amazing! I determined to find the first major mention of this plan in the Old Testament canon. My search led me to Gen 3:15.

I have immersed myself in these studies, in one way or another, for the past decade of my life. My blessings are immeasurable and indescribable. However, my academic findings and conclusions, after my intense scholarly research, are presented in this dissertation.

I offer profound gratitude to the Almighty Father for His Son Jesus Christ who saved me and has walked with me all this while. To God alone be all the glory! I am thankful for my godly parents, Elder and Mrs. Ezekiel Ojewole, for giving me Jesus above all things. My siblings, Olubukola (deceased), Olubunmi, Olajire, and Bolanle, helped me to demonstrate Christ's love also. I am blessed with mentors such as Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Ola, Prof. Adekunle Alalade, Dr. David Babalola, Pastor Onaolapo Ajibade, and Prof. Oladimeji Aborisade. Thank you for your love.

I acknowledge the kind support of my adviser, Dr. Richard Davison, who sharpened my understanding of the Word. Dr. Roy Gane and Dr. Jiří Moskala gave

wonderful suggestions that improved the result of this dissertation. I am thankful for the genuine Christian love shown to me by Dorothy Show, Mabel Bowen, Brenda Kis, Dr. Werner Vhymeister, and other friends and well-wishers.

I would not have realized my dream of coming to Andrews University from Nigeria if Dr. and Dr. (Mrs.) Deji Adeleke had not rendered the initial financial assistance that enabled my wife and I to come to Andrews University in September 1995. I cannot thank them enough for their inspiring generosity and selflessness. Only heaven can reward them adequately for how they continue to touch numerous lives for the kingdom.

Foluso, my sweetheart, is the gem above all. She endured the trying times with me. I will always love her, my beloved. David and Dorcas, our children, are a great blessing. Now they can have their husband and daddy back. No more doctoral excuses!

INTRODUCTION

Description of the Research

Background to the Problem

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (Gen 3:15 NASB).¹

The word “seed,” together with its related pronouns,² in Gen 3:15 has been discussed throughout the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation.³ John Ronning

¹This English version will be used throughout this dissertation unless otherwise stated.

²“Related pronouns” refers to those pronouns with “seed” as their antecedent noun in the passage. The word “seed,” with the lower-case “s,” will be used in this dissertation when referring to plural or collective seed only, except when the word appears in a quotation or in a Bible version. The word “Seed” with the upper-case “S,” will be used when referring to the singular individual Messianic Seed only, except when the word appears in a quotation or in a Bible version.

³Notable works on the history of the interpretation of Gen 3:15 include: Tibor Gallus, *Der Nachkomme der Frau (Gen 3,15) in der Altlutheranischen Schriftauslegung*, vol. 1, *Luther, Zwingli und Calvin* (Klagenfurt: Carinthia, 1964); *ibid.*, vol. 2, *Von den Zeitgenossen Luthers bis zur Aufklärungszeit* (Klagenfurt: Carinthia, 1973); *ibid.*, *Der Nachkomme der Frau (Gen 3,15) in der Evangelischen Schriftauslegung*, vol. 3, *Von der Aufklärungszeit bis in die Gegenwart* (Klagenfurt: Carinthia, 1976); *ibid.*, *Die Frau in Gen 3,15* (Klagenfurt: Carinthia, 1979); John L. Ronning, “The Curse on the Serpent (Gen 3:15) in Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics” (Ph.D. dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1997), 6-101; and Dominic Unger, *The First-Gospel: Genesis 3:15* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1954); *idem*, “Patristic Interpretation of the Protoevangelium,” *Marian Studies* 12 (1961): 111-164. Other writers include Charles L. Feinberg, “The Virgin Birth in the Old Testament,” *BSac* 117 (1960): 313-324; Jack P. Lewis, “The Woman’s Seed (Gen 3:15),” *JETS* 34 (1991): 299-319; and Ken Schurb, “Sixteenth-Century Lutheran-Calvinist Conflict on the Protoevangelium,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 54 (1990): 25-47.

notes that the predominant positions and interests of interpreters have changed over time.¹

The two ends of the spectrum of interpretation are the literal and the figurative, with considerable overlap between them.

The literal interpretation is “naturalistic” because it sees in the text only the natural serpent, the human being, and the hatred between them. The figurative interpretation employs symbolic, spiritual, and even allegorical meanings for the serpent, the woman, their seed(s), and the enmity between them.

The early Jewish interpretations of Gen 3:15 are divergent. They range from individual-eschatological,² individual-messianic,³ and collective interpretations⁴ for the seed of the woman, to strictly naturalistic,⁵ philosophical,⁶ and allegorical.⁷ The “seed” is

¹Ronning, ii.

²R. A. Martin, “The Earliest Messianic Interpretation of Gen 3:15,” *JBL* 84 (1965): 427. W. S. Vorster agrees with Martin in seeing the messianic meaning of Gen 3:15 in the LXX (“The Messianic Interpretation of Gen 3:15: A Methodological Problem,” *Ou Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika* 15 [1972]: 110-111). The *Targum Onqelos*, *Samaritan Targum*, *Palestinian Targums*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, and *Targum Neofiti* all refer to the fulfillment of the verse in the messianic age. However, the *Targum Onqelos* tends more strongly towards the eschatological-messianic application of the verse. See Bernard Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible, vol. 6 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988).

³Instances are found in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1:43, 44, 49, 50; and Herman L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Munich: C. H. Beck’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1956), 1:958.

⁴Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:272, 273, 277, 285; Johann Michl, “Der Weibessame (Gen 3,15) in spätjüdischer und frühchristlicher Auffassung,” *Biblica* 33 (1952): 385.

⁵Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 1.48-51.

⁶Philo *Philo I. Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis* 3, 3:65 (184-186).

⁷See Philo *Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis II, III* 3.188. Notable comments are seen in the works of Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1925), 1:77, 78; 55:100, no. 84; 5:101, no. 84; M. Rosenbaum and A. M. Silbermann, *Pentateuch with Targum*

taken as figurative for the righteous and the wicked.¹

The Church Fathers did not do rigorous exegesis of Gen 3:15; rather, they merely made cross-references between the Old and the New Testaments, using Christian terms to explain the text. They understood the woman's Seed as pointing to either Christ (individual application) or to the church or the human race (collective application). The woman was either the church, Eve, or Mary. Most of them agreed that the serpent represented Satan but took the serpent's seed to be demons, wicked people, or the natural human condition before conversion to Christ.²

The Reformers and post-Reformation interpreters maintained the individual-messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15, with some still allowing for the collective interpretation. Luther and Calvin became the leading figures around whom all other views

Onkelos, Haphtorah, and Rashi's Commentary: Genesis (New York: Hebrew Publication, 1965), 12, 15. *Midrash Hane'lam Zohar B'reshith* 19 is also cited in Michael M. Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation: Genesis*, trans. Harry Freedman (New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1953), 1:132. Cf. *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation*, vol. 22A, *Tractate Baba Bathra Chapters 1-2*, trans. Jacob Neusner (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1992).

¹P. Wernberg-Møller, *Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah*, vol. 1, *The Manual of Discipline: Translated and Annotated with an Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 27, 84, 85, no. 62. Qumran speaks of two ethical classes of people: the good and the evil. Charlesworth cites several occurrences of the figurative application (*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:272, 273, 277, 285).

²Mention should be made of Church Fathers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Origen, Serapion, Jerome, Augustine, and the Syrian Fathers. See *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, 95 vols. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1947-97); Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 5 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989-90); and Unger, "Patristic Interpretation," 111-164. The papal bull issued by Pius IX in 1854 announced the mariological interpretation of Gen 3:15. Other mariological doctrines such as "co-redemption" and "assumption" were also derived from Gen 3:15. Cf. Unger, *First-Gospel*, vii. This work is hereafter cited as *FG*.

in the debate clustered.¹ Luther called Gen 3:15 the “Protoevangelium,” that is, the first gospel with emphasis on the promise of a Savior.² To Luther, the woman was Mary, and her Seed was Christ in verity, but could mean the Church by extension.

Calvin termed Gen 3:15 the first promise of salvation, with emphasis on its collective interpretation.³ He took the woman as Eve; her Seed, in terms of the enmity, was the human race, but in terms of the victory, was Christ.

Rationalism followed the Enlightenment. Because of the prevailing critical presuppositions at this time, the Mosaic authorship of Gen 3:15 was rejected, its exegesis became unimportant, and it was stripped of any messianic application or any New Testament referent.⁴

The modern period evidences the widest variety of the understanding of Gen 3:15 between liberal and conservative scholars, Catholics⁵ and Protestants.⁶ Ronning points out

¹See Ulrich Zwingli, *On Providence and Other Essays*, ed. William John Hinke (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1983). Gallus referred to about 70 Lutheran theologians in the second volume of his work on Luther earlier mentioned. Gallus catalogued 20 more authors who contributed to this debate (*Alllutheranischen Schriftauslegung*, 2:163). Schurb noted several Calvinists and Lutherans (pp. 25-47).

²Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, vol. 1, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*, trans. George V. Schick, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1958), 140-147.

³John Calvin referred to Gen 3:15 in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster, c. 1960), 20.14.18; and his *Commentary on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 166-171.

⁴Gallus, *Gen 3,15 in der evangelischen Schriftauslegung*, 3:112-113. Rationalistic exegetes include Johann Semler, Gotthilf Traugott Zachariä, Johann Döderlein, Johann Crüger, William Hufnagel, Daniel von Cölln, Christian Kühnöl, and Ad Schumann.

⁵Catholic contributors to this subject include among many, Antonine DeGuglielmo, “Mary in the Protoevangelium,” *CBQ* 14 (1952): 104-115; Francis X. Peirce, “The Protoevangelium,” *CBQ* 13 (1951): 239-252; *FG*; idem, “Patristic Interpretation,” 111-164; Bruce Vawter, *A Path Through Genesis* (New

that “Hengstenberg and Kline seem to be the greatest defenders of the last 200 years of the view of Gen 3:15 as a proto-gospel.”¹ Several critical scholars now accommodate the figurative-collective interpretation within their rationalistic, naturalistic viewpoints.²

In the only dissertation on the passage, Ronning further develops the figurative identification of the two seeds as the righteous and the wicked. He traces the further fulfillment of the predicted enmity throughout the Old Testament. The demise of Israel as a nation was his justification for future messianic fulfillment of Gen 3:15 in the New Testament. He disagrees that the “Seed of the woman” is Christ alone.³

York: Sheed & Ward, 1956), 64-69.

¹Protestant scholars who have written about this passage include Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 199, 200, and endnote 20; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC, vol. 1 (Waco: Word, 1987), 79-81; and Edward Joseph Young, *Genesis 3: A Devotional and Expository Study* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1966).

²Ronnings, 100; more information on pp. 63-101. Cf. Ernst William Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament, and a Commentary on the Predictions of the Messiah by the Prophets* 3 vols., trans. Reuel Keith (Alexandria: William M. Morrison, 1836-1839); idem, *Christology of the Old Testament, and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1956). Meredith G. Kline has written extensively on Gen 3:15 in his *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Overland Park, KS: Two Age, 2000); idem, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980); and idem, *By Oath Consigned: A Reinterpretation of the Covenant Signs of Circumcision and Baptism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968).

³Heinrich Hävernick and Friedrich Schröder are examples of those rationalists who have allowed for some measure of figurative application by implication and extension. See Gallus, *Gen 3,15 in der evangelischen Schriftauslegung*, 40-44. Other critical scholars who also allow for figurative and symbolic application of this text include: Manfred Görg, “Das Wort zur Schlange (Gen 3,14f): Gedanken zum sogenannten Protoevangelium,” *BN* 19 (1982): 3; Josef Haspecker and Norbert Lohfink, “Gen 3,15: weil du ihm nach der Ferse schnappst,” *Scholastik* 36 (1961): 359-363; Knut Holter, “The Serpent in Eden as a Symbol of Israel’s Political Enemies: A Yahwistic Criticism of the Solomonic Foreign Policy?” *SJOT* 1 (1990): 106-112; and Walter Wifall, “Gen 3:15—A Protoevangelium?” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 361-365.

³Ronning, iii-iv. His work gives abundant detail of the historical interpretations of Gen 3:15 in a very unique way. However, he does not present a full-blown exegesis of the words, terms, and pronouns in Gen 3:15.

Statement of the Problem

The meaning and referent of “seed” and its related pronouns in Gen 3:15 have been discussed throughout the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation. While many see in the word “seed” and pronouns with “seed” as antecedent only a literal, natural interpretation, others insist that there is a symbolic and spiritual meaning. The main question to be asked of the text is: What do “seed” and related pronouns really mean in Gen 3:15 and to whom do they refer? This query engenders sub-questions such as: What reasons might be given for multiple meanings and referents? Is there a shift from the collective (plural) to the individual (singular) in the usage of the word “seed” and related pronouns in this verse? These are the issues to be addressed in this dissertation.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze Gen 3:15 in order to determine the meaning and referent of the term “seed” and related pronouns in this passage. This involves examining the context and purpose of the passage and comparing the use of “seed” and related pronouns within Genesis, the rest of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and comparing these with some ancient Near Eastern literature.

Justification of the Research

The meaning of “seed” and related pronouns in Gen 3:15 is at the heart of the understanding and application of this text. In spite of multiple discussions, from one end of the Jewish and Christian theological spectrum to the other, not until very recently has any dissertation examined this important verse. Ronning’s dissertation provides a detailed

chronological study of the history of the interpretation of Gen 3:15 and a summary of the history of the enmity between the righteous and the wicked.¹ However, Ronning has not exhausted the exegetical and intertextual examination of this text. In particular, he did not provide a detailed investigation of the term “seed” and its related pronouns.

The approach and emphasis used in the present dissertation have not been applied to Gen 3:15 in any prior dissertation. A semantic, morphological, syntactical, literary, and structural analysis of Gen 3:15 will be presented. This will entail a thorough examination of “seed” and related pronouns in order to arrive at a more satisfactory explanation of the text within its context.

Scope and Delimitation of the Research

This is an exegetical and intertextual study, hence, the zoological, agricultural, and medical nuances of the word “seed” are not considered. The use and referents of “seed” and related pronouns, as found in Gen 3:15 and other parts of Genesis are the main concentration,² while their use and application in the rest of the Old Testament and the New Testament have been examined only as they have bearing on the Genesis texts that are referred to.³ My criteria for the choice of texts to relate to Gen 3:15 are initially

¹See page 5 above.

²Passages in Gen 3; 4; 12:7; and 22:17, 18; 24:60 and others will be studied.

³Allusions to Gen 3:15 that will be examined will include 2 Sam 7:12-13; Pss 68:22 (Heb 21); 110; and Isa 53. Some of the intertextually relevant New Testament passages to be examined include: Rom 16:20; Gal 3:16; Rev 12; John 3; and passages on the virgin Mary and the virgin birth of Jesus in Luke 1:26-2:52; and Matt 1:18-25.

informed by the general principles guiding intertextuality,¹ while other criteria are developed in the course of the research. I do not present a detailed history of the interpretation of Gen 3:15 because Ronning has done this exhaustively.² However, I am advancing the investigation of this text by classifying the various historic interpretations into categories.

An examination of the Questions of Introduction is not presented here as this is available elsewhere.³ The possibility of the literary and structural unity of the Pentateuch as a whole, and of Genesis in particular will be considered.⁴

¹For the definition and methodology of intertextuality, see Danna Nolan Fewell, ed., *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992); and Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).

²Ronning, 6-101. He traced the history of the interpretation of Gen 3:15 from the Early Jewish interpretation based on the manuscripts of LXX, MT, OT Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, the Targums, and the writings of Philo and Josephus, through later Jewish interpretation to the Church Fathers, the Reformers, and their followers. He saw the effect of the translation from orthodoxy to rationalism and all recent commentaries, theological studies, and special studies of Gen 3:15 to date.

³Herbert Wolf recalls: "Few subjects have generated more discussion and more disagreement than the question of who wrote the Pentateuch" (*An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch* [Chicago: Moody, 1991], 51). Examples of the documentation of the history of Old Testament criticism include: R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 3-82; and R. J. Thompson, *Moses and the Law in a Century of Criticism Since Graf* (Leiden: Brill, 1970). See also John B. Gabel, Charles B. Wheeler, and Anthony D. York, "The Composition of Pentateuch," in *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 101-115; Otto Kaiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament: A Presentation of Its Results and Problems* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1975); M. Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972); and Moses H. Segal, *The Pentateuch: Its Composition and Its Authorship* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967).

⁴See Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 89-189; Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961); David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed., JSOTSup, 10 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1997), 7; Duanne Garrett, *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), 51-54; Gerhard F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1985); Isaac Kikawada and Arthur Quinn, *Before Abraham Was: The Unity of Genesis 1-11* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985); R. W. L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahvism* (Minneapolis, MN:

Methodology of the Research

The overall methodology is a close reading of Gen 3:15. This could be called “Wholistic Interpretation.” This is related to what Moshe Greenberg calls “Holistic Interpretation.”¹ The basic procedure is to allow the final form of the text to stand as is. This dissertation investigates the final form of Gen 3:15 and related texts.² The

Fortress, 1992); Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 43-80; David L. Petersen, “The Formation of the Pentateuch,” in *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. James Luther Mays, David Petersen, and Kent Harold Richards (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 31-45; Y. T. Radday, H. Shore, M. A. Pollatschek, and D. Wickmann, “Genesis, Wellhausen, and the Computer,” *ZAW* 94 (1982): 467-481; John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 1-33; and William H. Shea, “Date of the Exodus,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2:230-238.

¹Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 18-27. Greenberg explains this treatment of the text as: “. . . Listening to it patiently and humbly” (21). Greenberg insists that one must avoid all temptation of imposing “antecedent judgments on the text” (21), while deeply and repeatedly immersing oneself in the text with all “sensors alert to catch every possible stimulus—mental-ideational, aural, aesthetic, linguistic, visual—until its features begin to stand out and their native shape and patterning emerge” (21).

²This approach is close to that of the Canonical approach to the Scripture stipulated by Brevard S. Childs. See his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM, 1979). He earlier wrote “Interpretation in Faith: The Theological Responsibility of an Old Testament Commentary,” *Interpretation* 18 (1964): 432-449; and idem, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970). Childs’s more recent works include: *Old Testament Theology in Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); and “Old Testament Theology,” in *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future: Essays in Honor of Gene M. Tucker*, ed. James Luther Mays, David Petersen, and Kent Harold Richards (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 293-301. Childs is supported by R. W. L. Moberly, “The Church’s Use of the Bible: The Work of Brevard Childs,” *Expository Times* 99 (1988): 104-109; Paul R. Noble, *The Canonical Approach: A Critical Reconstruction of the Hermeneutics of Brevard S. Childs* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995); and Gerald T. Sheppard, “Barr on Canon and Childs,” *Theological Students Fellowship Bulletin* 7 (1983): 2-4. A similar approach to Childs is used by Rolf Rendtorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (London: SCM, 1985); and idem, “What We Miss by Taking the Bible Apart,” *Bible Review* 14 (1998): 42-44.

Opposing views are expressed by: James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972); idem, *Canon and Community* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Krister Stendahl, “Biblical Theology, Contemporary,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 1:418-432; and idem, “Method in the Study of

theological exegesis is based primarily on the MT. This methodology involves several steps. I begin by classifying the interpretation of Gen 3:15 in order to get a good grasp of the previous understanding and translations.

In the first chapter, I briefly examine the textual analysis of Gen 3:14-15 in the light of the Hebrew text that reflects the MT. A detailed literary, structural, thematic, terminological, syntactical, morphological, and semantic analyses of the context of Gen 3:15 yields what I consider the best possible meaning that arises from the text itself.

A comprehensive study of the term “seed” and its referents in Gen 3:15 is attempted, with attention to the pronouns that have “seed” as their antecedent. The possibility of multiple meanings is closely investigated, and the specific meaning and usage of “seed” and related pronouns in Gen 3:15 are then determined. Relevant textual evidences are also reiterated. It is on this basis of the above, that I provide my translation of the verse in the concluding section of this dissertation.¹

In the second chapter, I analyze Gen 3:15 intratextually,² first, within the context of Gen 1-3, and then, the wider context of the book of Genesis. This highlights the major verbal, thematic, terminological, syntactical, and literary interrelations of Gen 3:15 within the context of the book of Genesis. This endeavor helps to better illuminate the identity of

Biblical Theology,” in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), 196-209.

¹See page 431 below.

²Intratextuality involves interpreting the text through the grammatical features and other information available only within the limited textual world of that particular text (Fewell, *Reading Between Texts*, 23). “Thus the prefix *intra*-(‘within’) rather than *inter*-(‘between’ or ‘among’)” (ibid.).

the special Seed of the woman within the successive generations. An exegesis of major “seed” passages in Genesis is presented.

In the third chapter, I analyze the intertextual allusions¹ to the “seed” of Gen 3:15 elsewhere in the Old and New Testaments. I explore possible echoes, allusions, references, and applications of the “seed” and its related pronouns of Gen 3:15. This chapter seeks to determine whether or not later passages have an understanding of the seed similar to that expressed in Gen 3:15; and whether or not intertextual allusions to Gen 3:15 continue consistently with the meaning of “seed” as deduced intratextually in the context of the book of Genesis.

The fourth chapter presents certain relevant ancient Near Eastern parallels to the major words and ideas within and around Gen 3:15. It is intended to compare and contrast the understanding of the “seed” of Gen 3:15 with the ancient Near Eastern literature. The points of commonality and deliberate departure are noted.

The fifth chapter brings out the theological implications of the “seed” of Gen 3:15. This shows pertinent major themes and minor motifs that run through the book of Genesis and the rest of the OT. This further underscores the centrality of the “seed.”

In the conclusion section of the dissertation, I summarize the research and draw conclusions. The implications of the findings and conclusions of my study are enumerated. Areas of further research are suggested based on my research.

¹Allusions can be defined “in terms of implicit, indirect, or hidden reference (i.e., focusing on the artistry of the writer)” (ibid., 21) and as a “text-linking device” (ibid.). “The emphasis is on how the process of allusion evokes for the reader a larger textual field” (ibid.).

Classification of the Interpretations of Gen 3:15 in Literature

A careful investigation of the history of the interpretation of Gen 3:15 throughout the history of Jewish and Christian interpretations exhibits a great variety of interests and opinions. The range of interpretations is so vast, including Literal, Symbolic, Figurative, Naturalistic, Allegorical, Aetiological, Messianic, Mariological, Historical, Political, Christological, Eschatological, Collective, Singular, Representative, Rationalistic, and Form-Critical interpretations. There is considerable overlap within the various explanations. Opinion shifts, dogmatism, as well as apologetic rigidity are evidenced as exegetes of various eras wrestled with this key text. The following are a sample of such scholars in the various categories that they may be conveniently or approximately classified.

Literal and Naturalistic Interpretations

A good number of scholars fall within this category. They take the text literally as involving nothing more than snakes and human beings in perpetual hatred one for another. John Skinner succinctly defines those involved in Gen 3:15: "The whole brood of serpents, and the whole race of men,"¹ involving "each member of the species."² One

¹John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1951), 79-81, esp. p. 80.

²Ibid., 80. Skinner states further: "The general meaning is clear; in the war between men and serpents the former will crush the head of the foe, while the latter can only wound the heel" (80). However, he seems to give some allowance within the naturalistic interpretation of Gen 3:14 for the view that the serpent may also be seen as a demonic character. He suggests that the curse on the serpent is intended to protest against "the unnatural fascination of snake worship" (80). He is followed by Gerhard von Rad who points to "a real serpent; but at the same time man's relation to evil with which he has become involved" (*Genesis: A Commentary*, OTL [London: SCM, 1972], 90).

characteristic feature of this category of interpretation is taking the “seed” as collective plural.

Josephus gave a more detailed description of the literal condition resulting to the snake who became deprived of speech, with poison in his tongue as a human enemy. Humans in turn would “strike their blows upon his head, because it was therein that man’s danger lay and there too that his adversaries could most easily inflict a mortal blow.”¹ Nahmanides (A.D. 1195-1270) believes that humans would crush the serpent’s brain.²

Most of the scholars in this category see the duel between snakes and humans as endless from generation to generation and trace all snakebites to this. Robinson calls it an “endless hostility between snakes and men, the one crushing the head of the other whenever the opportunity arises, and the snake striking at the heel of man. . . . It is certainly true that most snakebites are inflicted on the foot.”³ The fatality of human-snake combat is emphasized by several scholars.⁴

¹Josephus *Jewish Antiquities* 1.1.4 (50-51), LCL translation. Josephus also indicated that God “further bereft him of feet and made him crawl and wiggle along the ground” (ibid., 51).

²See J. Newman, *The Commentary of Nachmanides on Genesis 1-6* (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 78; and Lewis, “The Woman’s Seed,” 305.

³Theodore Henry Robinson, “Genesis,” *The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, ed. Frederick Carl Eiselen, Edwin Lewis, and David G. Downey (New York: Abingdon, 1929), 223. Likewise, Hermann Gunkel accepts that the two seeds, snakes and humanity, are in perpetual enmity (*Genesis*, trans. Mark E. Biddle [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997], 20-21). Sigmund Mowinckel maintains that the struggle between mankind and serpents “continues as long as the earth exists. The poisonous serpent strikes at man’s foot whenever he is unfortunate enough to come too near to it; and always and everywhere man tries to crush the serpent’s head when he has a chance” (*He That Cometh* [New York: Abingdon, 1954], 11).

⁴While August Dillman insists that a snake’s bite is as fatal as the trampling of the head, seeing only enmity directly involved, he admits that victory may be implied only because of God’s involvement (*Genesis: Critically and Exegetically Expounded* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1897], 156-161). On the

The curse on the serpent was embellished in Jewish legend including about ten punishments and presuming a completely naturalistic interpretation:

The mouth of the serpent was closed, and his power of speech taken away; his hands and feet were hacked off; the earth was given him as food; he must suffer great pain in sloughing his skin; enmity is to exist between him and man; if he eats the choicest viands, or drinks the sweetest beverages, they all change into dust in his mouth; the pregnancy of the female serpent lasts seven years; men shall seek to kill him as soon as they catch sight of him; even in the future world, where all beings will be blessed, he will not escape the punishment decreed for him; he will vanish from out of the Holy Land if Israel walks in the ways of God.¹

Naturalistic Aetiology

Along similar lines, several scholars explain this text away as an afterthought or made-up story. Walter Wifall pleads: “Gen 3,15 must be ‘demythologized’ as an expression of man’s existential predicament in this world, or can be viewed as an aetiological myth which attempts to explain the natural hostility between mankind and the

Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924], 34-35).

Paul Humbert interprets the curses in Gen 3:14-19 naturalistically, containing no trace of hope whatsoever. In particular, vs. 15 is a hopeless and endless struggle to death, having no messianic significance (*Études sur le Récit du Paradis et de la Chute dans la Genèse* [Neuchatel: Secrétariat de l’Université, 1940], 76).

¹Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, 1:77-78. He continues: “Furthermore, God spake to the serpent: ‘I created thee to be king over all the animals, cattle and the beasts of the field alike; but thou wast not satisfied. Therefore thou shalt be cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field. I created thee of upright posture; but thou wast not satisfied. Therefore thou shalt go upon thy belly. I created thee to eat the same food as man; but thou wast not satisfied. Therefore thou shalt eat dust all the days of thy life. Thou didst seek to cause the death of Adam in order to espouse his wife. Therefore I will put enmity between thee and the woman’” (78).

“As angels had been present when the doom was pronounced upon the serpent—for God had convoked a Sanhedrin of seventy-one angels when He sat in judgment upon him—so the execution of the decree against him was entrusted to angels. They descended from heaven, and chopped off his hands and feet. His suffering was so great that his agonized cries could be heard from one end of the world to the other” (78).

serpent world.”¹ It is only meant to answer questions humans have about their current conditions on earth including human fear of snakes.²

Several aetiologies have been drawn from this passage by scholars explaining the causes of: the Fall; evil; death; human speech (2:19-20); the wearing of apparel (3:7, 21); the fact that the serpent crawls on his belly (3:14), and his inclination to bite (3:15); to mention but a few.³

This view also advocates the hopeless endlessness of this struggle between snakes and humans.⁴ As Rüger puts it, the enmity between them “is not a fleeting effect, but

¹Wifall, 361.

²von Rad, *Genesis*, 86, 89-90. He denied that the serpent is the “embodiment of a demonic power” (90) while in the same vein calling it “an evil being that has assumed form” (90). It is seen as strongly aetiological by James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Edouard Lipinski, “Etudes sur des textes ‘Messianiques’ de l’ancien Testament,” *Semitica* 20 (1970): 42-44; Skinner, 79-80; Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 84; and Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 259. Gunkel calls it a naturalistic aetiology that explains why humans hate snakes and why snakes crawl on the belly and eat dust; to mention but a few (*Genesis*, 20-21). Julian Morgenstern considers the text an explanation of the “natural human horror of serpents” (*The Book of Genesis: A Jewish Interpretation* [New York: Schocken Books, 1965], 59).

³See Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, part 1, *From Adam to Noah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 139. Cassuto vehemently argues against this: “The Hellene had a bent for abstract speculation, consequently he was eager to know the causes of things; this knowledge, unrelated to any practical purpose—knowledge for its own sake—he deemed of great importance. To the Semite, on the other hand, the desire for knowledge that has no practical value was mere dilettantism. . . . Moreover, the central theme of our section does not aim to give a philosophical explanation of the origin of evil in the world, but has the practical purpose of providing moral instruction and of assuaging the feeling of perplexity in the heart of man, who finds a contradiction between the Creator’s paternal love and the multitudinous troubles that throng his world” (ibid.).

⁴According to von Rad, in the generic and totally hopeless struggle between the species of human and snakes, “both will ruin each other. . . . Wherever man and serpent meet, the meeting always involves life and death” (89-90). Vawter posits: “The passage is part of a curse and a condemnation, not a prognosis of future blessings. It predicts a protracted hostility, even a protracted battle, but not a victory of one side or the other” (*On Genesis*, 84). It is interesting that the emphasis of Gen 3:15e advocated by Haspecker and Lohfink is “the *Begründungssatz* for why the snake’s head should be crushed” (“Gn 3,15,”

rather a permanent state.”¹ Moreover, “seed” is usually taken as collective since it refers to all their posterity from generations to generations.²

Allegorical Interpretation

This is by far the most creative and varied of all the categories in the history of the interpretation of the Gen 3:15 passage. Philo allegorizes the Fall of man profusely. For him, the serpent is a “symbol of desire”³: “And desire has a natural enmity toward sense, which the Scripture symbolically calls woman.”⁴ Elsewhere, he refers to the enmity between serpent and the woman by stating that “in reality pleasure is a foe to sense, albeit thought by some to be a close friend.”⁵ There is the enmity “*between pleasure and sense*”⁶

359) and “not so much a picture of a battle that will take place as a judicial sentence” (ibid.).

¹Hans Peter Rüger, “On Some Versions of Genesis 3.15, Ancient and Modern,” *The Bible Translator* 27 (1976): 105-110, esp. p. 107. His stand is informed by comparison with Num 35:21ff. and Ezek 25:15; 35:5. In addition, “this is underlined by the phrase ‘and between your seed and between her seed,’ which clearly shows that ‘seed’ means all the descendants of the snake and of the woman, and not just a single descendant. The unchangeable character of this ‘enmity’ can also be detected from the second half of Gen 3:15, where the repeated attempts of men and snakes to kill each other are indicated by means of the iterative imperfects ‘it bruises you . . . and you bruise it.’ The reciprocity of these inimical acts, no end to which can be foreseen, is emphasized by the use of the same verbal root for the activity of both men and snakes” (ibid., 107).

²Ibid. “‘Seed’ is evidently a collective noun, which *as such* [emphasis his] cannot have any direct or indirect reference to Christ and/or Mary, and secondly, Gen 3;15 forms part of a curse, and therefore cannot be a promise or a prophecy by implication” (ibid.).

³Philo *Questions on Genesis* 1:48.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Philo, *Philo I, Allegorical Interpretation* 3, 3:64 (181-183).

⁶Ibid.

(emphasis his) wherein immoderately indulged pleasure inflicts “injury on sense.”¹

Philo translates the expression “between thy seed and her seed” into a kind “full of philosophical truth,”² taking every “seed” as the “starting-point of existence.”³ “Seed” or “starting-point” of pleasure is allegorized as passion while that of sense is mind. Passion and mind are mutually hostile just as are pleasure and sense.⁴

Translating “he shall watch thy head, and thou shalt watch his heel” in Gen 3:15, he described in direct speech to Pleasure: “‘The mind shall watch thy chief and principal doctrine, and thou shalt watch it, the Mind, as it acts and rests upon its accepted tenets.’ This basing of conduct and principle on tenets is naturally represented by the word ‘heels’.”⁵ The ramifications of the words “shall watch” include the fact that “the foolish mind will show itself a guardian and steward of pleasure . . . ; but the good mind will prove its enemy, watching for the moment when it shall set upon it and achieve its utter destruction.”⁶ On the other hand, Pleasure “watches over and preserves the procedure of the foolish mind, but endeavours to break up and destroy the way of life of the wise mind.”⁷

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 3:65 (184-186).

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. Philo further commented: “the woman was fashioned out of Adam, sense (that is) out of mind” (ibid.).

⁵Ibid., 3:67-68 (188-189).

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid. See Lewis, “The Woman’s Seed,” 304.

Augustine uses a collective allegorical interpretation of Gen 3:15, interpreting the serpent's watching as "watching for an opportunity occasioned by pride to make us fall (a spiritual interpretation). Our watching his head means to be on guard for the beginning of all sin, pride (an allegorical interpretation of head as beginning; not of time, but of pride)."¹ The serpent's head is allegorically interpreted as the beginning of all sin, pride.²

The seed of the devil signifies perverse suggestion, and the seed of the woman the fruit of the good work by which one resists such perverse suggestion. Thus he watches the foot of the woman so that, if ever it should slip in that forbidden pleasure, he might seize her. And she watches his head so that she may exclude him in the very beginning of his evil temptation.³

Similarly, Erasmus points out that the woman of Gen 3:15 is the "carnal part of man. For this is our Eve, through whom the most crafty serpent lures our mind to death-dearing pleasures."⁴ When the Christian soldier quickly reacts to the beginning of temptation, this allows him or her to hiss the serpent away, "crushing straightway the head of the plague-bearing serpent. For he is never either easily or completely conquered."⁵

A Midrash describes the serpent as "man's evil Inclination."⁶ It is meant to be

¹Ronning, 32, referring to NPNF, 8.91.

²NPNF, 8.346.

³Augustine, *Saint Augustine on Genesis*, 2.18.28, trans. Roland J. Teske, vol. 84, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1991), 123. Augustine says that "our flesh is an Eve within us" (NPNF, 8.170).

⁴Desiderius Erasmus, *Enchiridion*, in *Advocates of Reform: From Wyclif to Erasmus*, ed. Matthew Spinka, LCC 14 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 297.

⁵Ibid., 363.

⁶*Midrash Hane'lam Zohar B'reshith* 19, cited in Menahem M. Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation: Genesis*, trans. Harry Freedman (New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1953), 1:132.

crushed with the head (of the Academy of Torah). “Only with Torah can the serpent (the Evil Inclination) be crushed. Conversely, the serpent can slay a man only through the heel, that is to say, when one transgresses and tramples God’s commandments under his heel.”¹

Benno Jacob takes Gen 3 as allegorical, with the snake representing the human tendency towards lust and malice. He rejects the charge that the snake represents the devil or his disguise, though he allows for a symbolism of evil inclination creeping apparently harmless but full of deadly poison.²

Samson Hirsch made a moral lesson of the advantage of humans over the serpent as follows: “Man is given greater strength over his lusts, than these have over him. Man can stamp his lusts on the head, they can at the most catch him on his heel.”³ He understood the curse as primarily for the education of mankind rather than the punishment of the snake. “The strange antipathy implanted in mankind towards snakes may be meant to bring home to his mind that it was ‘animal wisdom’ that led him astray, and to remind him of the gulf that separates Man from animal.”⁴

Umberto Cassuto leaned towards an allegorical interpretation by equating the serpent to the “craftiness to be found in *man himself*.”⁵ This labels the serpent as the personification of evil desire within Eve. The dialogue between the serpent and the

¹Ibid.

²Benno Jacob, *Das Erste Buch der Tora: Genesis* (Berlin: Schocken, 1934), 101-102, 112-115.

³Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch Translated and Explained*, 2nd ed. (London: L. Honig & Sons, 1963), 1:81.

⁴Ibid., 1.82.

⁵Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:142.

woman “took place in the woman’s mind, between her wiliness and her innocence, clothed in the garb of a parable.”¹ In other words, it is not really the serpent who “thinks and speaks but the woman does so in her heart.”² No wonder, therefore, at his knowledge of the prohibition and of “the purpose of the Lord God: it is the woman who imagines that she has plumbed the Divine intention—but is quite mistaken.”³

Many of these allegorical interpretations tend to be more figurative and symbolic than being literal and naturalistic. For instance, Edward Conklin described the Genesis Garden story as “a metaphor or analogy for the developing human body and mind. Within the human brain and mind, various images derived through sensory experience were placed together in order to explain the origin of all things in a linguistic story form.”⁴ He portrays it as the “transition of human cognitive development”⁵ and the “transfer of importance from the primacy of human genital and biological reproduction, to the brain-

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 143. See also Alan Richardson, *Genesis 1-11: An Introduction and Commentary*, Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM, 1981), 71. Samuel Rolles Driver adds that the enmity in Gen 3:15 is a moralistic interpretation, calling the serpent the representative of “evil thoughts and suggestions,” the “power of evil,” symbolizing the “power of temptation” (*The Book of Genesis*, Westminster Commentaries [London: Methuen & Co., 1943], 47-48, 57). Paul Haupt defends: “In the Story of paradise the serpent symbolizes carnal desire, sexual appetite, concupiscence” (“The Curse on the Serpent,” *JBL* 35 [1916]: 162). Contra Laurence Turner, who refutes this because “the serpent is differentiated from the Man and Woman in the curses of 3.14ff” (*Announcements of Plots in Genesis*, JSOTSup 96 [Sheffield: Sheffield, 1990], 43, n. 4).

⁴Edward Conklin, *Getting Back into the Garden of Eden* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1998), 133.

⁵Ibid.

mind function of imaginative thought and verbal ability.”¹

The allegorical interpretation of the Pseudo-Jonathan and Fragmentary Targums declares that the “enmity between woman and serpent represents the struggle between good and evil tendencies in man, with the serpent symbolic of evil. Torah enables man to strike down the evil impulse, but its absence leaves man a prey to it.”²

Rabbinic midrashic exegesis, in its typical manner of transferring the meaning of a word in one context to an entirely different one, homilized on Pss 139:11–“Darkness shall bruise (NIV ‘hide’) me.” “At the approach of darkness at the end of the Sabbath Adam thought the one of whom it was written ‘He shall bruise thy head’ was coming to bite him. The Lord gave him two flints to strike against each other and light came forth.”³ Several such homilies are offered for many other verses of Scripture. Most of these allegories seemingly deviate from the biblical text.

Historical-Political Interpretation

A combination of naturalistic, form-critical, and figurative examination of this text has given rise to its historical-political explanation by some rationalistic scholars.

Transferring the use of “enmity” to address Israel’s political enemies in Ezek 25:15 and 35:5 to its appearance in Gen 3:15, Knut Holter suggests that the serpent is a symbol of

¹Ibid.

²Samson H. Levey, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation: The Messianic Exegesis of the Targum* (New York: Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, 1974), 2.

³y. *Abod. Zar.* 1:2 A; *Gen. Rab.* 11:2; 12:6; 8:14. “The contrast of wounding on the head and the heel is used homiletically to teach that vindictiveness should be less than the injury received” (*b. Yoma* 23a).

Israel's political enemies.

Holter observes that animals describe nations (Gen 49), and in particular, snakes describe Assyria (Isa 14:29), Egypt (Jer 46:22), and invading enemies (Jer 8:17); hence the serpent of Gen 3:15 metaphorically represents Israel's enemies. These include all of Israel's neighbors and enemies, not only Egypt, but including also Tyre (1 Kgs 5:1-12), Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and the Hittites (1 Kgs 11:1).¹ Dating the Gen 3 narrative to the time of J, around the Solomonic era, he argues that it contains "an *undertone* of criticism . . . against the open internationalism in Solomon's foreign policy."²

¹Knut Holter, "The Serpent in Eden as a Symbol of Israel's Political Enemies: A Yahwistic Criticism of the Solomonic Foreign Policy?" *SJOT* 1 (1990): 111. He reveals that considering texts like Isa 14:28-32, esp. vs. 29; Jer 46:2-28, esp. vs. 22 and Jer 8:17 ("compared with the theriomorphisms in Jer 2:15; 4:7; 5:6; Jer 12:8ff."), it becomes "clear that the 'serpent' might act in the Old Testament as a metaphor for political enemies of Israel, a phenomenon which of course is linked to the important religious function serpents had among Israel's surrounding peoples" (ibid., 108-109).

²Ibid., 108-109. He builds on the view earlier expressed by W. von Soden who had suggested that the "dependence of Adam on Eve in Gen 3 reflects the dependence of Solomon on his Egyptian wife. The daughter of Pharaoh seems to have had a rather leading position in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kgs 7:8; 9:24) and according to von Soden there is a concealed criticism of this in Gen 3. This interpretation has been further developed by Görg, who discusses the role of serpents within Egyptian religion, and sees the serpent in Gen 3 as a symbol of (Egyptian) wisdom independent of Yahweh" (111). See Manfred Görg, "Die 'Sünde' Salomos: Zeitkritische Aspekte der jahwistischen Sündenfallerzählung," *BN* 16 (1981): 42-59; idem, "Weisheit als Provokation: Religionshichtliche und theologische Aspekte der Sündenfallerzählung," in *Die Kraft der Hoffnung: Gemeinde und Evangelium: Festschrift für Dr. Josef Schneider zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Alfred E. Hierold (Bamberg: St. Otto-Verlag, 1986), 19-34; and Wolfram von Soden, "Verschlüsselte Kritik an Salomo in der Urgeschichte des Jahwisten?" *WO* 7, no. 2 (1974): 228-240. As for Gen 3:14ff., M. Görg understands it as being of post-Yahwistic origin, and he interprets it as concealed criticism against the foreign policy of Hezekiah ("Das Wort zur Schlange, 121-140). "This snake was friendly with and deceived a 'woman' (Pharaoh's daughter, who became Solomon's wife), who was used for the downfall of man (Solomon). This woman is a prototype of the foreign woman, who is seen again in Hezekiah's mother Abi (2 Kgs 18:2; cf. 2 Chr 29:1, Abijah), whom Görg detects in a leading opposition role early in Hezekiah's reign. Hezekiah is therefore the seed of the woman, who destroys the snake statue in fulfillment of Gen 3:15. As for the action of the snake against the man's heel; the opposition of head and heel alone would not indicate a fatal as opposed to a non-fatal injury, since as others have pointed out, a snake bite is no less life destroying than the crushing carried out by the man. The fact that the snake is pictured as still attacking after its head is crushed (Gen 3:15e

In like manner, Rogerson links Gen 2-3 and the exile of 587/6 B.C., declaring:

The expulsion from the garden of paradise resembles the deportations from the Northern kingdom in the eighth century and from Jerusalem and Judah in the sixth century. The command not to eat from a particular tree resembles the divine law given to Israel, the disobedient man is a succession of kings from Solomon onwards who tolerated or encouraged idolatrous cults, and the woman is the foreign wives of kings who sponsored such cults. The tree and the serpent can be identified as cult objects in religious practices inimical to official Yahwism.¹

Rationalistic Interpretation

Rationalists do not take Gen 3:15 seriously because, to them, the Bible is nothing more than a product of human endeavor rather than a product of divine revelation. The NT interpretation of the OT was not considered authoritative. They think that Gen 3:15 could not have been quoted in the NT. It was impossible to have had an evil spirit in Gen 3 talk, much less disguise it as a snake.²

follows Gen 3:15d) indicates the figurative meaning of the picture, and shows that even when Nehushtan is smashed, the snake remains a menace. Egypt is the continuation of the seduction force of the snake, as is clear from Isa 27:1, where the three chaos figures (as Gunkel enumerated them) possibly stand for Egypt, as Rahab does elsewhere. Only later readers ignorant of the original historical circumstances could see in this passage, therefore, a protoevangelium, although one could connect Jesus to it by viewing him as another Hezekiah” (Ronning, 92, referring to Görg, “Das Wort zur Schlange,” 132-139).

¹John William Rogerson, “Genesis 1-11,” *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 5 (1997): 82.

²Gallus explains some of these views in detail (*Die Nachkomme der Frau*, 1:28-36). Johann Döderlein (d. 1792) objects that there is no knowledge of evil spirits in the mosaic tradition (*Institutio Christiani in captibus religionis nostris temporibus accomdata, Pars Posterior* [Altdorf: Sumtu Monath et Kussler, 1787], 183-4); Wilhelm Hufnagel affirms that demonology only came to Israel from the time of the Persian exile (*Handbuch der biblischen Theologie, Zweiter Teil* [Erlangen: J. J. Palm, 1789], 165-71); Johann Salomo Semler, *Institutio ad Doctrinum: liberaliter discendum Auditorum usui destinata* (Halae Magdeburgicae: n.p., 1774), 369-370; and Gotthilf Traugott Zachariä retorts that the seed of the serpent cannot be demons because there is no such biological generational process (*Biblische Theologie: oder Untersuchung des biblischen Grundes der vornehmsten theologischen Lehren, zweiter Teil* [Tübingen: bey Chr. Gottl. Frank und Wilh. Heinr. Schramm, 1780], 261-79).

Naturalistic Plus Figurative Interpretation

By far the majority of scholars who have perused this text allow for an inner symbolic and figurative interpretation in addition to the literal and naturalistic surface meaning. One of the earliest extant records of this view is that of John Chrysostom (d. 407), who speaks of the visible serpent (literal snakes) engaged in enmity with the human race (naturalistic interpretation), and then an “intellectual serpent” (the Devil) who would be made subject to believers.¹

Calvin emphasized this shift from a natural or literal meaning of the first part of Gen 3:15, about the hostile strife between the human race and serpents, to a symbolic one in the remaining part, addressing the enmity between Satan and humans which reaches beyond the first generation, extending “as widely, indeed, as the human race shall be propagated.”²

Franz Delitzsch declares that Gen 3:15 starts with the conflict between humans and snakes “only as a ‘natural picture’ of the more serious human conflict against Satan and his seed (the wicked).”³ David Pareus verifies that it evidently begins with a literal

¹John Chrysostom said that in the light of Luke 10:19, Gen 3:15 “must be taken *much more* of the intellectual serpent [the Devil]. . . . God humiliated and made subject under *our* feet and gave *us* the power to tread on his head” (*Homiliae in Genesimi*, 17.7). See also its English translation: *St. John Chrysostom: Homilies on Genesis 1-17*, trans. Robert C. Hill, vol. 74, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, ed. Thomas P. Halton et al. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 237-238. Cf. *FG*, 123.

²*Corpus Reformatorum* 51 (1964), 69-71; translated in Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, 167-168. “Calvin further noted that this curse-saying would have brought but small consolation to people if it involved serpents but not Satan” (Schurb, 29).

³Franz Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies in Historical Succession* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1891; reprint, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian, 1983), 27-29. Carl F. Keil and Franz Delitzsch elaborate further: “But even in this sentence there is an unmistakable allusion to the evil and hostile being

sense which “we neither ought to repudiate . . . nor are we able to do so.”¹ He then uncovers a clue for a subsequent figurative sense of the meaning of the text.²

Charles Briggs notes that something beyond the animal snake must be in view because that creature/tempter is accorded knowledge, speech, and intelligence even higher than accorded the humans. Moreover, no other animals in Eden are attributed with the power of reasoning and speech.³

For Edward Young, the word “subtle” is the “first hint that we have to deal with more than a snake.”⁴ “A subtlety is at work such as does not belong to snakes.”⁵

concealed behind the serpent. That the human race should triumph over the serpent, was a necessary consequence of the original subjection of the animals to man. When, therefore, God not merely confines the serpent within the limits assigned to the animals, but puts enmity between it and the woman, this in itself points to a higher, spiritual power, which oppose and attack the human race through the serpent, but will eventually be overcome” (*Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch*, trans. James Martin, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959], 3:100).

¹Schurb, 33. “It indicated that there would be a ‘perpetual variance’ between the serpent and Eve and also between their respective offspring, serpents and men” (Schurb, 33, referring to David Pareus, *Commentarius in Genesin*, in *Opera Theologica Exegetica*, Pars Secunda, comp. by John Philip Pareus [Frankfurt: John Rose, 1647], 102). God directed other curses at the snake (vs. 14), and humans have in reality continued to experience enmity with snakes! (Schurb, 33).

²Schurb, 33. Pareus then maintained that the word “He” later in the verse (vs. 15c), denoting an individual, formed an undeniable clue that the literal sense alone will not exhaust the meaning of the passage. “Therefore a mystical sense must be reached and seen, by which God promises men victory over the devil himself” (Pareus, 102). Satan and humans are intended in the symbolic aspect.

³Charles A. Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy: The Prediction of the Fulfilment of Redemption through the Messiah* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1886), 72.

⁴Young, *Genesis* 3, 9.

⁵*Ibid.*, 9-10. Young further enumerates: “To address a serpent is to assume that the serpent is a rational, responsible being. We must assume then, that the Lord God, in speaking to the serpent is addressing the beast as the instrument of the evil one, and that the words spoken to the serpent strike home at this evil one, the tempter of mankind” (*ibid.*, 95). “The purpose of the curse pronounced upon the serpent is to make clear that there had been a deep-seated wickedness using it” (*ibid.*).

“The condemnation placed upon the serpent is in line with the principle whereby an animal

Moreover, this serpent himself, and not his seed, is to bruise the Seed of the woman and it was not expected to live and not die, so as to do this, definitely, “more is involved than an actual serpent.”¹ In the same vein, “the very language is evidence that God is speaking to one more powerful than a serpent; the one who used the serpent for his evil purposes. To place enmity between the serpent and the woman is to point to something higher than a snake.”²

Victor Hamilton arrives at a similar conclusion by observing that “snakes do not eat dust, and no ancient writer ever thought they did. One has to take this passage symbolically, not literally.”³ For Henry Barrington Pratt, there is here “a double

which had been used in an unnatural crime was to be put to death. . . . Any beast which had participated in an unnatural crime with man was along with the man also to be killed. Of course the beast in such cases was not accountable nor responsible” (ibid., 96). He cites Gen 9:5 as an example.

¹Ibid., 118.

²Ibid. This was similarly observed by Feinberg: “All other usages of *'evah* (*enmity*) in the Old Testament are in connection with relationships between persons—Num 35:21-22 (the manslayer and cities of refuge); Ezek 25:15 (Philistines); and 35:5 (Mount Seir, the Edomites). The strong probability is that a similar sense is called for in Genesis 3:15” (“The Virgin Birth in the Old Testament,” 314). Second, instead of presuming that the earth was “the normal food of snakes” (ibid.), it only meant that “snakes would live on the ground. . . . A symbolic sense is intended as in the expression ‘lick the dust’ (Ps. 72:9; Isa. 49:23; and Mic. 7:17)” (ibid.).

Gallus discusses this extensively. He explained that the snake was said in Gen 3:1 to be “wiser than all of the animals” rather than “wiser than all of the *other* animals.” Since this snake talks and is cunning, it is not only a mere animal. Moreover, its use of lying tactics shows that it has a demonic spirit (*Die Frau in Gen 3:15*, 111-161).

³Hamilton appeals that “it is fruitless to see in this particular verse an etiology of why snakes no longer walk on legs and why they lost their legs” (*Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 196-197). “The writer clearly intends these two facts to be expressions of humiliation and subjugation (as in Ps 72:9; Isa 49:23; Mic 7:17)” (ibid., 197). Contra Robinson, who insists: “Ancient zoology is often strange to us, and there is other evidence to show that the old Hebrew believed that earth was the normal food of snakes” (Robinson, “Genesis,” 223).

application and a double fulfilment.”¹

Gerhard von Rad states very vividly:

One must, under all circumstances, proceed from the fact that the passage reflects quite realistically man’s struggle with the real snake; but one must not stop there, for the things with which this passage deals are basic, and in illustrating them, the narrator uses not only the commonplace language of every day, but a language that also figuratively depicts the zoological species. . . . But at the same time, in a kind of spiritual clearheadedness, he sees in it an evil being that has assumed form, that is inexplicably present within our created world, and that has singled out man, lies in wait for him, and everywhere fights a battle with him for life and death. The serpent is an animal which, more than any other, embodies uncanny qualities that make it superior to man.²

Only the figurative aspect is emphasized in the Manual of Discipline, expressing that the seed represents the righteous and the wicked.³ “The governing thought is that of

¹Henry Barrington Pratt, *Studies in the Book of Genesis* (New York: American Tract Society, 1906), 42. Pratt states: “It is clear that there is found here a curse upon the whole race of snakes, and a prophecy of the implacable hatred which exists between them and men. The words of this prophecy . . . have, as many other prophecies have, a double application and a double fulfilment; as there was not merely a serpent, but that ‘Wicked One,’ who availed himself of that disguise to disarm the suspicions of Eve” (ibid., 42-43).

²von Rad, *Genesis*, 92. See Driver, *Genesis*, 44. Terence E. Fretheim mentions that the serpent is more than an ordinary animal (*Creation, Fall and Flood: Studies in Genesis 1-11* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969], 80-81). Westermann refers to those who call the serpent as “Satan in disguise” (*Genesis 1-11*, 237); while Dan E. Burns reports it as “God in disguise” (“Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24: Asleep in the Garden,” *JSOT* 37 [1987]: 9).

³The Manual of Discipline contains teachings about the creation and Fall of man (Wernberg-Møller, 25-7: Plates iii.13 - iv.26). Gen 3:15 is alluded to in iii.13 and iv.15ff with statements such as follows: “It is for the wise man to instruct and teach all the sons of light concerning the genealogies of all mankind, with respect to both kinds of their spirits with the (different) characters of their actions in their generations, and with respect to their visitation of afflictions together with their times of peace” (Pl.iii.13,14).

“In these (two) are the genealogies of all mankind, and in their (two) classes all the hosts of their generations have a share; in their (two) ways they walk, and the entire work of their activity (falls) within their (two) classes, according to everybody’s share, large or small, in all times for ever. For God has set them apart until the last time, having put eternal enmity between their (two) classes. (Objects of) abomination are the doings of deceit to truth, and (objects of) abomination are all the ways of truth to deceit. There is a fierce struggle between all their qualities, for they do not walk together. But God . . . has put down a limited time for the existence of deceit. At the time fixed for visitation He will destroy it

the two spirits ruling in man and dividing mankind into two sharply distinguished sections, the children of righteousness and the children of deceit, these two groups being in the power of the angel of light and the angel of darkness respectively.”¹

Figurative “Messianic” Interpretation and Royal Ideology

Some scholars posit that the original ramifications of the term “messianic” or “messianism” refer to “an elaborate king ideology” rather than to the “eschatological messianism” of the New Testament.² They apply to the sacral divine kingship in the ancient Orientals which later informed Israel’s royal theology.³ Attempts have thus been

for ever, and then the truth of the earth will appear for ever. . . . Then God will purify all the doings of man by His truth and purge a part of mankind. . . . Until now the spirits of truth and deceit struggle in the heart of man, some walking in wisdom and (some) in vileness. According to his share in truth and righteousness, thus a man hates deceit, and according to his assignment in the lot of deceit and ungodliness, thus he loathes truth” (Pl. iv. 15-25).

¹*The Manual of Discipline*, 66. Wernberg-Møller maintains that the two classes of mankind distinctly separate rejecting the notion that “every human soul is a mixture of both *spirits*, the individuality being due to individual ‘mixtures’” (83). He posits that “every man has his share of one of the two spirits, and some have a larger or smaller share than others . . . and his individuality depends on the quantity of his share” (83-84).

²Wifall, 362.

³See Ivan Engnell, *A Rigid Scrutiny: Critical Essays on the Old Testament*, trans. and ed. John T. Willis (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 221; and Wifall, 362-363. Speiser looked for “Mesopotamian links” or “distant traditions that had gained currency through the ages” (*Genesis*, 20). James Henry Breasted said that Israel’s “messianism” was ultimately related to Egyptian royal theology (*A History of Egypt* [New York: Bantam, 1964], 172). Breasted cites the composition of an Egyptian Middle Kingdom Sibylline Prophet named Ipuwer who announces the arrival of a savior who shall restore the land subsequent to predicted frightful calamities involving all classes: “He shall bring cooling to the flame. Men shall say, ‘he is the shepherd of all the people; there is no evil in his heart. . . . The thought of men shall be aflame; would that he might achieve their rescue. . . .’ Verily he shall smite evil when he raises his arm against it. . . .” (ibid., 204-205). This “Messianic” oracle of this prophet proclaims the coming of the good king. It is argued that this class of literature may be traced to the development of the form and content of the Messianic prophecies of Hebrew prophets, who gave it “a higher ethical and religious significance” (ibid., 205).

made to gain a more concrete picture of “messianic representation through the study of ancient Near Eastern (especially Mesopotamian and Syro-Palestinian) royal iconography.”¹

Gen 2-11 was taken as Israel’s pre-history written with a view of Israel’s future while using “David” as the model for the “Adam” stories of Gen 2-3.² This became the basis of the royal ideology leading to the description of “the man” taken “from the dust” and quickened by the “breath of life.” It is alleged that the writer actually lived and wrote during the tenth century BC, during the time of the King David/Solomon narrative of 2 Sam 9-20, 1 Kgs 1-2.³

Walter Brueggemann explored the royal or kingship elements in the garden of Eden story. The phrase “formed from the dust” can be understood as royal covenant

¹James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 52. Charlesworth indicates that “messianism” is at the “intersection of a collective eschatology and a royal ideology” (ibid.).

²See A. Bentzen, *King and Messiah* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 38; Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Theme and Motif in the Succession History (2 Sam xi 2ff.) and the Yahwist Corpus,” *VTSup* 15 (1965): 44-50; Walter Brueggemann, “David and His Theologian,” *CBQ* 30 (1968): 156-181; idem, “Kingship and Chaos,” *CBQ* 30 (1971): 317-332; idem, “From Dust to Kingship,” *ZAW* 84 (1972): 1-18; Ronald Clements, *Abraham and David* (London: SCM, 1967), 80; M. L. Henry, *Jahwist und Priesterschrift* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1960), 15; Wifall, “Gen 3:15, A Protoevangelium?” 362; idem, “David, Prototype of Israel’s Future?” *BTB* 4 (1974): 94-107; idem, “The Breath of His Nostrils,” *CBQ* 36 (1974): 237-240; and H. W. Wolff, “The Kerygma of the Yahwist,” *Interpretation* 20 (1966): 131-158.

³Furthermore, Brueggemann submits that the Gen 2-11 stories are not to be understood as historical in the real sense; neither are they “a collection of ancient Near Eastern myths and legends in any primary way, but they are . . . an extremely sophisticated statement by one of Israel’s earliest, most profound theologians” (“David and His Theologian,” 156). Cf. R. A. Carlson, *David the Chosen King* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1964); R. H. Pfeiffer and William G. Pollard, *The Hebrew Iliad* (New York: Harper, 1957); Gerhard von Rad, “The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel,” in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1966), 176 passim; and Wifall, “Breath of His Nostrils,” 237.

ideology, or as “enthronement.”¹ To be “taken from the dust” means to be “enthroned” as king, and “to return to the dust” means to be “deposed” from kingship. There is a “connection between kingship and creation.”² In fact, the initial creation of man “is the enthronement of man as faithful regent of his covenant Lord.”³

He also saw a fertility motif: “Fertility is a primary concern of the monarchy. . . . Barrenness is a manifestation of curse or being out of covenant, then the images of (1) elevation to kingship, (2) restoration of covenant, and (3) giving of new life all intersect at this point.”⁴ In addition, the dust motif is commonly used to underscore the subjugation of royal enemies.⁵

Consequently, Walter Wifall was able to stipulate that “Gen 3;15 owes its present

¹Brueggemann, “Dust to Kingship,” 12.

²Ibid. “The royal imagery has been extended so that the whole people now share in the promise and hope of the royal tradition” (ibid., 11). See Otto Eissfeldt who traces the process by which a dynastic promise is shared by the whole community (“The Promise of Grace to David in Isaiah 55:1-5,” in *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage: Essays in Honor of James Muilenberg*, ed. Bernard W. Anderson and Walter Harrelson [New York: Harper, 1980], 196-207).

³Brueggeman, “Dust to Kingship,” 7, n. 14. He concludes that the Yahwist created a pattern of “creation-enthronement-resurrection” (ibid., 15).

⁴Ibid., 4. See 1 Sam 2:9; 2 Sam 6:21ff.; the Ugaritic evidence for kingship with reference to fertility is discussed in Arthur L. Merrill, “The House of Keret,” *SEA* 33 (1968): 5-17. Merrill argues vigorously that kingship has as its task fertility, salubrity, and sovereignty.

⁵Brueggemann, “Dust to Kingship,” 8-9. He recalls: “A special use of the dust motif occurs when there is a wish or a promise that ‘we’ should triumph and conversely, those who oppose us should be destroyed or subjugated. . . . Part of the hope for elevation out of dust is the wish or promise that the others will go to the dust. . . . The wish for the enemy to be in the dust is the counterpart of the enthronement of the king who moves from death to life in its rich, powerful royal form” (ibid.).

This is apparent in the Psalms which are clearly about monarchy or messiah or divine monarchy like Pss 18:42ff.; 72:9-11; 22:29. “The well-being and elevation of the king (or in Ps 22, Yahweh himself) depends upon the subjugation of the opposition” (9). Other such texts are Mic 7:16ff.; Isa 47:1; 49:22ff.; 25:10-12; 26:4-5; 41:2. See Harris Birkeland, *The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms* (Oslo: I Kommissjon, 1955).

form to the Yahwist's adaptation of both the David story (2 Sam-1 Kgs 2) and ancient Near Eastern royal mythology to Israel's covenant faith and history."¹

Figurative, Collective, Eschatological, Non-Christological Interpretation

The various Targums and Ethiopic manuscripts treat the Genesis passage figuratively and non-Christologically. Specifically, the Targums Onqelos, Pseudo-Jonathan, Fragmentary, and Neofiti all explain Gen 3:15 collectively and "eschatologically, speaking of humanity's victory over the devil 'in the days of the King Messiah,' but do not base the interpretation on the uniqueness of 'her seed'."²

In *1 Enoch*, several Ethiopic manuscripts contain the term "son of man" or its

¹Wifall insists that the royal and "Davidic" significance of Gen 3:15 "for both OT and NT cannot be overlooked" ("Gen 3:15," 365). Furthermore, "the NT has also portrayed what is considered the fulfillment of Israel's history within the same royal or 'messianic' framework, now applied to Jesus as the 'Messiah' of the Church. Although Gen 3:15 is not a direct prediction of Jesus as the Christ of Israel, it stands within the royal "messianic" tradition connecting the OT and NT. In this respect, the 'myth-ritual' school appears justified in distinguishing the 'messianism' of the OT from that of the NT as consisting mainly in the increasingly eschatological stress of the latter" (ibid.).

²Lewis, "The Woman's Seed," 301. More details on these Targum renditions of Gen 3:14-15 will be discussed in the section on textual analysis below. Meanwhile, Hans Peter R ger combats that the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and the so-called Fragmentary Targum refer to the Messiah explicitly, "but this reference has nothing in common with the christological interpretation of Gen 3:15" which identifies the "Seed of the woman" with Christ or Mary ("On Versions of Genesis 3:15, Ancient and Modern," *Bible Translator* 27 [1976], 109). "In the Palestinian Targums the mention of 'King Messiah' merely serves to specify the date on which 'the sons of the woman . . . are going to make peace (among each other)'" (ibid., 109). R ger continues: "The meaning of this phrase can be inferred from midrash Tanhuma, *בְּצוּרָה*, 2: 'In the world to come, all those having blemishes will be healed, but the snake will not be healed,' as it is written: 'Cursed are you above all cattle' (Gen 3:14), because everyone will be healed, but it will not be healed. Of man it is written: 'Then shall the lame man leap like a hart' (Isa 35.6) and . . . : 'the eyes of the blind shall be opened' (Is 35.5), and likewise of beasts and of cattle: 'The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox' (Isa 65.25). But as to the snake, 'dust shall be its food' (Isa 65:25), because it will not be healed, for it brought down to the dust all creatures" (ibid., 109, n. 11). He later contends that the "renderings of Gen 3:15 in the Revised Standard Version and in the Revised Luther Bible *are* (emphasis his) doctrinal" (ibid., 109).

equivalents like “son of the woman,” the “son of the descendants of the mother of the living,” and “that son of the descendants of the mother of the living.”¹ Jack Lewis comments on these, saying, “Eve must be meant by these terms, and ‘son of the descendants’ may be a double translation of the *zera*’ of Gen 3:15. This doubling shows a collective interpretation rather than an individual one.”²

Zohar, a work outside classical Rabbinic tradition, also identifies the serpent as a literal serpent, evil tempter, Samael’s mount, Satan, and angel of death. It indicates that the mixed multitude which went up from Egypt with Israel (Exod 12:38) “are the offspring of the original serpent that beguiled Eve.”³ The wicked are described in *Zohar Hadash* as “בְּנֵי דְנִחָשׁ הַקְדְּמוֹנִי” (sons of the ancient serpent), who has slain Adam and all his posterity.”⁴

¹See *I Enoch* 62:5, 7, 9, 14; 63:11; 69:26, 27, 29; 70:1; 71:17.

²Lewis, “The Woman’s Seed,” 302. Strack and Billerbeck contend that the above in *I Enoch* prove that a messianic interpretation of “her Seed” existed in pre-Christian Judaism (*Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, 1:958, n. 1). Michl disagrees, insisting that the above were merely an insertion of Christian theology into *I Enoch* (383-386). Martin McNamara states that no conclusions can be based on the occurrences of these phrases here (*Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis, The Aramaic Bible*, vol. 1A [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992], 220, n. 92). Mowinckel mentions that the Ethiopic NT regularly renders “son of man” as “son of the offspring of the mother of the living” (362). See R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1912), 86.

Nahum Sarna uses “they” and “their heel” in the text of Gen 3:15 and then advocates that the woman is the representative of the whole human race, “as the reference to her ‘offspring’ shows” (*Genesis, Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary* [New York: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 27).

³Harry Spaulding and Maurice Simon, *Zohar*, 5 vols. (London: Soncino, 1956), 1:lx, 108. *Zohar* is identified here as the “fundamental book of Jewish Cabbalism . . . the premier text-book of medieval Jewish mysticism” (*ibid.*, ix).

⁴*Ibid.*, 1:133-134.

The author of *Zohar* refers to Gen 3:15 in his vision of the messianic era.¹

Earlier on, Bar Kokhba, who led the Jewish revolt against Rome between 131 to 135 C.E., attests to an already prevalent understanding of the messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15 by use of the emblem of the serpent to support his messianic claim.² Gen 3:15 must have acquired a messianic understanding very early in the Jewish tradition.

Figurative Plural Collective-Christological Interpretation

The history of the interpretation of Gen 3:15 is filled with the great influence of the Church Fathers who themselves largely advocated a figurative collective, yet Christological, interpretation of the text. For some, the woman's Seed was Christ, or the Church, or the whole human race; while taking the woman to be the Church, or Eve, or Mary.³

Origen identifies the woman's seed collectively as the Church in both the enmity and the victory.⁴ He preached that the conflict of Gen 3:15 is a war, beginning with Cain

¹This work is attributed to a Rabbi of the 2nd century C. E., Rabbi Simeon Bar Yokhal. It was produced as a mystical work in the 13th century. See *Zohar* 2 (folio 1206), Exod 22:19.

²Elie Munk, *La Voix de la Torah: Commentaire du Pentateuque* (Paris: Foundation Samuel et Odette Levy, 1969), 41.

³Ronning summarized their views and added: "A few fathers recognized themselves as of the serpent's seed before their conversion to Christ, thus it is the natural state of humanity without the new birth. Those who took the two seeds as collective for the Christians and the world sometimes applied the fulfillment of Gen 3:15 to all of human history, beginning with Cain's murder of Abel, and enduring martyrdom could be described as defeating the serpent in terms of Gen 3:15" (Ronning, 36).

⁴See Chrysostom, *Homilae in Genesim*, 15.5; and *FG*, 107. Saint Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, concurs when he pointed out that humans who persevere in wickedness, like Cain, would incur the serpent's curse on themselves (Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 3.23.3 [trans. Roberts and Rambaut, ANF, 1:456-458]). This may imply that the serpent's seed includes wicked people as well as fallen angels. Irenaeus seems to include heretics among the serpent's seed by saying, "heretics and apostates from the

and Abel, and the believers' victory is ascribed to Jesus.¹ Cyprian also hoped that "when the serpent begins to be trampled upon by us, he may not be able to bite and throw us down."² Moreover, the Syrian Fathers saw the seed of the woman as collective, for either people in general or the Church.³

Later on during the Reformation Period, Calvin picked up on this view in his Genesis commentary, stipulating a collective figurative interpretation of the woman's seed.

truth . . . show themselves patrons of the serpent and of death" (*Against Heresies*, 3.23.8).

¹See *Homilae in Genesim*, 15.5; and *FG*, 107. Origen asserts that "God did not leave them to themselves when they had been placed in this war, but He is always with them. He is pleased with Abel but reproves Cain" (*FG*, 107). Origen enjoined believers to pray that "our feet may be such, so beautiful, so strong, that they can trample on the Serpent's head that he cannot bite our heel (Gen 3:15). . . . So you see that whoever fights under Jesus [Joshua], ought to return safe from battle" (*FG*, 107). See *Homilae in librum Jesu Nave*, 12.2; and also *FG*, 106-107; *FG*, 12.888A-B.

Optamus of Mileva (d. before 400) saw the murder of Abel by Cain and the massacre of infants in Bethlehem as part of the continuous outplaying of the hostile rivalry that was established in Gen 3:15 with "the waylaying Devil" (*FG*, 173-4). See *In Natale Infantium qui pro Domino occisi sunt*, 5. Basil, the Great, also saw the enmity of Gen 3:15 as a war engaged by the collective woman's seed. "The Lord established for us a war against him [Satan], that when the war had been won through obedience, we might triumph over the enemy" (*FG*, 110-111). See *Quod Deus non est auctor malorum* 8-9.

²St. Cyprian, *Saint Cyprian Letters (1-81)*, trans. Rose Bernard Donna, vol. 51 of *The Fathers of the Church, A New Translation* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 1964), 170. Cyprian expounded Eph 6:12-17, indicating that Christians should put on covers for their feet by means of Gospel preaching (*ibid.*, letter 58, 9, "To the people of Thibaris"). Moreover, Cyprian described the victorious suffering of one Celerinus with these words: "and although his feet were bound with cords, the helmeted serpent was both crushed and conquered (because he did not deny his faith under torture)" (*ibid.*, 100, "To the priests and people," letter 39, 2).

"In early Christian martyrology, Perpetua in a dream treads on the head of the Egyptian, who is a symbol of the devil" (*Perpetua Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* 3.2 [ANF, 3:702]).

³See Abraham Levene, *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis: From a Syrian MS; On the Pentateuch in the Mingana Collection; The First 18 Chapters of the MS; Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Notes; and including a Study in Comparative Exegesis* (London: Taylor's Foreign Press, 1951), 77-78. They believe that the head and heel is "a figure for the judgment upon Satan, how much lower than us God has placed him. As for us, if we desire the good, through mighty deeds are we able to smite him, but he on the other hand is able to smite us, since he guards our heels i.e., our way, which is our deeds; even as 'the iniquity of my heels doth encompass me'" (*ibid.*, 78).

His view is well-articulated by Schurb:

Calvin identified the woman's seed, in the several parts of his interpretation, as (1) all men (as against snakes), (2) all men (as against the devil), and (3) Christ as the Champion of all men (and, by extension from Christ, the Church). He arrived at Christ because "experience teaches" that all do not conquer Satan; yet, inasmuch as the passage did promise victory over the devil, there had to be "one Head" in whom the race would conquer. Having introduced the "headship" concept, which comes not from Genesis 3:15 but from the New Testament passages on Christ and His church, Calvin went on to say that Christ shared with His people the power to overcome the devil.¹

Numerous exegetes have followed suit. Dietrich Philips understood the seed collectively in the spiritual sense. He took all believers as the seed of the spiritual Eve, just as all unbelievers constitute the seed of the serpent.²

Similarly, Hengstenberg defends the collective woman's seed as referring only to the righteous rather than all humanity. Even though the wicked are physical offsprings of the woman, they have excommunicated themselves by aligning themselves with the

¹Schurb, 32. John Calvin asks rhetorically: "Who will concede that a *collective* noun is to be understood of one man *only*? Further, as the perpetuity of the contest is noted, so victory is promised to the human race through a continual succession of ages. I explain, therefore, the *seed* to mean the posterity of the woman generally. . . . The power of bruising Satan is imparted to faithful men, and thus this blessing is the common property of the whole Church" (*Commentaries on the First Book of Moses*, 170-171).

Ronning adds: "Apparently, then, Calvin identified the woman's seed in Gen 3:15c (the enmity portion) as the whole human race, but in Gen 3:15d (the victory portion) limits the race to Christ and those who belong to him, the Church" (Ronning, 46).

²See George Hunston Williams, ed., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers: Documents Illustrative of the Radical Reformation*, LCC, Ichthus Edition (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), 230-233. Philips pointed to the murder of Abel by Cain as the first manifestation of the enmity between God's children and the devil's children, the conflict which has since continued to be renewed to date (*ibid.*). Robert Jamieson agrees that the seed of the serpent includes wicked human beings everywhere (cf. John 8:44; 13:38 with Matt 23:33) while the seed of the woman refers to the children of God (Gal 3:29) (*Genesis-Deuteronomy, A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945], 57).

serpent, Satan, and thus spiritually are the serpent's seed, rather than the woman's.¹

On the other hand, Young looks for the seed of the serpent outside the realm of the human race, identifying them as the evil spirits.² Geerhardus Vos concurs because "it seems more plausible to seek the seed of the serpent outside of the human race. The power of evil is a collective power, a kingdom of evil, of which Satan is the head."³ They are the evil spirits which derive their nature from Satan. Similarly, the seed of the woman must be collective including the human race out of which "a fatal blow will come which shall crush the head of the serpent."⁴ However, Briggs expands the serpent's race to include snakes, demons, and evil people; while the woman's race comprises human beings

¹Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*, 1:27-30. While the seed of the woman normally designates "her whole progeny" (ibid., 28), "they who enter into communion with the hereditary enemy of the human race are viewed as having excommunicated themselves" (ibid., 29).

In defense of this collective interpretation, he writes: "It does violence to the language to understand, by the seed of the woman, any single individual; and the more so, since we are compelled to understand, by the seed of the serpent, a plurality of individuals, viz., the spiritual children of Satan, the heads and members of the kingdom of darkness" (ibid., 30). He accepts, however, that the singular (collective) words used to describe the woman's seed show the unity which exists between Christ and humanity. Christ "comprehends within Himself the whole human race" (ibid.).

²Young, *Genesis 3*, 116. He recommends: "Far better, therefore, because in keeping with the demands of the Scripture at this point, is it to hold that the serpent's seed is found in evil spirits. These are his spiritual seed, not descended from him in a physical sense, but nevertheless, truly his seed. Satan rules over a kingdom of evil which is opposed to God, and this kingdom of evil is his seed" (ibid.).

Similarly, John Peter Lange understands the seed of the woman to include the human race while the serpent's seed (demons and their powers) are those who have "become ethically children of the power of temptation" (*Genesis, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Critical, Doctrinal, and Homilectical*, vol. 1, trans. Philip Schaff [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915], 234).

³Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology, Old And New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1944), 54. See ibid., 53-55.

⁴ibid., 55.

who oppose the forces of evil.¹

Samuel Driver takes the serpent as the symbol of the power of “manifold temptations,”² “evil promptings and suggestions”³ engaging in a prolonged “continual spiritual struggle with all humanity.”⁴ He reiterated that “the law and aim of humanity is to resist, and if possible to slay the serpent.”⁵ Furthermore:

It is of course true that the great and crowning defeat of man’s spiritual adversary was accomplished by Him who was in a special sense the “seed” of the woman, the representative of humanity, who overcame once and for all the power of the Evil One. But the terms of the verse are perfectly general; and it must not be interpreted so as to exclude those minor, though in their own sphere not less real, triumphs, by which in all ages individuals have resisted the suggestions of sin and proved themselves superior to the power of evil.⁶

Figurative Singular Individual-Christological Interpretation

One fact that has encouraged the singular individual-Christological interpretation of Gen 3:15 is the influence of ancient manuscripts which seem to suggest it, namely, the

¹Briggs enumerates: “The term *seed* is a generic term for the entire race of descendants of the woman on the one hand and the serpent on the other. . . . This prediction points not merely to the whole family of snakes, but to the serpents of the higher world, the evil spirits, and to the serpents among mankind, the evil men, and seducers, called by Jesus the children of the devil, indeed all the forces of evil which array themselves against the children of God. The seed of the woman embraces the human race as such, that is, all who take part in the conflicts of the race with the forces of evil” (Briggs, 75). He later verifies that “there are those who by birthright belong to the seed of the woman who become by apostasy the children of the serpent. There are those who are won as trophies of grace from the seed of the serpent and are adopted into the seed of redemption. These two great forces are in conflict throughout history” (ibid., 76). See ibid., 71-77.

²Driver, *Genesis*, 57.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

LXX, Vulgate, Jerome, Targum Onkelos, and Targum Neofiti.¹ With a resurgence of biblical word studies in the Reformation period and beyond, the Gen 3:15 passage also gained more focus.

One of the most ardent proponents of this view is Martin Luther who clearly identifies the Seed as Christ alone. Christ crushed and still crushes the serpent's head. He referred to Christians as being subject to the same hatred as the woman's Seed, only as a secondary application of the text of Gen 3:15 which is interpreted primarily in terms of Christ alone.² He insists that here, God "is speaking of only one individual, of the Seed of Mary, who is a mother without union with a male."³

Luther uses experience, rather than the grammar of the text, to identify the promised Seed as Christ. Human nature was insufficient to accomplish what was intended and promised in Gen 3:15, hence Christ had to step in on our behalf.⁴

Zwingli supported the individual-Christological interpretation of Gen 3:15 based on the singular pronoun of אָנֹכִי, and the singular direct object suffix in אֶתְּשִׁיבָהּ. He insists that the translators of the LXX understood "that there was a mystery underlying

¹Detailed consideration is given to all of these in the section on Textual Analysis.

²See Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*, 5, 24, 41, 58, 178, 319; and Schurb, 28. Luther adopted a strictly individual and Christological interpretation of the woman's Seed, but lacked a detailed identification of the serpent's seed. Christians are not directly referred to in Gen 3:15, but are involved only as a result of their relationship with Christ.

Luther treats Gen 3:14 "entirely in figurative language; God is speaking with the serpent, and yet it is certain that the serpent does not understand these words. . . . God is not speaking to an irrational nature but to an intelligent nature. . . . In a figurative sense, Satan's punishment is meant by the punishment of the serpent" (*Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*, 183).

³Ibid., 195-197, 220.

⁴Ibid.

these words, and therefore refused to change the gender of the words.”¹ He deduced that the use of the singular was intentionally meant to foretell that “from the woman sometime should proceed the seed which should bruise the head of the serpent, i.e., the Devil; and that, on the other hand, the Devil would try to hurt his heel.”² He took the heel to mean the human nature of Christ.

Zwingli believes that all the curse of the snake in Gen 3:14 entirely refers to the devil’s punishment in being cast down to earth and banished from heaven. The Seed of the woman is singular, crushing the devil’s head, which refers to the devil’s power and dominion. On the other hand, the seed of the serpent is plural including all those who listen to and obey the devil.³

Aegidius Hunnius defended the application of Gal 3:16 to Gen 3:15 that the same singular Seed was the subject of the promise both in Eden and to Abraham with blessings that only God could provide.⁴

Arthur Pink proposes that the woman of Gen 3:15 “typifies *Israel*—the woman from whom the promised Seed came—the woman of Revelation 12. The children of Israel

¹Samuel McCauley Jackson and Clarence Nevin Heller, eds., *Commentary on True and False Religion: Zwingli* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1981), 107.

²*Ibid.*, 108.

³See Gallus, *Der Nachkomme der Frau*, 1:149-150. The Latin is found in *Corpus Reformation C, XIII, 28-29 (Farrago annotationeum in Genesim [Tiguri, 1527]), 37-8*. The woman’s Seed is in combat with an individual (the devil), and therefore must be an individual. Cf. *idem, Allutheranischen Schriftauslegung II*, 16, 79-80, 102; and Johann Kunad, *Disputatio Theologica de Inimicitis inter Serpentem et Mulierem, ad Locum Classicum Gen 3, 15 adornata* (Lipsiae: Veit et Comp., 1662), 13.

⁴Schurb, 38, n. 37. See Aegidius Hunnius, *Antipareus, Opera Latina, Tomus Secundus* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Impensis Iohan, Iacobi Porsij Bibliopolae, 1608), col. 930, 931, 933, 934, 941, 942.

being the channel through which the Messiah was to come, became the object of Satan's continued enmity and assault."¹ He takes the seed of the serpent as the seed of Satan who is the Antichrist. On the other hand, the woman's Seed who is the Christ. "In these two persons all prophecy converges."² Pink argues: "If 'her seed' ultimates in a single personality—the Christ—then by every principle of sound interpretation 'thy seed' must also ultimate in a single person—the Antichrist."³

Virgin Birth and Mariological Interpretations

Virgin birth is the designation of the birth of Christ as having intentionally occurred in verity as indeed the "seed" from a woman, without the participation of a man.⁴ Mariology involves the subsequent exaltation of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, to a superior status over and above a normal human being. This includes her immaculate conception, sinlessness, infallibility, perpetual virginity, veneration, and intercessory,

¹Arthur W. Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis* (Chicago: Moody, 1922), 42.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴"Virgin birth" is the most accurate and most proper designation of the birth of Christ. The "immaculate conception" confuses the births of Mary and Christ; while "supernatural birth" or "supernatural conception" are two broad terms "in view of the supernatural conceptions of Isaac, Samson, and John the Baptist, among others" (Feinberg, 313). See J. M. Frame, "Virgin-Birth of Jesus," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1143-1145. Theodore M. Dorman also defines virgin birth as "the designation for the NT teaching that Jesus was born without the agency of a human father, being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary and subsequently born while Mary was yet a virgin. . . . It is not to be confused with the 'Immaculate Conception,' the Roman Catholic doctrine that teaches that Mary was conceived without original sin" ("Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ," *ISBE*, 4:990-993, esp. 992).

mediatorial, and co-redemptive roles.¹

Serapion, Bishop of Thumis (Egypt; d. after 359) may have given “the earliest extant argument for the virgin birth predicted in Gen 3:15.”² He argued seriously for this, taunting: “But a woman does not have seed, only man does. How then was it said of the woman? Is it clear that it was said of Christ whom the undefiled Virgin brought forth without seed? Certainly, He is a singular seed, not seeds in the plural.”³ Abbot Rupert of Deutz (d. 1135) also confirms that Christ “alone is the seed of woman in such wise that He is not also the seed of man.”⁴ He also said that the lying in wait for his heel meant that he was attacked at the end of his life.⁵

Irenaeus considered Eve as a virgin because the fact that Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed shows that they were children.⁶ He listed analogies between Eve and Mary. He gives a prominent role to Mary saying: “And thus, as the human race fell

¹See Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “Mary,” *ISBE*, 3:269-273.

²Ronning, 30.

³*Ibid.*, referring to *FG*, 111 (*Catena in Genesim*); as cited from S. J. Gallus, *Interpretatio Mariologica Protoevangelii [Gen 3:15], Temporare postpatristico usque ad Concilium Tridentium* (Rome: n.p., 1949), 24, claiming that it was so found by A. Lippomanus (Paris, 1546).

⁴*FG*, 214-215.

⁵See *In Genesim* 2.19 (*FG*, 214-215). Commenting on Rev 12:3, he further said that the woman clothed in the sun was the sign of the whole church, whose greatest member is Mary [*In Apoc.* 12:3] (*FG*, 216).

⁶See ANF, 1.455, n. 4. In a special sense, Christ experienced this enmity and conquered on behalf of humanity. Irenaeus claims that “the Lord summed up in Himself this enmity, when he was made man from a woman, and trod upon his [the serpent’s] head” (ANF, 1.524).

Unger took this to mean “a concise but complete interpretation of the First-Gospel in a Christological and Mariological sense” (“Patristic Interpretation,” 122).

into bondage to death by means of a virgin, so is it rescued by a virgin.”¹

In *The Testament of Adam*, dated between the second and fifth century A. D., Adam is depicted as educating Seth about the Lord’s promise to him of the coming virgin birth wherein the Lord said “for your sake, I will be born of the Virgin Mary.”² Likewise, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* of the sixth century mentions that the Lord cut the serpent’s legs and promised Adam’s redemption through the incarnation. “He shall sojourn in a Virgin, and shall put on a body and through Him redemption and a return shall be effected for thee.”³

Exegetes of this conviction delved into the textual analysis of Gen 3:15, armed with ancient manuscripts like the Vulgate which support their idea. The Vulgate reads: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and your seed and her seed; she (other manuscripts: he) shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for his heel.”⁴ Jack Lewis portrays this process:

Making the woman to be the addressee had its influence in convincing interpreters

¹Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 3.22.4.

²*Testament of Adam* 3:1, 3; cited in Lewis, “The Woman’s Seed,” 302. Cf. Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:272, 274.

³E. A. Wallis Budge, ed., *The Book of the Cave of Treasures* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1927), 67.

⁴Rüger, 107. Rüger then argues that this translation, using the personal pronoun “she” (*ipsa*), “no doubt has a mariological meaning, but it is rather unlikely that this reading represents Jerome’s text” (*ibid.*, 108). Saint Jerome “first quotes Gen 3:15 from the Old Latin ‘ipse servabit caput tuum et tu servabis eius calcaneum (he shall observe your head, and you shall observe his heel),’ and then adds: ‘melius habet in hebraeo: ipse conteret caput tuum et tu conteres eius calcaneum (one has a better [text] in the Hebrew: he shall crush your head, and you shall crush his heel).’ This makes it fairly certain that the original Vulgate equivalent of Hebrew מִן־רִגְלֵי was ‘he’ (*ipse*) rather than ‘she’ (*ipsa*)” (*Saint Jerome’s Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, trans. C. T. R. Hayward [New York: Oxford University Press, 1995]).

that the statement was a promise rather than a part of the curse on the serpent. Once the pronoun *ipsa* got into the Latin translation, and once “her seed” was elaborated into the terminology “woman’s seed” and what that term suggested, there was really no way to exegete the passage apart from the idea of its predicting the virgin birth.¹

Charles Feinberg holds that this detail is included in the “form as well as intent”² of the verse, coining the term “Particularistic Messianic interpretation”³ for it. He affirms:

Whether considered from the angle of the precise text of the passage, Scriptural usage, the history of redemption as unfolded throughout the revelation of God, or the basic requirements of the case, Genesis 3:15 is to be understood as teaching the coming in ultimate victory over Satan of the virgin-born Messiah, Redeemer, and Son of God. The study of the Scriptural doctrine of the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ must begin with Genesis 3:15.⁴

Mariology necessarily sees Mary, rather than Eve, in the text of Gen 3:15. As correctly observed, this is “logically dependent on the exclusively individual interpretation of the woman’s seed”⁵ in this verse. It is also the source of such mariological doctrines as

¹Lewis, “The Woman’s Seed,” 319.

²Feinberg, 322.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, 324. Concurring with him, though mildly, Herbert C. Leupold upholds that “not primarily, but at least incidentally,” the particular expression “Seed of the woman” refers to Mary and the virgin birth (*Exposition of Genesis*, Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953], 1:169). Leupold continues: “An expression is chosen that meets with literal fulfillment in Him who is virgin born and not the seed of man. . . . The expression used does not specifically prophesy the virgin birth, but it coincides and agrees with it under divine providence” (*ibid.*).

Pink maintains that “her seed”—the woman’s seed, “not the man’s!” indicates “the first announcement concerning the supernatural birth” (Pink, 42). Albertus Pieters underscores: “Very remarkably, the man is completely ignored . . . not the seed of both together, or of the man. . . . The position and part of the man is left wholly out of reckoning” (*Notes on Genesis: For Minsters and Serious Bible Students* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943], 87-88).

⁵Ronning, 36.

her sinlessness, assumption, and co-redemption.¹ This is the exclusive development of the Catholic Church² and this view pervades the interpretation of Gen 3:15 by Catholic exegetes of all times.³

Movement from Collective Figurative Seed to Singular Representative Christological Seed

A close reading of Gen 3:14-15 has led several exegetes to observe a movement in the text, not only from God's attention to the literal snake and symbolic serpent (Evil force, Satan) but also from the collective figurative seed to a singular-individual

¹Ibid., and also n. 36. He believes that "if the seed is properly taken as a collective (not just by application), then Mary cannot be the woman (except as an anti-type of Eve)" (ibid.).

Ronning coins the term "hyper-mariological" in order to "distinguish from the mariological interpretation, in which Mary is said to be 'the woman' predicted in Gen 3:15. The hyper-mariological interpretation goes beyond this to elevate Mary from her place alongside the rest of the saints, even 'blessed among women,' to a role as co-redeemer with Christ, in which she crushes the serpent in a way that other believers do not" (ibid., 32).

²A Papal Bull announcing the doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception was issued by Pius IX in 1854. For exhaustive studies on the development of the Virgin Birth doctrines, see: Saint Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, *Virgin Conception and Original Sin* (Albany, NY: Magi, 1969); Thomas David Boslooper, *The Virgin Birth* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962); Hans von Campenhausen, *The Virgin Birth in the Theology of the Ancient Church*, Studies in Historical Theology, 2 (London: SCM, 1964); Charles Gore, *Dissertations on Subjects Connected with the Incarnation* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1895); John Gresham Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York: Harper, 1932); and Vincent Taylor, *The Historical Evidence for the Virgin Birth* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1920).

For Mariology see: Stephen Benko, *The Virgin Goddess: Studies in the Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993); Elliot Miller and Kenneth R. Samples, *The Cult of the Virgin: Catholic Mariology and the Apparitions of Mary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992); Edward Dennis O'Connor, ed., *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: History and Significance* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958); Joseph Pohle, *Mariology: A Dogmatic Treatise on the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God* (St. Louis: Herder, 1953); William Bernard Ullathorne, *The Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God: An Exposition* (Westminster: Art and Book, 1905).

³See among numerous others: DeGuglielmo, "Mary in the Protoevangelium"; Peirce, "The Protoevangelium"; Unger, "Patristic Interpretation;" idem, *FG*; and Vawter, *A Path Through Genesis*; idem, *On Genesis: A New Reading*.

representative Christological Seed. Foremost among them is David Pareus.¹

Pareus made a distinction between Gen 3:15c and 15d. He maintained that the “woman’s seed” in 15c is collective, not individual while the “He” in 15d is singular. He emphasized that the *athnach* under the word *zar’ah* before 15d was significant. “God placed it there so readers would not confuse this portion with what preceded it.”² He insisted that the “He” of 15d denoted “the Seed of the woman, that is, a certain one from among the seed, as if he goes forth from the midst for battle, an athlete and hero more robust and strong than the devil, certainly Christ.”³ He described the overlap between the two expressions in 15c and 15d in that “‘He’ was the Seed (singular) in that He was the great champion from among the seed (collective).”⁴

Pareus then enumerated his reasons for taking the Seed of the woman in Gen 3:15c individually, concerning Christ, rather than collectively:

1. The word “He” was used instead of a repetition of “his seed.” Thus, God separated this portion of the verse from what preceded it. Pareus conceded the weakness of this argument by itself, but he argued that it be considered together with the others.
2. The Septuagint rendered “He” with the word *autos*.
3. Opposed to the Seed in 15c stood not another seed, as in 15b, but the serpent himself, an individual.
4. The word *contereor*, more generally, the idea of the fight and the mode of victory suggested a single entity.
5. It took divine strength to crush Satan’s reign (Zechariah 3:2; Romans 16:20). But the one prophesied would be both the Seed of the woman and God.

¹Pareus’s book has been fully cited above. I have adjusted his reference to the parts of Gen 3:15 to follow my suggested divisions of the Hebrew text of this verse as presented on pages 119-120 below.

²Schurb, 35, n. 27.

³Ibid., 35, n. 28.

⁴Ibid., 35.

6. God sometimes spoke individually of Christ as “Seed” (Gal 3:16; 1 Chr 17:11 [in which Seed was Christ; Solomon was not involved]; see also Isaiah 9:6).

7. Gen 3:15 attributed to this Seed the proper office of the Christ, namely, to break the power of Satan (Pss 68:19; 110:6). David, Joshua, and Samson were only types; Christ was victor over Satan directly.

8. The New Testament showed the fulfillment of this promise in Christ alone (1 John 3:8; John 14:30; Luke 10:18; John 12:31; 1 Cor 15:54-55; Heb 2:14; Rev 20:2).¹

Pareus believes that Christians are drawn in with Christ as part of the “He” of Gen 3:15c because what is said concerning the head also pertains “by participation to the whole body.”² Arguing from analogy, he verifies:

Satan bit Christ on the heel, but since Christ was the head, His death pertained to the whole body. So Christians suffer and die with Him, and by virtue of His victory they would daily fight sin, death, and Satan, and win. . . . Therefore under this Seed, which is Christ, all the faithful are also contained.³

Keil and Delitzsch vividly saw both the collective and singular seed of the woman in Gen 3:15. Taking a cue from the difference between the natural serpent (snake) and the spiritual serpent (Satan), they distinguished between the woman’s natural Seed—the natural development of the human race—and the woman’s spiritual seed.⁴

Against the natural serpent the conflict may be carried on by the whole human race, by all who are born of woman, but not against Satan. As he is a foe who can only be met with spiritual weapons, none can encounter him successfully but such as possess and make use of spiritual arms. Hence, the idea of the “seed” is modified by the nature of the foe.⁵

¹Ibid., 36.

²Ibid., 37.

³Ibid., 37-38. See also *ibid.*, n. 34.

⁴Keil and Delitzsch, 3:100-101.

⁵Ibid., 101.

They verified their view by examining “the history of the human race”¹ which reveals a constantly repeated process of divine deliberate delimitation according to the spiritual condition of the physical descent of human beings. Seth’s lineage, chosen out of Adam and Eve’s three sons, carried the human race to the time of Noah’s flood. From Shem’s lineage, the chosen out of Noah’s three sons, came Abraham, the one chosen to bless the world through his chosen seed, Isaac. They report:

The “seed,” to which the victory over Satan was promised, was spiritually or ethically determined, and ceased to be co-extensive with physical descent. This spiritual seed culminated in Christ, in whom the Adamic family terminated, henceforward to be renewed by Christ as the second Adam, and restored by Him to its original exaltation and likeness to God. In this sense Christ is the seed of the woman, who tramples Satan under His feet, not as an individual, but as the head both of the posterity of the woman which kept the promise and maintained the conflict with old serpent before His advent, and also of all those who are gathered out of all nations, are united to Him by faith, and formed into one body of which He is the head (Rom. xvi. 20). On the other hand, all who have not regarded and preserved the promise, have fallen into the power of the old serpent, and are to be regarded as the seed of the serpent, whose head will be trodden under foot (Matt. xxiii. 33; John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 8).²

They quickly admit that “it does not follow . . . that by the seed of the woman we are to understand *one* solitary person, one individual only. As the woman is the mother of all living (ver. 20), her seed, to which the victory over the serpent and its seed is promised, must be the human race.”³ He is aptly described as “the centre of the collective he, the individualization of the human race.”⁴

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 102.

³Ibid., 101.

⁴Franz Delitzsch, *Old Testament History of Redemption* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1881), 26. He also emphasizes that notwithstanding the fact that victory is promised generally for the human race in this

Young introduces the idea of solidarity in this text when he declares:

The arch-foe of man is brought to the fore in that God speaks of “thy head,” and “thou shalt bruise.” There is a certain solidarity in the kingdom of evil, and that solidarity appears in that the kingdom of evil is here hidden, as it were, behind its head. In the ensuing enmity and conflict, it is not merely the seed of the serpent which will be wounded, nor is it merely from that kingdom that a bruise will be inflicted upon the seed of the woman. Rather, it is the head of that kingdom himself who is brought to the fore and the kingdom is as it were hidden behind him. Here is to be a decisive victory. Not merely will the kingdom over which the evil one rules be defeated, but the very head of that kingdom will receive the capital blow.¹

Young recognizes a correlating solidarity whereby the seed of the woman, which includes “the entirety of humanity,”² embraces “both the good and the evil, the righteous and the unrighteous”³ because “God deals with the world.”⁴ “Nevertheless, it is also true that the way in which man will vanquish Satan is . . . Jesus Christ, who will obtain the victory. . . . It is the seed of the woman as comprehended in the Redeemer that will deliver the fatal blow.”⁵

Meredith Kline agrees that the woman’s seed consists of the righteous people while the serpent’s seed includes the wicked people. The first part of the verse entails the collective for the seeds for each side of the combat. However, in the second part (Gen

conflict, since it is the tempter that is to be overcome, “we may consequently infer that the seed of the woman will culminate in One” (idem, *Messianic Prophecies*, 27-29).

¹Young, *Genesis 3*, 118-119.

²Ibid., 119.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. He adds: “The prophecy is uttered in general terms, and its primary meaning is that the human race is to be victorious over the serpent” (ibid., 120).

⁵Ibid.

3:15d-e), “a climactic battle in the holy war”¹ pitches an individual Seed as the federal head of God’s kingdom and champion of the rest of the woman’s seed, against Satan.

“The all-decisive battle is a judgment ordeal by combat, fought by a champion from each of the opposing armies.”²

All the scholars mentioned above have neglected to examine the word עֶרֶב and its referents within Gen 3:15 in detail. This is a serious inadequacy. This lack is the main justification for the research being done in this dissertation.

¹Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 82.

²Ibid., 83. “Mention of a wound to be suffered by the champion of the woman’s army does not throw in doubt the decisive victory he was to gain for them” (ibid., 89).

CHAPTER ONE

GEN 3:15 AND ITS IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

An detailed examination of Gen 3:15 in its context is needed in order to fully elucidate the ramifications of the passage. This chapter begins with a brief textual analysis of Gen 3:14-15. This is followed by the literary, structural, thematic, terminological, syntactical, morphological, and semantic analyses of the context of Gen 3:15.

Textual Analysis¹

The Hebrew text of Gen 3 is practically problem-free.² Some argue that they can

¹Vinton A. Dearing states that Textual Analysis “determines the genealogical relationship between different forms of the same message” (*Principles and Practice of Textual Analysis* [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974], 1). A message includes a mental phenomenon, visual images, words, sounds, or meta-messages. Dearing further enumerates that Textual Analysis is the “determination of the descent of texts” (*A Manual of Textual Analysis* [Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1983], 3). Each manuscript records and transmits different forms of the text. “The determination of the descent of manuscripts” is also called Bibliographical Analysis (*ibid.*).

²However, J. A. Soggin refers to the differences in the translations of Gen 3:2, some of which insert a לֵב before the אֲשֶׁר giving the reading, “of every tree of the garden” (“The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis,” in *Old Testament and Oriental Studies*, BibOr, 29 [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1975], 90). LXX has ἀπὸ παντὸς ξύλου, while the Vulgate has “*de omni ligno*” (*ibid.*). “This is obviously not a true textual variant but a gloss to specify an otherwise vague reference, neither adding nor subtracting anything in the text” (*ibid.*, 91).

Some authors suspect at least two sources underlying the present text. For example, I. Lewy, “The Two Strata in the Eden Story,” *HUCA* 27 (1956): 93-99.

discern traces of an original in meter and rhyme of the story.¹ Oesterley wrongly suggests that the following words in Gen 3:1, “than any beast of the field which the Lord had made,” were an unnecessary addition to the consonantal MT.² The Syriac Version follows the LXX in further adding “the Serpent” after “and he said,” in the same verse.

Oesterley’s main reason for objecting to this supposed addition is that “the whole presentation of the Serpent is so emphatically alien to the idea of his being one of ‘the beasts of the field,’ that the words in question would be more appropriately omitted.”³ The text would have originally been: “The serpent was subtle (or crafty), and said to the woman. . . .”⁴ There is no evidence in the text itself to support this theory of this phrase being a later addition. This phrase is one of the connections within the whole creation story in Gen 1-2 and the fall in Gen 3.

The Dead Sea Scrolls–Qumran

“Genesis . . . was very popular among the Qumranites. Both the number of biblical manuscripts and the collection of scrolls involved with retelling its compelling stories attest to this fact.”⁵ There were twenty-four manuscripts on Genesis alone, a

¹Procksch, 35.

²W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Evolution of the Messianic Idea: A Study in Comparative Religion* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1908), 76-77.

³Ibid., 77.

⁴Ibid. I strongly disagree with his position because the phrase in question has its function in linking the serpent in 3:1 with 3:14. Moreover, it is needed to show that the serpent belonged to the natural order of creation and not a supernatural creation.

⁵Martin Abegg, Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: The Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English* (New York: Harper Collins, 1999), 3-5.

quantity surpassed only by Psalms, Isaiah, and Deuteronomy.¹

These Genesis manuscripts are “all relatively fragmentary and preserve only thirty-two chapters among their crumbs. They do, however, reveal a text of Genesis that is generally very close to the traditional Hebrew text.”² In particular, the ones found at Wadi Murabba‘at, “dated according to their script, . . . are identical to the traditional Hebrew text.”³

The importance and reliability of the Genesis manuscripts are underscored by the fact that out of over eight hundred manuscript fragments found at Qumran, only four contain the title of the scrolls, and the Genesis manuscripts happens to be one of these four.⁴ Moreover, Genesis is attested in the ancient paleo-Hebrew script—4Q11paleoGen-Exod¹ and 4Q12paleoGen^m - the latter being the oldest scroll of Genesis.⁵

The only extant portions of Gen 3 are 3:1-2 from 4QGen^k; and 3:11-14 from 1Q1Gen. These verses from this manuscript are identical with the Hebrew text.⁶ This attests to the reliability of our text its present form.

¹Ibid. The remains of possibly twenty manuscripts were unearthed at Qumran itself: one manuscript each at 1QGen, 2Gen, 6QGen, 8QGen, and 16 manuscripts in Cave 4. Four other manuscripts were found at Wadi Murabba‘at and south of Masada.

²Ibid.

³Ibid. The two (or possibly three) manuscripts from Wadi Murabba‘at, which are “dated according to their script,” were most likely created “at the beginning of the second century CE” (ibid.).

⁴Ibid. This manuscript is identified as 4QGen^{b-ctd}, most likely a part of 4QGen^k.

⁵Ibid. 4Q12paleoGen^m is dated from the middle of the second century BCE. At least two scrolls, namely, 4QGen-Exod¹ and 4QpaleoGen-Exod¹, “contain both Genesis and Exodus, confirming an ancient order for these two important books.”

⁶Ibid., 7.

The Septuagint–LXX¹

The Greek translation of the Pentateuch is well acclaimed as being of a higher quality than that of the other parts of the Old Testament.² Focusing on Gen 3:14-15, one sees a great similarity with the Hebrew text. The LXX translation here appears very literal. In fact, the early chapters of Genesis were an “exact and literal representation” of a Hebrew *Vorlage* to the MT.³ John Wevers asserts that the LXX translators followed the consonantal text of MT, trying to translate into Greek “what they believed God intended to say to his people.”⁴

In several instances, LXX follows the Hebrew word order, including prepositions, adverbs, and articles, at the risk of translating it into “unidiomatic and wooden Greek.”⁵ The introductory speech of Gen 3:14 demonstrates this. “Both Hebrew and Greek begin with a conjunction, which is followed by a main verb, a subject (the divine name and title

¹I have followed the Rahlfs edition of the LXX for the most part.

²Martin, 427. Cf. Henry Barclay Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1902), 315 passim; and Henry St. John Thackeray, *Grammar of the Old Testament in Greek: According to the Septuagint* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), 13 passim.

³James Barr, *Typology of Literalism in Ancient Biblical Translations* (Nachrichten: Mitteilungen des Septuaginta–Unternehmens Göttingen, 1979), 285.

⁴John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*, Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series, 35 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1993), xii-xiii. He believed that the MT was treated as a sacrosanct canonical text by the LXX translators who were very intentional, slavish and faithful to the received text, rather than being haphazard.

The Pentateuch was very prominent in ancient Judaism and thus would have been copied with extreme caution and interest in its wording. The LXX was the synagogal Scriptures in Alexandria.

⁵Stephen G. W. Andrews, “Ancient Interpretation of Divine Judgment in Eden (Genesis 3:14-19)” (Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge University, Cambridge, England, 1994), 42.

occurring in the same order), and an indirect object with the article.”¹ This shows how faithful the translators tried to be to their supposed Hebrew *vorlage*.

In like manner, the Hebrew preposition ׀ׁ is translated in LXX as ἀνὰ μέσον and used laboriously four times in Gen 3:15. This would have been unnecessary but for the way the Greek translations seem to faithfully follow the Hebrew.² This overpreoccupation with following the underlying Hebrew text caused the LXX translators to miss the poetic nature of Gen 3:14-19.³

In the LXX translation, Gen 2:25 [MT/Eng.] equals 3:1; hence 3:14-15 [MT/Eng.] equals 3:15-16. Gen 3:14 reads: “καὶ εἶπεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῷ ὄφει Ὅτι ἐποίησας τοῦτο, ἐπικατάρατος σὺ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν κτηνῶν καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν θηρίων τῆς γῆς· ἐπὶ τῷ στήθει σου καὶ τῇ κοιλίᾳ πορεύσῃ καὶ γῆν φάγη πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς σου” (LXX Gen 3:14).

This can be translated: “And the Lord God said to the serpent, Because thou hast done this thou art cursed above all cattle and all the brutes of the earth, on thy breast and belly thou shalt go, and thou shalt eat earth all the days of thy life.”

¹Ibid., 42, including n. 121. He continues: “The Greek becomes awkward or clumsy where it translates the nominal sentence in 3.14: ׀ׁׁׁׁׁׁׁׁׁ as ἐπικατάρατος σὺ, without the copula” (ibid.). See Ilmari Soisalon-Soininen, *Studien zur Septuaginta-Syntax*, Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia Annales Academiæ Scientiarum Fennicæ, Ser. B, vol. 237 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1987), 79.

²Andrews, 42. Moreover, “a relatively common Septuagintal Hebraism can be found in vs. 16, where the Greek tries to render the infinitive absolute with a finite verb and a circumstantial (adverbial) participle of the same verb” (ibid.). Compare Thackeray, 47-48.

³Ibid., 43. Andrews adds: “Unlike BHS, neither Rahlfs’s edition nor the Göttingen text makes any attempt to arrange the passage in lines. It may be noted that other parts of Genesis *are* set out in poetic form in these Greek editions: 4.23-24; 9.25-27; 27.27-29, 39-40; 49.1-27” (ibid., ὕμ. 123).

The passage continues in Gen 3:15: “καὶ ἔχθραν θήσω ἀνὰ μέσον σου καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τῆς γυναικὸς καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σπέρματός σου καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς· αὐτός σου τηρήσει κεφαλὴν, καὶ σὺ τηρήσεις αὐτοῦ πτέρναν” (LXX Gen 3:15).

This has been translated: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed, he shall watch against thy head, and thou shalt watch against his heel” (KJV).

The “beasts of the field” (חַיָּוָה הַשָּׂדֶה) in Gen 3:14 is translated in LXX as τῶν θηρίων τῆς γῆς, that is, “beasts of the earth.” חַיָּוָה הַשָּׂדֶה appears four times in the book of Genesis and thirty-one times in the OT. This phrase is translated very literally by the LXX twenty-seven times as τῶν θηρίων τοῦ ἀγροῦ.¹

An interesting pattern emerges in the translations of the phrase חַיָּוָה הַשָּׂדֶה in the four times that it appears in Genesis. In its appearance in the creation narrative (Gen 2:19, 20), this phrase is translated as ἀγροῦ “field,” but rendered as γῆς “earth” twice (Gen 3:1, 14) in connection with the serpent. The translator might have assumed that the “earth” as opposed to “field” was more related to the serpent’s sphere of life.²

¹Ibid., 43. He mentions the four exceptions as: Gen 3:1, 14; Exod 23:29, and Lev 26:22 (ibid., n. 126).

²Ibid., 44. γῆς is used to translate חַיָּוָה הַשָּׂדֶה in 3:14, 19; חַיָּוָה הַשָּׂדֶה in 3:17, 19; and חַיָּוָה הַשָּׂדֶה in 3:14. “Perhaps the sheer number of times γῆ is employed (six times) in six verses is an indication that its use serves some stylistic purpose in making the text sound more solemn” (ibid.).

According to Johann Cook, γῆ is used in Genesis to translate 296 times (95%) out of the 311 uses of חַיָּוָה הַשָּׂדֶה; 43 times (98%) out of the 44 uses of חַיָּוָה הַשָּׂדֶה; 5 times (55%) out of the 9 uses of חַיָּוָה הַשָּׂדֶה; and 4 times out of the 48 uses of חַיָּוָה הַשָּׂדֶה (“The Exegesis of the Greek Genesis,” *Volume for the 6th Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Jerusalem, 1986*, ed. Claude E. Cox, *Septuagint and Cognate Studies Series*, 23 [Atlanta: Scholars, 1987], 91-125). See also Andrews, 44, n. 127.

In Gen 3:14 where the MT reads: “upon your abdomen (belly) shall you go,” $\text{עַל־בֶּטֶן וְעַל־בָּרֶךְ}$, the LXX translates “upon *your breast and* your abdomen (belly) shall you go,” ἐπὶ τῷ στήθει σου καὶ τῇ κοιλίᾳ πορεύσῃ. This is the “first significant departure” from the Hebrew text and is the only recorded use of the expression that combines “breast and abdomen.”¹

The LXX’s addition of the “breast” seems to make the curse on the serpent “more dramatic,”² to clear up “an inherent vagueness in the text,”³ and to “explicate the underside of the snake”⁴ showing that the “whole length of the snake is involved.”⁵ This further “intensifies the sense of humiliation and degradation which is the effect of God’s judgment on the serpent (i.e., it can now scarcely raise its head from the ground), and may

¹Andrews, 44. Andrews remarks: “It is unlikely that the translator thought that the Hebrew required two words in order to make the text’s meaning plain. In Leviticus 11.42, the only other occurrence of בֶּטֶן , in a passage prohibiting the eating of creatures which crawl on the ground, the Septuagint translates it with the one term κοιλία. Other instances of στήθος both within and outside the Pentateuch demonstrate that it refers to the breast, and not the abdomen. On the assumption, then, that κοιλία and בֶּטֶן are lexical equivalents, it is probable that στήθος was the added term” (ibid.).

Exod 28:29-30; Prov 6:10; 24:48; and Dan 2:32 are examples showing that στήθος is used exclusively for “breast,” separately from “abdomen.” Andrews continues: “It ought to be noted, however, that while στήθος is not missing in any manuscript or translation, the phrase καὶ τῇ κοιλίᾳ is omitted in an Ethiopic translation. . . . This means that the Ethiopic supports the MT ‘in having only one phrase.’ Surprisingly, Jerome was of the opinion that ‘and abdomen’ was the term added by the Greek translator” (ibid., 44, n. 129). See “*ventrum LXX interpretes addiderunt*” (*Hebraicae Quaestiones in Libro Geneseos* at 3.14).

²Andrews, 44.

³Ibid., 44-45.

⁴John W. Wevers, “An Apologia for Septuagint Studies,” *Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 18 (1985): 33.

⁵Ibid.

reflect a tradition about the serpent’s archetypal form.”¹

Another important implication of LXX wording of this text is that the translator was “less interested in the story as an etiology about why serpents crawl than he is interested in the sentence as a divine response”² to Satan’s deception. The rendering of the serpent’s food “dust” (אֲפֹרֶת) with “earth” (γῆ), a more general term, instead of χούς, a more specific term, seems to indicate the translator’s “lack of interest in the story’s etiological potential.”³

The LXX uses the phrase “to consume (or devour) the earth” metaphorically for destruction in all instances beyond Gen 3:14. The subject can be fire (Deut 32:22), a people (tribe of Dan in Jer 8:16), or a hostile foreign power (the 4th or last beast in Dan 7:23).⁴

The LXX renders the obscure Hebrew verb אָרַשׁ, used twice in Gen 3:15, as derived both times from the root תָּרַעַ.⁵ The other certain occurrence of אָרַשׁ, in Job 9:17, is translated with ἐκτριβω, “to rub, wear out.” The third occurrence in Ps 139:11

¹Andrews, 45. It might be that the translators felt that the serpent used to stand erect before this curse, having arms and legs, which were amputated at that time. He cites a personal indication of R. P. Gordon that the translator possibly made “a pun on the phrase ‘beast of the אָרַשׁ since the Hebrew for ‘breast’ is אָרַשׁ. He, however, rejected this suggestion because אָרַשׁ “is used almost exclusively of women, and the LXX reserves μαστός for this term (cf. Gen 49:25)” (ibid., n. 131).

²Ibid., 45.

³Ibid. Aquila used χούς for this text. The LXX of Mic 7:17 also refers to the serpent food, but uses χούς instead of γῆ used in Gen 3:14: “They will lick dust (χούν) like a serpent.”

⁴Ibid. See ibid., n. 133.

⁵Aquila’s Greek translation of Gen 3:15 uses προστριβω, “to rub against”; while Ephiphanius has φυλάσσω and Symmachus uses θλίβω.

is uncertain.¹

The LXX's choice of *τηρέω* is not easy to explain. Its meaning varies from "to watch" (cf. Prov 23:26; Eccl 11:4; Jer 20:20; Dan 6:12; 2 Macc 14:29; Jdt 12:16); "to guard or protect" (cf. 2 Esdr 8:29; Prov 4:23; 1 Macc 4:61); "obeying" (cf. 1 Kgs 15:11; Tob 14:3; Prov 3:1, 21); "to watch in order to destroy,"² to "to lie in wait."³

Stephen Andrews suggested three possibilities for the LXX's choice of *τηρέω* in Gen 3:15.⁴ First, the translator might have been aware of another meaning for *רָשָׁע* or one of its cognates.⁵ Second, a translator who did not know the meaning of *רָשָׁע* may have conjectured one.⁶ Lastly, he might have mistaken *רָשָׁע* for *רָשָׁע* himself or simply

¹The use of the verb *רָשָׁע* to describe the action of the serpent in Gen 3:15 is difficult to define, seeing that the usual word for serpent's ability to bite is *רָשָׁע* "to bite." Whenever this verb occurs in the literal sense, it always has a snake or serpent as its subject. See Milton C. Fisher, "רָשָׁע," *TWOT* (1980), 2:604. An example is Num 21:6, 8. The LXX translates it as *δάκνω*.

²Monique Alexandre, *Le Commencement du Livre Genèse I-V: La version grecque de la Septante et sa réception*, Christianisme Antique, vol. 3 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1988), 316.

³Marguerite Harl, *La Bible d'Alexandrie: La Genèse* (Paris: Édition du Cerf., 1986), 108. Andrews posits: "Because of the serpent's characteristic as a deceiver (Genesis 3.13), it seems most likely that 'lying in wait' is the sense of *τηρέω* employed here" (Andrews, 50).

⁴Andrews, 50-51.

⁵Alison Salvesen cites the example of its likely relation to the Arabic *šaffa*, 10th form, meaning "look through" (*Symmachus in the Pentateuch*, Journal of Semitic Studies Monographs, 15 [Manchester, England: The Victoria University of Manchester, 1991], 14).

⁶Such translation pattern is discussed in Emmanuel Tov, "Did the Septuagint Translators Always Understand Their Hebrew Text?" in *De Septuaginta: Studies in Honour of John William Wevers on His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. Albert Pietersma and Claude Cox (Mississauga, Ontario: Benben, 1984), 53-70; and idem, "The Septuagint," 170-171. Wevers suggests that "the translator relies on his knowledge of snakes and people's relation to them," in order to find a verb for both actions, that is, *τηρέω*, meaning "to watch carefully" ("Apologia," 33). Alexandre, on his part, is convinced that the translator was avoiding taking a strong position on this difficult verse by using a single general word that fits the actions of both the serpent and the woman's seed (316).

followed the Targumic tradition that relates שׁוּר to שׁוּר, rendering it as נטר in Aramaic.¹

Ronald Hendel takes the position that שׁוּר from the MT of Gen 3:15 becomes τηρησει in LXX, thus reflecting the Hebrew שׁוּר. This is a graphic confusion of שׁוּר. So also, MT has שׁוּרָאָה whereas the LXX has τηρήσεις which comes from the Hebrew שׁוּרָאָה. This is another graphic confusion of שׁוּר.²

Andrews rightly concludes from the deviation of the LXX from the Hebrew word order in the last part of Gen 3:15:

While no differentiation of meaning can be discerned from the employment of the one word, τηρέω, there is evidence in the deviation from the Hebrew word order to suggest that the translator did not regard the interaction between the serpent and humans equally. For it might have been expected that the arrangement of words αὐτός σου τηρήσει to have been different, on the pattern of the MT (שׁוּרָאָה אִתְּךָ) and in agreement with the pronoun-verb-pronoun order later on in the sentence (σὺ τηρήσεις αὐτόν). This inversion, though subtle, secures a heightened contrast between the kinds of assault that the serpent will endure and inflict. The emphasis falls on the woman's offspring "watching for" the serpent, and this may reflect a certain confidence that the translator has about the serpent's defeat, and about the ability of humans to survive its attack.³

Targum Onqelos to Genesis (TO)

Generally, TO is regarded as a unique literal translation of the Hebrew into

¹Further discussions on the Targums Onkelos, Pseudo-Jonathan, and Neofiti are below. The root word נטר means "observe." Meanwhile, it is interesting to observe, along with Andrews, the possibility of a wordplay based on the assonance between נטר and τηρ- (Andrews, 51, n. 153).

²Ronald S. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1-11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 126-127.

³Andrews, 51. He refers to such a pattern in an 11th century minuscule (*ibid.*, n. 154). Wevers remarks on the LXX translators' use of pronominal modifiers ("Apologia," 32).

Aramaic and it is also Palestinian in origin.¹ Gen 3:15 is “translated carefully, so it seems likely that the translator did not regard this passage as poetry.”² It is translated as follows:³

vs. 14 ואמר יי אלהים לחייוא ארי עבדת דא ליט את מכל בעורא ומכל חית ברא על מעך תיזיל ועפרא תיכול כל יומי חיד:

vs. 15 ודכבו אשוי בינך ובין אחתא ובין בנך ובין בנהא הוא יהא דכיר מה דעבדת ליה מלקדמין ראת תהי נטר ליה לסופא:

Below is the English translation given by Moses Aberbach and Bernard Grossfeld, along with my suggested corrections and clarifications (which harmonize with the MT) in italics:⁴

(Vs. 14) And the Lord God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you beyond all the cattle and beyond all the wild beasts; on your belly you shall crawl, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. (Vs. 15) And I will put enmity

¹It is viewed as an attempt to translate the scriptures into Aramaic authoritatively. John Bowker dates this a part of the trend in “Judaism from the second century A.D. onward to provide . . . a safeguard against Christian interpretations of Scripture based on LXX” (*The Targums and Rabbinic Literature: An Introduction to Jewish Interpretations of Scripture* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969], 24-25).

Philip Alexander affirms that the Aramaic of Targum Onqelos is closely related to that of *Genesis Apocryphon*, containing some, though comparatively limited, interpretative elements (“Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures,” in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading, and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. M. J. Mulder, *Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, 2 (Van Gorcum: Assen/Maastricht, 1988), 242). See also Géza Vermès, “Haggadah in the Onkelos Targum,” in *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 127-138.

²Andrews, 65, n. 196. The translator also paraphrases Gen 49 though it is clearly poetic in the MT.

³Moses Aberbach and Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text* (New York: Ktav, 1982), 37.

⁴*Ibid.*, 36.

between you [*singular*] and the woman, and between your [*singular*] children and her children, [+ *emphatic he*], they [*he*] will remember what you did to them [*him*] in ancient times, and you will preserve (your hatred) for them to the end (of time).

TO takes MT's "beast of the field" in vs. 14 to mean "undomesticated animals living outside the area of human habitation."¹ However, in vs. 15, a couple of alterations are made to the MT. For example, TO uses defective plural forms of בְּנֵי אָדָם for בְּנֵי אָדָם, which may connote "mankind," though retaining the singular masculine pronouns of the MT.²

The next alteration is the Hebrew verb שָׁחַח used twice in vs. 15. TO renders it as דָּבַר, meaning "to mention" or "to remember" in the first instance, and as נָטַר, meaning "to guard, watch, keep, observe" in the second occurrence. The second verb נָטַר can also mean "to keep in memory."³ This shows an overlap between the two verbs used by TO, דָּבַר and נָטַר, thereby relating שָׁחַח to שָׁחַח.⁴

Aberbach and Grossfeld had suggested an association between שָׁחַח and שָׁחַח ("to hiss"). Hissing is "an action characteristic of the serpent when aroused to anger and hate

¹Ibid., 31, n. 19.

²Lewis, "The Woman's Seed," 301. Bernard Grossfeld discovered that TO usually uses בְּנֵי אָדָם, rendered "children, offspring, or descendants," whenever the Hebrew term אָדָם "refers to humans exclusively, or to humans and animals"; while it retains אָדָם "where the Hebrew has reference to plant life" (47). Andrews accepts this as an indication of the "translator's tendency to substitute more concrete and realistic terms for more abstract and figurative expressions" (Andrews, 65). Such is also evidenced in vs. 16.

³Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990), 348. It is sometimes used to replace the word שָׁחַח. Cf. TO for Gen 27:41; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Gen 37:4, 5, 8; and the gloss to Targum Neofiti, Gen 27:41.

⁴This shows a likely overlap of the LXX tradition with the TO. The TO translator might have had a Greek source before him. Striking enough is the assonance mentioned earlier, between נָטַר and τῆρ-.

and about to strike.”¹ Hissing and hatred are associated closely in some Midrashic passages like Genesis Rabba XVI, 4, which “alludes to Media whose people Haman inflamed (with hate); (alternative version: whose eyes Haman inflamed [with hate] like a serpent.).”² Also, Esther Rabba Proem 5 “alludes to Haman who hissed at the people (with hate) like a serpent.”³

Grossfeld also postulated that **רָחַץ** revolves around **רָחַץ** (“long for”). Hence, the TO translator deduced “the somewhat related roots of ‘to remember’ and ‘to guard/sustain (in one’s heart).”⁴

The MT’s **רִאשִׁית** (head) is taken by TO “in the abstract sense of ‘beginning,’ ‘in antiquity,’ ‘in ancient times.’ Likewise, MT **עַקְבֵּי** (heel) is understood by TO, in contrast to **רִאשִׁית** (beginning) as ‘end,’ i.e., until the end of time.”⁵ This takes cognizance of a time line stretching from creation to the Messianic era and the eschatological end of the world.⁶

Conclusively, TO treats the passage figuratively, and seems to be influenced by some tradition of interpretation. The literal text is seen in conflict with this tradition in the points of alteration discussed above. This will be seen in the other Targums below.

¹Aberbach and Grossfeld, 36.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 37.

⁴Grossfeld, 47, n. 9.

⁵Ibid.

⁶See Aberbach and Grossfeld, 37.

Palestinian Targums

The extant Palestinian Targums which will be considered include Targum Neofiti 1, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (PJ), and Fragmentary Targum. Though the Targum Onqelos is also related to Palestinian as mentioned above, these contain a fuller treatment of Gen 3:14-15, almost twice as long as both the MT and TO. They tend to reflect more homiletical and judiciary expansions and are more wordy and interpretative.

I will now proceed to briefly examine each of the Palestinian Targums in order to see the peculiarity of each and how each contributes to our understanding of Gen 3:14-15.

Targum Neofiti 1 (TN1)

This is translated into Aramaic as follows:¹

Vs.14 ואמר ייי אלהים לחויה ארום עבדת דא ליט תהוה
 חויה מן כל בעידא ומן כל חיותא דעל אפי ברה
 על מעך תהוי שחף ועפר יהוי מוונך כל יומי חייד:
 Vs.15 ובעל דבבו אשוי בינד ובין אתתה ובין בניך ובין
 בנה ויהוי כד יהוון בניה נשרין אורייתא ועבדין
 פקודייה יהוון מתכוונין לך ומחיינן יתך לראשך וקטלין
 יתך וכד יהוון שבקין פקודי דאורייתא תהוי מתכוין
 ונכת יתיה בעקבה וממרע יתיה ברם לבריה יהוי אסו
 ולך חויה לא יהוי אסו דעתידין אינון מעבד שפיותיה
 בעוקבה ביומא דמלכא משיחא:

¹See Alejandro Díez Macho, ed., *Neophyti 1: Targum Palestinense ms. de la Biblioteca Vaticadicion principe, introduccion y version castellana* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1979).

This is translated into English as follows:¹

(Vs. 14) And the Lord God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, you shall be cursed, O serpent, above all the cattle and above all the beasts that are on the face of the field. Upon your belly you shall crawl, and dust shall be your food all the days of your life. (Vs. 15) And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your sons and her sons. And it shall come to pass that when her sons keep the Law and do the precept they shall aim at you and smite you on the head and kill you. And when they forsake the precepts of the Law you shall aim at and bite him in the heel and wound him. For her sons, however, there shall be a remedy, and for you, serpent, there shall be no remedy; for they are to make cure for the heel in the days of the King Messiah.

TN 1 is more literal than all the other Palestinian Targums. “Following a pattern that recurs in many other verses, the first half of this verse is translated quite literally (*bnh* may be singular or plural), but, the last six words have generated many lines of midrashic text.”²

Targum Neofiti 1 has several unique characteristics. First and foremost, the use of the vocative “O serpent” in vs. 14, and “serpent” in vs. 15 “gives more force to the oral presentation of the targum.”³ In a bid to make the Hebrew text clearer, it adds to the Hebrew wordings: “beasts of the field” (חַיֵּי הַשָּׂדֶה), making it “the beasts that are on

¹Martin McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, *Analecta Biblica* 27a (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978), 218-219.

²B. Barry Levy, *Targum Neophyti 1: A Textual Study*, vol. 1, *Introduction, Genesis, Exodus* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 96. Levy put the Targum Neofiti side-by-side with the MT and demonstrated that: “Notwithstanding the departure from the literal translation in the second half of the verse, there are clear references in the midrashic passage to the original Hebrew” (*ibid.*, 97). He admits: “Since the curse applies to the descendants of the women, not just to her, the midrash in effect updates the text to apply to the listeners as current doctrine” (*ibid.*, 96).

³*Ibid.*, 95. See also the Fragmentary Targum (V) for Gen 3:15. A. Shinan calls this a homiletic feature preserved from the Targum’s oral stage, designed to add vigor to the hearing of the listening audience (“Echoes from Ancient Synagogues: Vocatives and ‘Emendations’ in the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch,” *JQR* 91 [1991]: 357). Andrews suggests that this “may also reflect the phraseology of a judicial pronouncement” (Andrews, 68).

the face of the field” (חיותא דעל אפי ברה).

“him” in vs. 15 is certainly third-person singular. “The Targumist may be here influenced by the underlying Hebrew text, or he may have taken ‘sons’ as a collectivity.”¹ This abrupt and intentional shift to the third-person singular should also be taken as a messianic undertone as it is with the Targum Onqelos.²

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (PJ)

Ernest Clarke and others presented the Aramaic of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan as:³

Vs. 14 ואייתי ייי אלקים תלתיהון לדינא ואמר לחייוא ארום
 עבדת דא ליט את מכל בעירא ומכל חיות ברא על מעך
 תהי מטייל וריגלך יתקצצון ומשכך תחי משלח חדא לשב
 שנין ואיריסא דמותא בפמך ועפרא תיכול כל יומי חיך
 Vs. 15 ודבבו אישוי בינך ובין איתתא בין זרעית בנך ובין
 זרעית בנהא ויהי כד יהוון בנהא דאיתתא נטרין מצוותא
 דאורייתא יהוון מכוונין ומחייין יתך על רישך וכד
 שבקין מצוותא דאורייתא תהוי מתכווין ונכית יתהון

¹McNamara, *New Testament and the Palestinian Targum*, 219. Some describe this shift as due to scribal error, or that it is a collective singular. “Son” also becomes “they” later on in this verse. Mignel Pérez Fernández, *Tradiciones mesiánicas en el Targum Palestinense: Estudios exegeticos*, Institución San Jerónimo, 12 (Valencia, Spain: Artes Gráficas Soler, 1981), 43. Levey declares that “Neophyti I has a confusion of person, reading ‘you will aim and wound him,’ etc.” (*The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation*, 148).

²I see a link with the LXX and TO, in support of the MT, in seeing a narrowing from the plural to the singular, signifying a messianic understanding. Contra McNamara, who argues that “The Messianic interpretation of the Palestinian Targum is connected with עקב, ‘the heel,’ not with the ‘the seed.’ עקב is first rendered literally and then taken in its transferred sense of ‘final period, end of the days’ which is considered to be Messianic times” (*New Testament and the Palestinian Targum*, 219-220). He further combats that “there can be no question of taking it to refer to the Messiah, seeing that the paraphrase informs us that this ‘seed,’ i.e., the son or sons of the woman, might not observe the precept of the Law. Such would be inconceivable for the Messiah” (*ibid.*, 220).

³Ernest G. Clarke et al., *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch: Text and Concordance* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1984), 4.

בעיקביהון ברם להון יהי אסו ולך לא יהי אסו ועתידין
 הינון למיעבד שפיותא בעיקבא ביומי מלכא משיחא

This is translated into English by Bowker as follows:¹

(Vs. 14) And the Lord God brought the three of them to judgment, and he said unto the serpent, 'Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and your feet will be cut off, and your skin you will cast off once in every seven years, and the poison of death will be in your mouth, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

(Vs. 15) And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between the seed of your offspring and the seed of her offspring; and it shall be that when the offspring of the woman keep the commandments of the Law, they will aim right (at you) and they will smite you on the head; but when they abandon the commandments of the Law, you will aim right (at them), and you will wound them in the heel. However, for them there will be a remedy, but for you there will be none, and in the future they will make peace with the heel in the days of the king, Messiah.

Among the Palestinian Targums, PJ is the richest with interpretative elements, especially concerning Gen 3:14. The verse seems to be a general introduction for everything that follows from vss. 14-19. Here it announces that "the Lord God brought the three of them to judgment" (וואייתו יי אלקים תלתיהון לדינא). It seems to me that this supports the structural consideration that 3:14-19 is unified, and that the other judgments in vss. 16-19 are subsets of and subordinate to the judgment of the serpent in vss. 14-15.²

¹Bowker, 122.

²See more details below in the section on literary and structural analysis of Gen 3:14-19. Andrews observed that "the passage begins and ends with a reference to 'judgment' (דינא, repeated in vs. 19). This inclusio would seem to set the context of the passage, and perhaps highlights the importance of 'judgment' for the translator" (Andrews, 68).

PJ's elaboration of the serpent's humiliating punishment is etiological.¹ PJ is definite regarding the identity of the serpent, Samael, the adversary of God and man.²

PJ uses the elaboration, "seed of the sons/offspring," instead of "your seed" or "her seed." Andrews calls this "cumbersome," and an "attempt at both interpretation (emanating from an attempt to be more concrete) and fidelity to the Hebrew text."³

Fragmentary Targums

There are two manuscripts, namely the Fragmentary Targum (V) and the Paris Text, each lacking vs. 14. Frag. Tg. (V) contains only vss. 15 and 18 within the unit of Gen 3:14-19. Michael Klein renders the translation of vs. 15 from it as follows:⁴

ובעיל דבבו אישוי בין חיויא ובין אינתתא ובין זרעיית בנדך ובין זרעיית
 ויהא בנה כד יהוון בנהא דאיתתא לעיין באוריתא ונטרין פיקודיא יהוון
 מתכוונין ומחייין יתך ברישך וקטלין יתך וכד ימנעון גרמיהונן בניה

¹PJ is alone in this specific elaboration except in some rabbinic texts. For example, *Gen. R.* xx. 5 is said to have stated that "Ministering angels descended and cut off its hands and feet." Further on in the same passage, *Gen. R.* says that God had created the serpent to walk upright like a man. Rabbi Eliezer also said: ". . . (God) decreed that it (the Serpent) should cast its skin and suffer pain once in seven years . . . and the gall of asps, and death is in its (the serpent's) mouth" (*Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer [PRE] 14: 99*). Josephus agrees with much of these also (*Jewish Antiquities* i.50).

Bowker posits that this elaboration "was based on observation of the present appearance of snakes, interpreted in terms of punishment" (127). This trend of elaborating on the serpent's condition is also seen in PJ *Exod* 7:9, where the translator relates that the serpent was made naked before "all creation."

²See Bowker, 125-126; León Domingo Muñoz, *Dios-Palabra: Memrá en los Targumim del Pentateuco* (Granada: Editorial Imprenta Santa Rita, 1974), 125-135; and Michael J. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible, vol. 1B (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992).

³Andrews, 70. This is a similar feature in the Paris text of the *Fragment Targum* of *Gen* 3:15.

⁴Michael L. Klein, ed., *The Fragment Targums of the Pentateuch: According to Their Extant Sources*, *Analecta Biblica*, 76 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 1:46.

דאיתתא דלא לעיין באוריתא ודלא למטור פיקודיא תהוי מתכין ונכית
 יתהון בעוקביהון וממרע יתהון ברמ לבניא דאינתתא יהוי אסו ולך לא
 אסו ברמ עתידין אינון יהוי איליין [לאיליין] מעבד שופייתא בסוף
 עקב יומיא ביומוי דמלכא משיחא :

Klein's English translation of the Fragmentary Targum of Gen 3:15 follows:¹

And I will put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between the offspring of your children and the offspring of her children; and it will come to be that when the woman's children toil in the torah and keep the commandments they will take aim and strike you on your head and kill you; and when the woman's children refrain from toiling in the Torah and from keeping the commandments you will take aim and bite them on their heels and afflict them; however, there will be a remedy for the children of the woman, whereas for you there will not be any remedy; for indeed they shall appease one (another) in the final end of days, in the days of the King Messiah.

Frag. Tg. (V) also evidences a vocative, "O serpent," showing the force in its oral presentation which is lacking in the Paris text even though their translation is similar.

Moreover, the Paris text, Frag. Tg. (P), begins vs. 15 with a sentence not found in the Frag. Tg. (V): "And enmity: And I will put enmity between the serpent and between the woman, and between the seed of your sons and between the seed of her sons."²

This Paris text "introduces a fundamental stylistic awkwardness by starting with a third-person address ('the serpent' instead of 'you') and then switching to the second-person. It is as though the Lord God begins by addressing a third party."³

The Fragmentary Targums state clearly that the seed of the woman, the Law-

¹Ibid., 2:7. See also Levey, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation*, 2.

²See Andrews, 62-63.

³Ibid., 70. Andrews probes whether the third party is the reader or the divine assembly.

obeying community, “shall make peace with one another in the end.”

General Similarities in the Palestinian Targums

While all of the three Palestinian Targums give similar witnesses to Gen 3:15, the Fragmentary Targums omit vs. 14. This may indicate the “strength and importance of Gen 3:15 in ancient Jewish exegesis.”¹ These Targums emphasize the serpent’s defeat through the keeping of the Law and all refer to the coming messianic age, thus pointing to a common underlying tradition.²

The idea of obedience to the Law comes from the Targums’ understanding of the Hebrew word שָׁמַר as נָטַר (“to guard” or “keep”). “The association of ‘keeping’ with ‘cursing’ in a context describing punishment and retribution”³ must naturally have evoked the subject of Torah observance in the minds of the Targum translators since such a link is paramount in the Scriptural blessing and cursing passages like Deut 28:1-68; 30:15-20.⁴

These Targums treated Gen 3:14-15 as an “exhortation for national obedience to Torah.”⁵ The subject of root נָטַר (which the Targums use to replace the Hebrew שָׁמַר) is “a community obedient to Torah”⁶ who will prosper thereby. A similar theme of

¹Ibid., 69.

²Ibid., 70, n. 216, enumerates their lack of textual interdependence and points out their stylistic differences in their attempt to reflect and smoothen the Hebrew text.

³Ibid., 71.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 73.

⁶Ibid., 71, n. 219.

prospering because of their faithfulness to the Torah continually resurfaces in the Targum, thus showing the disposition of their translators.¹

Generally, these Targums translate the woman's offspring in a collective sense with the use of plural in Gen 3:15. They then predict a clear victory over the serpent for the woman's offspring. Extending the meaning of **שָׁמַר** to cover "to keep, smite, and peace," the translators visualized eventual peace among the people obedient to the Law, following the defeat of the serpent.² This is expected to happen "in the days of the King Messiah."

This messianic understanding results from extending the meaning to the Hebrew **עָקַב**; Aramaic **עַקִּיב**, to mean "the end of the age."³ Furthermore, the translators may recall the rabbinic messianic treatment of "footsteps of the anointed" **מְשִׁיחָא** in Ps 89:52.⁴ The people might have thought that "national obedience to Torah would itself

¹See Roger Le Déaut, *Targum du Pentateuque: Traduction des deux Recensions palestiniennes complètes avec Introduction, Parallèles, Notes et Index*, in collaboration with Jacques Robert, 3 vols., Sources chrétiennes, 245 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978), 1:94-95. Le Déaut cites PJ Gen 25:23; Tg. Neof. (M) Gen 27:22; TO, PJ, Tgs Neof., Gen 30:18; PJ Num 24:14; Tg. Neof. Deut 33:29.

²Andrews, 72. All the Palestinian Targums mention the eventual peace. "Peace" was an addition to the text which was derived from a play on words. Bowker cites: "The Hebrew text has *yeshupheka* and *teshuphenu* (bruise); Ps. Jon. has *shephiyutha* ('peace')" (127-128).

³Rüger denies that this verse has anything to do with the Christological interpretation which points to Christ or Mary. He defends, rather, that "in the Palestinian Targums the mention of 'King Messiah' merely serves to specify the date on which 'the sons of the woman . . . are going to make peace (among each other)'" (109). Andrews accepts that "this may reflect a naive idea of the ancient view of the Messiah and his relationship to the community of Israel," noting that Targum Neofiti of Gen 49:10-12 portrays King Messiah as a warrior (Andrews, 73, n. 225).

⁴Andrews, 73. See *m. Sotah*. McNamara finds no Messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15 in Rabbinic sources: "A midrash similar to the PT Gn3:15 is referred to in the Zohar but has no reference to the Messiah. . . . The references to Gen 3:15 found in Jubilees, 1 Enoch, Josephus, and Philo given by J. Michl, pp. 381-8, have no parallel to the PT on the verse. Neither do the notes of L. Ginzberg to the midrash offer a true parallel" (*New Testament and the Palestinian Targum*, 220). See also Kasher, 132, n.

usher in the messianic age (or conversely, that the messianic age would bring about perfect fidelity to Torah).”¹ Since Gen 3:15 promises healing as a result of keeping the Torah, this was probably related to the Messiah who “brings about the fulfilment of the Torah.”²

The Syriac Peshitta

It is generally believed by scholars that ancient Jewish tradition found its way, at one point or the other, into the Syriac Peshitta.³ Striking parallels have also been observed between the Peshitta and the LXX.⁴ However, the Peshitta text of Gen 3:14-15 appears to be a literal rendering of the MT:⁵

53.

McNamara continues: “The nearest parallel I have been able to find to the PT paraphrase is a saying of R. Levi (PA 3, c. 320) according to which ‘in the future world all will be healed except the serpent and the Gibeonite’ (*Gen. R.* 20 to 3,15). This PT paraphrase is, then, very probably a very old one and, considered in itself, has every chance of being pre-Christian” (*New Testament and the Palestinian Targum*, 220-221).

¹Andrews, 73.

²Ibid. Pérez Fernández makes a connection between the Messiah and healing (68-73) and presents an elaborate discussion on the Messiah and the Torah (ibid., 73-84). Rabbi Levi said: “In the Messianic age all will be healed save the serpent and the Gibeonite” (*Genesis Rabbah* 20:5).

³See Peter B. Dirksen, “The Old Testament Peshitta,” in *Mikra*, ed. Martin J. Mulder, CRINT, II/1 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 259-265. Andrews give details of relevant sources on the various opinions about the Peshitta’s origin and development (Andrews, 83-84). Bruce K. Waltke defines the term *Peshitta* as “‘the simple [translation],’ and it refers to the Syriac Bible (Syr)” (“Old Testament Textual Criticism,” in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation: A Complete Library of Tools and Resources*, ed. David S. Dockerey et al. [Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994], 167).

⁴J. Hänel, *Die außermasorethischen Übereinstimmungen zwischen der Septuaginta und der Peschittha in der Genesis*, BZAW, 20 (Gießen, n.p., 1911).

⁵Andrews, 85. See Martin J. Mulder, “The Use of the Peshitta in Textual Criticism,” in *La Septuaginta en la Investigacion Contemporanea* (V Congreso de la IOSCS), ed. N. Fernández Marcos (Madrid, Spain: Instituto “Arias Montano” CSIC, 1985), 52.

Andrews comments: “The Peshitta shares a targum-like penchant for clearing up ambiguity in the Hebrew text. In the following places it is alone among the Versions in the additions (indicated by the

(Vs. 14) And the Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the cattle and above all the beasts of the field. And upon your belly shall you go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life.

(Vs. 15) And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall trample your head, and you shall strike his heel.”

Unlike the LXX, but very much like the Palestinian Targums, the Peshitta uses two verbs to translate the senses of the Hebrew word **רָמַס**. The first verb is *dwš* “trample,” while the second is *mhy* “strike.”¹

Another vivid case of narrowing is reflected in the Peshitta as the term “seed” is followed by the singular pronoun “He.” This supports a messianic reading, following the MT, LXX, Targum Onqelos, and the Targum Neofiti 1.²

Latin Versions

Latin translations of the Bible, based on the LXX, started in the early period, as Tertullian is believed to have used one in the later half of the 2nd century AD.³ The text in

italics): ‘and *the serpent* said to the woman’ (Gen 3:1); ‘where are you, *Adam?*’ (Gen 3:9); ‘and *the Lord* said’ (Gen 3:11). This striving for clarity is a feature of most ancient translations” (Andrews, 86, n. 277).

¹Andrews wonders if Peshitta is here following the Targum tradition to imply the serpent’s defeat (Andrews, 86). Ephraem sees a natural snake in the text which has become Satan’s tools (*Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodum Commentarii*, ed. and trans. R. M. Tonneau, Corpus scripturum Christianorum Orientalium, 152, 153, Scriptorum Syri, vols. 71, 72 [Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1955], 32-34, 42-44). Cf. Budge, 63-68; and Levene, 77.

²Ephraem makes a Christological comment on the verse: “The blessed Infant crushed the head of the serpent that bruised [Eve]” (*De Nativitate* 13.2; 22.31.3; 26.8.5-8; *De Virginitate* 37.1.5-7). See further, Tryggve Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1-11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian: With Particular Reference to the Influence of Jewish Exegetical Tradition*, Old Testament Series 11 (Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1978).

³Joseph Ziegler, *Antike und moderne lateinsche Psalmenübersetzungen* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1960), 5, called the Old Latin “the Septuagint in Latin clothing.”

discussion are the Old Latin and the Vulgate, both of which have been subject to numerous editing over the ages, intended to bring them in line with the Greek text.¹

The Vulgate translation is as follows:²

(Vs. 14): *et ait Dominus Deus ad serpentem quia fecisti hoc maledictus es inter omnia animantia et bestias terrae super pectus tuum gradieris et terram comedes cunctis diebus vitae tuae. (V.15): inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem et semen tuum et semen illius ipsa conteret caput tuum et tu insidiaberis calcaneo eius.*

A translation of the Vulgate, with variations in the Old Latin noted in the text, is as follows:

(Vs. 14) And the Lord God announced (K, E: *said*) to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you among (K, E: *above*) all animals (K, E: *cattle*) and (K adds *above all kinds of*; E adds *above all*) the beasts of (E: *that are upon*) the earth. Upon your breast (K, E add *and belly*) shall you walk (K: *crawl*). And you shall consume (E: *eat*) earth (K: *earth shall be your food in*) all the days of your life.

(Vs. 15) And I will put enmities (K: *enmity*) between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. She (some MSS of K, E: *he*) shall crush (K, E: *tread on*) your head and you shall lie in wait for (K, E: *watch*) his heel.³

The Old Latin manuscripts from the European text type (E) and the North African one uses the masculine intensive pronoun, *ipse*, following the MT, LXX, Targum Onqelos, Targum Neofiti, and the Syriac Peshitta. Jerome seems to have also followed

¹Augustine also complained that there were several non-authoritative texts (*De doctrina christiana*, 2.15.22). The Old Latin distinguishes between a European text type (E) and a North African one (K). The Jerome text on Genesis is called *Hebraicae Quaestiones in Genesim*.

²Bonifatio Fischer, Iohanne Gribomont, H. F. D. Sparks, and W. Thiele, eds., *Biblia Sacra: iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, vol. 1, Genesis-Psalms (Stuttgart, Germany: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1969), 7.

³Andrews, 89.

the Hebrew masculine pronoun by retaining the masculine pronoun as *ipse*.¹

However, some OL manuscripts, like Fischer's edition, and the Vulgate use the feminine singular pronouns *ipsa* and *eius* with the woman as the antecedent. The Patristic authors also introduced the Church, along with Eve, as the antecedent in this context. The clear intention is to make "her seed" refer exclusively to Christ, the son of Mary.²

The Latin translations favor the victory of the woman's offspring and the serpent's woeful defeat. The serpent is victim of a hostile and aggressive act, with his head being "trodden upon" (*calco*, OL mss, K,E) or "crushed" (*contero*, Vulgate). On the other hand, the woman's heel (or that of her seed) will only be "watched" (*observo*, OL, mss K,E) or "ambushed" (*insidior*, Vulgate).³

¹See the discussions above on the LXX, Targums Onqelos, Neofiti I, Peshitta. Jerome's *Hebraicae Quaestiones in Genesim* has Gen 3:15c as "melius habet in hebraeo *ipse conteret caput tuum, et tu conteres eius calcaneum*" (emphasis mine).

²Skinner suggests that the use of the feminine pronoun "may have been prompted by a feeling that the proper antithesis to the serpent is the woman herself" (Skinner, 80). However, it is possible that the Latin translators and their later re-editing and transmissions inched closer and closer to harmonizing the passage with early Christian Christological understanding and teaching.

Andrews suggests that Vulgate translation of Gen 3:15 "coincided with an early, developing Mariology" (Andrews, 91). He further observes: "The earliest expressing an interest in Mary may well be the Gospels themselves. Subsequent speculation on Mary reflecting her exalted status can be found in Ignatius of Antioch (*Ephesians* 19.1), and, in the eastern Syrian tradition, in the *Ascension of Isaiah* 11.2-17; and the *Odes of Solomon* 19.8-9 (from about the middle of the 2nd century AD). Moreover, from at least the time of Hippolytus and Methodius, the woman of Rev 12 (a text which has been associated with Gen 3) has been identified with Mary or the Church" (ibid., n. 297).

³See Andrews, 91-92. These double verbs all witness to a Christological understanding of this passage. Jerome also agrees with this. Lewis puts the Vulgate as follows: "The woman crushes the serpent's head, and he wounds her heel" ("The Woman's Seed," 301). These Latin texts agree with the Targums and Peshitta in using two different verbs to express the promise of the serpent's defeat. However, it is interesting to note along with Andrews that there are Latin manuscripts using "*observabo*" for the first verb, which would bring the text into line with the Septuagint" (Andrews, 92, n. 299).

Literary, Structural, Terminological, and Thematic Analysis

In order to study the passage of Gen 3:15, it is of paramount importance to examine its literary, structural, terminological, and thematic context within the book of Genesis. These provide important links within and outside the book, bringing the illumination needed to elucidate the meaning to our text. In this section, I intend to discuss the literary style, genre, and form of our passage. In order to locate the text of Gen 3:15 within the framework of the book of Genesis, its surrounding chapters, and, in particular, chapter 3 to which it belongs, literary and structural analyses are set forth. Literary, terminological, and thematic links and parallels are noted. Establishing the most probable structures would guide our understanding of Gen 3:15.

The question of unity likewise features prominently. The unity or otherwise of the book of Genesis, in general, and of its early chapters, in particular, affect one's understanding and application of the text of this study. If specific links are established, and common motifs, themes, and structures observed within the early chapters of the book of Genesis especially, then it will be possible to situate Gen 3:15 within its larger structural and thematic context. This enhances the subsequent exegesis of Gen 3:15.

Thus, this section endeavors to establish necessary building blocks for intratextuality and intertextuality that are pursued later on in this study in pursuit of the most probable meaning of Gen 3:15.

Genre, Form, and Style

Gen 3 is of a narrative genre cast in numerous direct speeches and addresses. The

writing is presented in a manner like historical record of literal events.¹ The stories of the origin of the cosmos and humanity are present “genealogically.”² Gen 1-2:4 contains the history/genealogy of heaven and earth, while that of Adam is in Gen 2:5-5:2.

Human past is defined by both “the historical and biological facts and the meanings attached to them.”³ History is summarized vividly in these genealogies. “In them the past is condensed to its biological nucleus, to the transmission of ancestral material. Life is described as survival, and history as the preservation of ‘genes’.”⁴

The creation and the Fall in Gen 1-3 are “literal, straightforward historical”⁵ accounts just like the subsequent Genesis narratives. Other OT and NT writers vividly

¹See Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Literary Form of Genesis 1-11,” in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*, ed. J. B. Payne (Waco, TX: Word, 1970), 48-65. See Richard M. Davidson, “In the Beginning: How to Interpret Genesis 1,” *Dialogue* 6, no. 3 (1994): 9-12.

²See Jacques Doukhan, *The Genesis Creation Story: Its Literary Structure*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series, 5 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978), 167-220. Doukhan states: “Creation belongs to human history as do the episodes of the patriarchs” (ibid., 214). Edmond Jacob emphasizes: “The same priestly author uses the term *toledot* for the creation of the heavens and the earth (Gen 2:4) as well as for the genealogy of the patriarchs” (*Theology of the Old Testament* [New York: Harper & Row, 1958], 139). Bernhard W. Anderson laments: “What often escapes attention is that the creation story . . . is inseparably related to the historical narration which unfolds through the period of the fathers of Israel. . . . Often we detach ‘creation’ from this historical context and consider it as a separate ‘doctrine.’ . . . But this violates the intention of the creation stories. They want to speak to us primarily about history. Accordingly, the greatest weight must be given to the form of these stories: they are ‘historical accounts’ and, as such, are part of the historical narration” (*Creation and Chaos: The Reinterpretation of Mythical Symbolism in the Bible* [New York: Associated, 1967], 33). Cf. Claus Westermann, *Creation*, trans. John Scullion (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 27.

³Ellen van Wolde, *Stories of the Beginning: Genesis 1-11 and Other Creation Stories*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1996), 2.

⁴Ibid., 3. She continues: “Therefore Genesis is primarily gene-sis. This is expressed by the word תולדות, which means fatherings, but also births, begettings, becomings or generatings” (3).

⁵Davidson, “In the Beginning,” 9, 10.

refer to Gen 1-11 as literal and historical.¹ Even notably critical scholars like von Rad honestly submit that “what is said here . . . is intended to hold true entirely and exactly as it stands.”²

Gen 3 has been erroneously treated as only a myth or legend by some scholars.³ Hermann Gunkel surmises his form criticism of the book of Genesis which he simply calls a “collection of legends.”⁴ Discounting any ability of history writing prior to late Judaism, he charged the ancients as lacking any mature objectivity. “They were able to present historical events only in poetic form, in songs and legends.”⁵ These arguments are weakened by the תולדות evidence of historicity of these literal accounts.⁶ Furthermore,

¹The following NT verses support the historicity of Gen 1-11: Matt 19:4-5; 24:37-39; Mark 10:6; Luke 3:38; 17:26-27; Rom 5:12; 1 Cor 6:16; 11:8-9, 12; 15:21-22, 45; 2 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:31; 1 Tim 2:13-14; Heb 11:7; 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5; 3:4-6; Jas 3:9; 1 John 3:12; Jude 11, 14; and Rev 14:7.

²von Rad, *Genesis*, 47.

³See Brevard S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, Studies in Biblical Theology, 27 (London: SCM, 1962), 31-50; Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis, the Biblical Saga and History*, trans. W. H. Carruth (New York: Schocken, 1964); and Soggin, “The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis,” 92. John William Rogerson postulates a form of the myth that must have preceded the canonical version, based on the 2nd century text, *Physiologus*, and its interpretation of Gen 2-3: “An original pair of humans, ignorant of procreation, were kept in this state of ignorance by the gods, who did not wish the humans to be able to procreate independently of them. The secret of sexual knowledge was located in the fruit of a tree, hence the well-known prohibition. One of the gods, the serpent, expressed the secret to the humans. They ate the fruit, and became equal to the gods in the matter of procreation. They were excluded from paradise by the gods” (“Genesis 1-11,” 83). Rogerson was referring to D. U. Rottzoll, “Ihr werdet sein wie Gott indem ihr ‘Gut und Böse’ kennt,” *ZAW* 102 (1990): 385-391; and B. Lang, *Eugen Drewermann: interprète de la Bible* (Paris: Cerf, 1994), 70.

⁴Gunkel, *Genesis*, vii.

⁵Ibid. He further declares: “Characteristically, the Paradise narrative associates a motif as childish as the movement of the serpent on its belly with motifs as serious as those which deal with humans. It is also possible that a faded myth underlies this battle between human and serpent” (ibid., 21).

⁶See page 84 below for further discussion.

Gen 1-3 was written as an intentional polemic against ancient Near Eastern mythology.¹

Alan Richardson wrongly defines “Genesis 3 and all of the primordial history of Genesis as a series of parables . . . a literary genre of largely didactic nature.”² They are “*mythical in form*,”³ though not only myths, rather, “parable.”⁴ He denies the reality of Adam, Eden, the Serpent, and so on, reducing them all to mere “poetical figures,”⁵ belonging to the “poetry of religious symbolism, not to history and geography.”⁶

Richardson’s interpretation is scarcely tenable because the parabolic element is completely missing here. Genesis does not truly resemble the parables contained

¹See Gerhard Hasel, “The Polemic Nature of the Genesis Cosmology,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (1974): 81-102; idem, “The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis 1 in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels,” *AUSS* 10 (1972): 1-20.

²Soggin, 93. See Richardson, *Genesis 1-11*.

³Richardson, 27.

⁴*Ibid.*, 27-28. “A parable is a story which may or may not be literally true; . . . it conveys a meaning beyond itself. It implies that beyond the words of the story which our outward ears have heard there is a meaning which only our spiritual hearing can detect. . . . A parable is not an allegory; it is not a tale in which *every* object mentioned stands for something else; it has just *one* ‘point’, one total implication. It is the meaning of the parable as a whole that is the important matter” (*ibid.*).

⁵*Ibid.*, 29.

⁶*Ibid.* Richardson explains the “truth” contained in his “Genesis parables” as “the truth of religious awareness” which “cannot be stated in philosophical, theological or psychological terms” (*ibid.*, 30). They offer only “personal knowledge about my existence, my dependence upon God, my alienation from him, my need of reconciliation to him” (*ibid.*). I must first understand that I am the Adam being addressed here before I can understand the “deep implications concerning mankind in general” (*ibid.*, 30-31).

Examples of scholars who take Gen 1-3 as Poetry: Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, trans. David G. Preston (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1984), 49-59; and D. F. Payne, *Genesis One Reconsidered* (London: Tyndale, 1964).

elsewhere in the Bible.¹ Furthermore, the fact that poetry, similar to Hebrew poetry, is found in Gen 1-3 does not negate its historicity—similar to “Exodus 15, Daniel 7, and some 40 percent of the Old Testament, which is in poetry. Biblical writers often write in poetry to underscore historicity.”²

Dan Burns misses the point with his position that Gen 2-3 is cast in a dream form.³ This is unacceptable because the passage deals with realities rather than dreams. In like manner, the symbolic view⁴ of Gen 1-3, rather than detract from its historicity, actually affirms it by pointing beyond itself.⁵ Similarly, the theology view of Gen 1-3 falls short because this portion does not present a profound theology of God, humanity, and other issues. Nonetheless, “theology in Scripture is not opposed to history. In fact,

¹Archer rejects Richardson’s view on the basis of the comparison of the Gen 3 material with NT parables: “The characteristic introduction to Jesus’ parables was: ‘the kingdom of God is like-’ . . . But the narratives and genealogical lists of Genesis 1-11 have no such framework. Nowhere is it stated that the beginning of the world or of mankind was *like* anything analogous. A parable is never to be explained in terms of itself; it always involves an analogy drawn from something else” (208).

²Davidson, “In the Beginning,” 10.

³Burns, 5. He took the opening stage as Gen 2:4b-20 until Adam is put to sleep in 2:21. “Events in the center of the narrative (2.22-3.6), which may be read as if it were Adam’s dream, are characterized by numinous qualities, including transformation, juxtaposition, paradox, and disguise” (ibid.). Adam’s eyes opened after eating the fruit (3:7). Eve appeared in his unconscious dream, acting out his prohibitions, becoming a reality when they both wake up.

⁴See Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1967), 54-58; Robert C. Newman and Herman J. Eckelmann, Jr., *Genesis One and the Origin of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1977), 64-65; and P. J. Wiseman, *Creation Revealed in Six Days* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1948), 33-34.

⁵Davidson asserts: “The language of the Garden of Eden and the occupation of Adam and Eve clearly allude to sanctuary imagery and the work of the Levites (see Exodus 25-40). Thus the sanctuary of Eden is a symbol or type of the heavenly sanctuary” (“In the Beginning,” 11). See Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9 (1986): 19-25. A little more attention given to this fact in chapter 2 below.

biblical theology is *rooted* in history.”¹

The style of Gen 1-2:4a manifests solemn, majestic, repetitive, stereotyped, and balanced structures which appeal to the intellect. It has a cosmic perspective. The world is ordered and creation is by word. There is restrained anthropomorphism, because God is presented as transcendent, majestic, and sovereign.²

On the other hand, the style of Gen 2:4b-4:26 is story-like and artistic. It has economy of words. The language is picturesque, flowing, evocative, and poetic. It portrays relationships “rather than the tabulation of events or commands.”³ There is a dramatic use of dialogue here and it appeals to the imagination. Moreover, man is the central concern. Bold anthropomorphism is prevalent in the creation story as creation is done by hand and God is portrayed as immanent, intimate, involved, and gracious.⁴ There is a difference of emphasis between Gen 1 and 2.⁵

Analysis of the Book of Genesis

Genesis has been subjected to considerable diachronic analysis involving source analysis, form, and tradition criticisms. The attention has shifted more to synchronic

¹Davidson, “In the Beginning,” 11.

²Norman Habel, *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament*, OTS (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 20.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 20, 27. Habel reveals: “The various acts of God the creator are closely interrelated rather than separated by distinct periods of time or repeated expressions. . . . The creative workings of God are interdependent parts of one story” (ibid., 27).

⁵Doukhan’s dissertation is solely dedicated to proving that this difference in emphasis does not imply difference of authorship (*Genesis Creation Story*, 1-187).

analysis using structuralism, rhetoric, and literary-aesthetic criticisms. While some feel that “Genesis is not an independent book that can be interpreted by itself,”¹ others see it as “a unitary composition thematically developed and integrated from the beginning to end.”²

A number of recent studies led to the conclusion that Genesis is a unified work of literary art that can stand by itself.³ Its content makes prologue to the rest of the Pentateuch (or Hexateuch, as suggested by some)⁴ and the Bible as a whole.

The purpose of the literary, structural, terminological, and thematic analysis presented below is to situate Gen 3:15 within the book of Genesis, from the general macro-structure to the immediate micro-structure.⁵ This could guide us in the pursuit of the most probable meaning of Gen 3:15.

תולדות (Toledot) Structure of Genesis

Mesopotamian ancient tablets often began or ended with catch-lines as titles or colophons indicating the accurate sequence of a series of tablets. In like manner, the

¹von Rad, *Genesis*, 13.

²Bruce T. Dahlberg, “On Recognizing the Unity of Genesis,” *Theology Digest* 24 (1976): 361.

³See page 8, n. 4 above for some references of works that address this issue.

⁴See Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology: The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions*, vol. 1, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

⁵The book of Genesis is conveniently structured into three sections as outlined below:

1. Creation—Gen 1-2
2. Fall and Consequences—Gen 3-11
3. Patriarchs—Gen 12-50
 - a. Abraham narrative—12-50
 - b. Jacob narrative—26-36
 - c. Joseph narrative—37-50.

structure of Genesis is said to follow eleven תולדות lines, showing eleven tablets. The LXX translators considered the תולדות divisions of the book so significant that they gave the whole book the title “Genesis,” which is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word translated “generations.”¹

The תולדות lines, expressed in the phrase, “these are the generations of . . . ,”² have been described as the “master key to the method of compilation that underlies the structure of the book of Genesis.”³ They represent the “successive stages in the progress of the narrative.”⁴ The whole book, as it is in the present canon, has been cast into this “framework, or scheme.”⁵

This phrase is used in Genesis “to point back to the origins of the family history and not forward to a later development through a line of descendants. . . . It is used to indicate the tracing back of the genealogy to its origin.”⁶ It may not be connected with a

¹P. J. Wiseman, *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis: A Case for Literary Unity* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1985), 60. Eleven tablets are considered because only eleven out of the thirteen תולדות repetitions represent separate tablets. The occurrences of תולדות in 10:32 and 25:13 are repetitive and do not mark off separate tablets. He defines תולדות as “*history, usually family history in its origin*” (ibid., 62).

²Ibid., 59.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. He adds: “If this phrase is handled consistently, . . . it will be found to solve the literary and many other difficulties which the book has so long presented” (ibid.). He mentioned several scholars who have endeavored to divide the Book of Genesis into sections which begin with the phrase: Herbert E. Ryle, G. J. Spurrell, F. Lenormant, J. Skinner, J. E. Carpenter, C. F. Keil, H. Bullinger, J. P. Lange, and C. H. H. Wright.

⁵Driver, *Genesis*, ii.

⁶Wiseman, *Ancient Records*, 63. Moreover, “it is the concluding sentence of the record already written and not an introduction to the subsequent record” (ibid.).

genealogical list.¹

The name of the person mentioned along with this formula is not to refer to his history but that he is the owner or writer of the record on the tablet. The tablets were evidenced by titles (usually the first few words), catch-lines (repetitions of the last words of the preceding tablet in the subsequent one), concluding colophons indicating the writer or owner of the above record, and the date or its writing indicated by location of the writer or the name of the reigning king.²

Wiseman and Harrison propose the extent and content of the eleven tablets that make up Genesis as follows:³

TAB I	–	1:1-2:4	Origins of cosmos
TAB II	–	2:5-5:2	Origins of humanity
TAB III	–	5:3-6:9a	Histories of Noah
TAB IV	–	6:9b-10:1	Histories of sons of Noah
TAB V	–	10:2-11:10a	Histories of Shem
TAB VI	–	11:10b-11:27a	Histories of Terah
TAB VII	–	11:27b-25:12	Histories of Ishmael
TAB VIII	–	25:13-25:19a	Histories of Isaac
TAB IX	–	25:19b-36:1	Histories of Esau
TAB X	–	36:2-36:9	Histories of Esau
TAB XI	–	36:10-37:2	Histories of Jacob

These are obvious structural lines for the book of Genesis, whether there are indeed ten or eleven tablets.⁴ I am not subscribing to the elaborate arguments on the

¹Ibid., 65.

²Ibid., 67-68.

³Ibid., 68-69; and Harrison, 543-553, especially 548. It is debated whether there are either ten or eleven tablets, depending on whether 25:19b-36:1 and 36:2-36:9, both “histories of Esau,” are taken as one or two tablets.

⁴Casper J. Labuschagne made some comments on the numerical pattern observable in the book of Genesis (*Numerical Secrets of the Bible: Rediscovering the Bible Codes* [North Richland Hills, TX:

Tablet theory. Rather, I believe that the Tablet structure exhibits a clear pattern of arrangement intended for the book of Genesis.

The Tablet structure is very significant for the historicity of the book of Genesis because the תולדות lines always enumerate genealogies which concern an “accurate account of time and history.”¹ Moreover, the use of תולדות in Gen 2:4, which also governs the garden of Eden account of Gen 2-3, validates the historicity of the creation and Fall accounts of Gen 1-3. These earlier chapters were intended “to be just as literal as the rest of the Genesis narratives.”² To the extent that we can accept the historicity of the patriarchal stories which are structured by the תולדות, it is logical to accept the historicity of Gen 1-11 which are also structured by the תולדות.

In summary, the book’s preoccupation with generations, procreation, and family lineage/origin is a strong indicator of the message of the book of Genesis. This idea will be developed in chapter 2 of this research.

BIBAL, 2000], 66-69). I do not see these as being particularly intentional, but most likely incidental. It also borders on numerology which I do not subscribe to. However, some insights might be gained from his observations: The eleven תולדות headings of the book of Genesis (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; and 37:2), introducing the eleven narrative blocks above, intentionally have a perceivable order. This order is possibly a 4 + 7 equals 11, or 7 + 4 equals 11. The symbolic significance of the number 7 is for expressing “fullness, completeness, abundance, and the maximum, the highest possible attainable amount or number” (ibid., 67). It is “an extremely holy number” (ibid., 68) in the ANE culture.

The number 7 is the sum of 3 and 4 while the significant number 12 is their product. The number 3 expresses “heavenly totality” (ibid., 66) involving the “three vertical dimensions of the cosmos: the vault of heaven, the earth and the nether world” (ibid.). He adds that the number 4 expresses the “terrestrial totality” involving the “horizontal dimensions: the four quarters” (ibid., 68). Also, the number 11, “the sum of 4 as the number of extensiveness, and 7 as the number of fullness” (ibid., 69), attained a significant symbolic function: “to express the idea of fulfillment” (ibid.).

¹Davidson, “In the Beginning,” 10.

²Ibid.

Literary and Thematic Structure of Gen 1-11

Gen 1-11 has been long recognized as an integrated entity within the Pentateuch.¹

The literary structure of Gen 1-11 was also enumerated.²

The book of Genesis comprises a mixture of both narratives and genealogies which combine to communicate the intended message of the book. They are dependent on each other and neither is dispensable. A broad structure has been long observed, which demonstrates the alternating structure of narratives and genealogies as follows:³

1-2:3	Seven-Day Creation
2:4a	<i>Generations of the Heavens and the Earth</i>
2:4b-3:24	Man and Woman in the Garden
4:1-2a	<i>Eve's Children</i>
4:2b-16	Cain and Adonai
4:18-26	<i>Cain's Children, Their Descendants, and Seth</i>
5:1-32	<i>Generations of Adam through Noah</i>
6:1-9:29	Noah and the Flood: The Storm in God's Heart
10:1-32	<i>Noah's Children and Their Descendants</i>
11:19	The Fortified City

¹Morgenstern, 21-24; Speiser, *Genesis*, liii-lviii; Robert Davidson, *Genesis 1-11* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 8-9; Kidner, *Genesis*, 13; and Michael Fishbane, "Genesis 2.4b-11.32: The Primeval Cycle," in *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 17-39.

²For example, Jack M. Sasson, "The 'Tower of Babel' as a Clue to the Redactional Structuring of the Primeval History (Gen 1-11:9)," in *The Bible World: Essays in Honor of Cyrus H. Gordon*, ed. Gary Rendsburg et al. (New York: Ktav, 1980), 211-219, especially 218; and R. L. Cohn, "Narrative Structure and Canonical Perspective in Genesis," *JSOT* 25 (1983): 5.

³David C. Hopkins, "The First Stories of Genesis and the Rhythm of the Generations," in *The Echoes of Many Texts: Reflections on Jewish and Christian Traditions: Essays in Honor of Lou H. Silberman*, ed. William G. Dever and J. Edward Wright (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1997), 26. Cf. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 145-7; Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 66-9; Fishbane, "Genesis 2.4b-11.32: The Primeval Cycle," 27-29; B. Renaud, "Les généalogies et la structure de l'histoire sacerdotale dans le Livre de la Genèse," *RB* 97 (1990): 5-30; J. van Seters, "The Primeval Histories of Greece and Israel Compared," *ZAW* 100 (1988): 10; T. L. Thompson, *The Origin Tradition of Ancient Israel, 1: The Literary Formation of Genesis and Exodus 1-23*, *JSOTSup* 55 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1987), 64-5; and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 6-18.

11:10-26	<i>The Generations of Shem through Terah</i>
11:27-32	<i>Terah's Children especially Abram and Sarah</i>
12:1-9	<i>Abram, Sarah, and Lot Journey to Canaan</i>

Literary and Thematic Structural Links within Gen 1-3

It has been rightly observed that “at the very entrance into Scripture, in the opening chapters of Genesis, the Bible provides its own key as to the central theme of its treasure display . . . the ‘grand central theme’ around which every other truth clusters.”¹

The Bible opens with creation. History had a beginning, and creation by God was the beginning.² Dependence is the first lesson which creation teaches us.³ Creation also indicates a theology of salvation and election. Salvation indicates a powerful Creator, and the process of election suggested by the salvation concept refers to the universal dimension from which it is narrowed down to the particular one.⁴

The dramatic accounts of creation in Gen 1-2 are the necessary background for understanding the depth of the Gen 3 story of the Fall. These first three chapters are

¹Richard M. Davidson, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” *JATS* 11, no. 1-2 (2000): 102-119, esp. 103-104.

²H. Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, Dogmatics 2* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1952), 15-16.

³Doukhan, *Genesis Creation Story*, vii. Claus Westermann observes that the majority of the Old Testament passages concerning the creator and creation are within the context of the joyous, sincere, and spontaneous praise of God’s majesty and glory. Hence, he concludes that the real goal of these creation stories is the praise of Creator-God (*The Genesis Accounts of Creation*, trans. Norman E. Wagner [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964], 4, 5, 37).

⁴Doukhan, *Genesis Creation Story*, vii. However, I disagree with the view of von Rad that: “Faith in creation is neither the basis nor the goal of the declarations in Gen., chs. 1 and 2. Rather, the position of both the Yahwist and the Priestly document is basically faith in salvation and election” (von Rad, *Genesis*, 46).

intricately connected, literarily, structurally, thematically, terminologically, and syntactically. They shed significant light on each other. The accounts of Gen 2-3 are complementary rather than contradictory to that of Gen 1.¹

A number of scholars have demonstrated the parallels between the first creation account (Gen 1:1-2:4a) and the second (Gen 2:4b-25).² Many scholars have argued for a break and serious distinction between Gen 1 and 2 stories.³ There is a strong connection and a striking parallelism between the creation accounts recorded in Gen 1:1-2:4 and Gen 2:5-25⁴ in both literary structure and thematic content. In the same vein, the whole story

¹Doukhan's dissertation referenced above is solely dedicated to proving this (*Genesis Creation Story*, 1-187).

²Gen 2:4 is not intended to be pieced into two irreconcilable parts as argued by documentary hypothesists. There is no justification for such dichotomy, but "there are definite indicators that it is a unity, and also that the first half belongs to the story of the garden of Eden" (Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:97). The two parallel half-sentences that make up this verse are arranged in chiasmic order; and can refer to the succeeding text just as it can refer to the preceding text. It is possible to be an organic whole that belongs entirely to the section of the garden of Eden. Most importantly, Gen 2:4 connects the two narratives. Cassuto affirms: "The structure for the verse follows the precise rules of sentence-building and parallelism that normally govern exalted prose as well as poetry" (*ibid.*, 98).

³von Rad submits: "The difference is in the point of departure: Whereas in ch. 1 creation moves from the chaos to the cosmos of the entire world, our account of creation [chap. 2] sketches the original state as a desert in contrast to the sown" (76). Westermann adds: "The narrative of Gen 1 is characterized by its onward, irresistible and majestic flow that distinguishes it so clearly from the drama narrated in Gen 2-3" (*Genesis 1-11*, 80). Clines posits: "While chap. 1 views reality as an ordered pattern which is confused by the flood, chs. 2-3 see reality as a network of elemental unions which become disintegrated throughout the course of the narrative from Eden to the flood" (*Theme of the Pentateuch*, 81). Moreover, he argues that the creation story of chap. 1 is different in teaching us that everything in the whole world was created according to God's will by His unrestrained word. Chap. 2, on the other hand, is only a part of the story of the garden of Eden which includes chap. 3 (Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:71, 84-94). Chap. 3 is meant "to explain how it is that in the Lord's world, the world of good and beneficent God, evil should exist and man should endure pain and troubles and calamities" (*ibid.*, 90).

⁴I am inclined to follow Alviero Niccacci who argued syntactically, semantically, and structurally that Gen 2:4 must not be split into two and separated into the preceding and succeeding creation narrations (as Gen 1:1-2:4a and Gen 2:4b-25) ("Analysis of Biblical Narrative," in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen [Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994], 183-

of the Garden of Eden spanning from Gen 2:4b to 3:24 shows several links and reversals within these chapters.

Parallel between Gen 2:4b-25 and Gen 3:1-24

The unity of chaps. 2 and 3 of the book of Genesis is generally recognized¹ and various reasons have been postulated for this. Obviously, both chapters span the story of the garden of Eden.² The creation of man, which occupies the central position in Gen 2, belongs inseparably with the Fall of man in Gen 3. They are not merely following each other, “but rather *one* inclusive event which stretches from the introductory aside in 2:4b to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden.”³

187). Further discussion is presented in the later part of this chapter under “Syntactical Analysis.”

¹Defenders of the unity of Gen 2-3 include: Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:71-177; George Wesley Coats uses the term “Paradise Tale” (*Genesis: With An Introduction to Narrative Literature*, Forms of Old Testament Literature [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984], 28); Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora*, 71-134; Kidner, *Genesis*, 58; Skinner, 51; and Speiser who called them “the brief Eden interlude” (*Genesis*, 14-28, esp. 18). John McKenzie says “the Paradise Story is a unified narrative with a climactic structure” (“The Literary Characteristics of Genesis 2-3,” *Theological Studies* 15 [1954]: 567-568). Gunkel enjoined: “A series of allusions unite the two chapters (3:1a alludes to 2:19; 3:1b-5, 1, 17 to 2:16-17; 3:7 to 2:25; 3:12 to 2:21ff.; 3:19, 23 to 2:7). It can be concluded, then, that the redactor essentially followed one source and that he utilized only fragments of the other” (*Genesis*, 25).

Contra Westermann, who uses literary analysis charging that the idea that the two chapters are independent and separate narratives was “one of the most important and decisive results of literary criticism” (*Genesis 1-11*, 186). He finds in “Gen 2-3 repetitions, lack of balance, gaps in the line of thought, contradictions. One could not expect anything else.” These were attributed to “the many-sided process of the formation of this text” (*ibid.*, 190).

²See Jerome T. Walsh, “Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Synchronic Approach,” *JBL* 96 (1977): 161-177. “The story of man and woman in the garden of Eden holds eternal fascination for scholar and layman alike. As an object of study, it enjoys an immense bibliography; as a story, it forms part of the literary heritage of Jews, Christians, and Moslems, and is surely one of the world’s most widely known tales” (*ibid.*, 161).

³Westermann, *Genesis Account of Creation*, 25. “Chapters 2 and 3 are presented in the form of a drama which not only has a strong thrust of its own but also points beyond itself to the rest of the story” (*ibid.*).

Numerous diachronic and synchronic structures have been suggested for the narrative and literary unity Gen 2 and 3.¹ Several concentric or chiasmic structural patterns suggested for these two chapters show their connectedness.² The narrative rhetorical analysis brought forth elements of its semantic structure like the alimentary code, the code of the animals, sexual code, and life/death.³ Action sequences identified include mainly a punishment sequence and several other sequences “embedded in, woven into, or added to the main sequence.”⁴

The order of creation established in Gen 2:16-18, disrupted by the serpent, a villain, in 3:1-7, was re-established by the initiative of God in 3:8-21. The three deficiencies identified in Gen 2:5—no man to work the earth, no rain, and the loneliness of and lack of helper for man (2:18)—were supplied. Man was formed in 2:7-15, his helper provided in 2:19-25, and tilling the ground and falling of rain came with the sin and

¹The whole issue of *Semeia* 18 (1980) is dedicated to synchronic and diachronic analysis of the structure of Gen 2 and 3 as a single unit. Walsh proposes that “the principal pattern is a concentric arrangement of seven scenes, each of which is itself tightly organized,” and “distinguished from one another principally by shifts in *dramatis personae* and changes in literary form” (Walsh, 161-177).

²For example, Joel W. Rosenberg, “The Garden Story Forward and Backward: The Non-Narrative Dimension of Genesis 2-3,” *Prooftexts* 1 (1981): 6. He treated the story as “symmetrical and largely concentric” making it “a unity, and only as completed” (*ibid.*, 21).

See also, David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 50. Walsh saw a series of seven scenes, delineated by the shifts in *dramatis personae* and literary form, and arranged in a concentric pattern: (a) 2:4b-17, (b) 2:18-25, (c) 3:1-5, (d) 3:6-8, (c') 3:9-13, (b') 3:14-19, (a') 3:22-24 (Walsh, 161-177).

³Thomas E. Boomershine, “Structure and Narrative Rhetoric in Genesis 2-3,” *Semeia* 18 (1980): 113-129.

⁴Robert C. Culley, “Action Sequences in Genesis 2-3,” *Semeia* 18 (1980): 25-33. Action sequence refers to “a basic unit of action in a story” (*ibid.*, 26). “The central action sequence is the ‘wrong/wrong punished’ which is spread out in Gen 2:16-17; 3:1-6, 9-13, 16-19. A wrong is done when the man and the woman eat the fruit and this wrong is punished” (p. 28).

consequent expulsion of man from the garden in 3:22-24.¹

Creation is expressed in Gen 2 by the forging of bonds between “humans and the soil,” “humans and the animals,” “the man and the woman,” and “humanity and God.” These relationships of bonds or harmony between each of these pairs are disrupted in chap. 3.² This also indicates the connectedness of both chapters.

Certain words, terms, and verses stand out vividly as strong links between Gen 2:4-25 and Gen 3:1-24. The serpent “which God had made” in Gen 3:1 definitely points back to the creation of the animals in Gen 2:18.³ There is also an interesting play on the resemblance of the word “cunning” עָרֵב in Gen 3:1 to “naked” עָרְוָה at the end of the preceding paragraph in Gen 2:25. This is intended by the author to link both chapters as a continuum and to suggest a particular understanding of the text.⁴

¹Daniel Patte and Judson F. Parker, “Structural Exegesis of Gen 2 and 3,” *Semeia* 18 (1980): 55-75.

²Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 81, 82. “The communion between God and man who breathes God’s breath (2:7) has become the legal relationship of accuser and defendant (3:9ff.); the relationship of man and woman as ‘one flesh’ (2:24) has soured into mutual recrimination (3:12); the bond of humanity (*adam*) with the soil (*adama*) from which he was built has been supplanted by ‘an alienation that expresses itself in a silent, dogged struggle between man and sod (3:17ff.); the harmonious relationship of humans with beast in which the human is the acknowledged master (2:19ff.) has become a perpetual struggle of intransigent foes (3:15)” (*ibid.*).

³von Rad, *Genesis*, 100. “The theme of shame in ch. 3.7 ff. is taken up and attached (almost abruptly) to the narrative about creation of man (2.25)” (*ibid.*).

⁴Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:143-144. In order to make the wordplay more apparent, the preceding verse (2:25) uses the plural form of עָרֵב and not עָרְוָה, which occurs subsequently in 3:7, 10, 11. Interpretatively, this means that Adam and Eve were “naked,” and remained “naked” because their ignorance of “good and evil” prevented them from being ashamed of their nakedness. Yet, notwithstanding their lack of “knowledge,” they were not wanting in “cunning.” Zdravko Stefanovic declares that “the Hebrew root *ʿrm* in 2:25 and 3:1 is the best discernible lexical link between (the) two chapters” (“The Great Reversal: Thematic Links Between Genesis 2 and 3,” *AUSS* 32 [1994]: 51, n. 18). Westermann reinforces that chapter 3 is comprehensible only when it is prefaced by the detail that “the man and his wife were naked, and were not ashamed” in each other’s presence (*Genesis*

Gen 2:5 mentions “plant/thorns of the field,” “grains/herb of the field,” and “tilling the ground.” Gen 3:18 also has identical “grains/herb of the field”; while “thorns and thistles” are synonymous with the expression “plant/thorns of the field” and are a particularization of the general concept of the latter. Man was compelled to “till the ground,” in Gen 3:23, upon leaving the garden of Eden.¹

The name for God employed throughout both chapters is YHWH Elohim, describing God’s immanence.² The returning of man to the ground at death (3:19) only reverses the initial formation of man from the “dust of the ground” (2:7, 17). The phrase “at the east of the garden of Eden” in 3:24 echoes a similar expression earlier in 2:8. The issue of nakedness and shame connects 2:25 and 3:7, 21.³

The unity of these sections and their continuity is also seen “in the numerical symmetry based on the number *seven* that we find in this section just as we encountered it in the story of Creation.”⁴ The words that express the fundamental concepts of the passage recur in a given number of times, namely, *seven* times, or a multiple of *seven*. The

Accounts of Creation, 30). “The story is misunderstood if we sever these two chapters” (ibid.).

¹Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:102.

²The exclusive use of Elohim in Gen 3:1-5 in the dialogue between the serpent and the woman is because “it is unfitting that the personal name of God, which is supremely holy, should be used by the creature that counsels evil, or by the woman holding converse with it” (ibid., 88).

³Ibid. See pp. 148-177 for various linking of terms in both passages.

⁴Ibid., 94. Cassuto discusses the importance of the number *seven* in the symbolism of numbers, and how it is fundamental to the main theme of the creation story, and how its structure is based on a symmetry of numerical harmony (ibid., 12-15). Seven is understood as “the number of perfection and the basis of ordered arrangement”; no wonder it is used in describing the work of the Creator which is marked by “absolute perfection and flawless systematic orderliness” (ibid., 14).

name עֵדֶן “Eden” occurs together with קֶדֶם (east) *seven* times. The names אָדָם and אִישׁ, both meaning “man,” appear twenty-eight times, i.e., four times *seven*. The word אִשָּׁה and its synonyms עֲזָרָה (helper) and צִלְעָה (rib) are used twenty-one times, i.e., three times *seven*.¹

Words derived from the root אָכַל (eat) occur twenty-one times; out of which it is used *seven* times in the paragraph describing the sin (3:1-7). The verbal root לָקַח (take) is given special emphasis by being used *seven* times in vss. 2:23; 3:19, 23. Following the logical division of the context of the section, seven paragraphs naturally emerge.² “*To suppose that all this is a mere coincidence is not possible*”³ (emphasis mine).

On their thematic links, it can be argued that “the primary purpose of the Torah in these chapters is to explain how it is that in the Lord’s world, . . . evil should exit and man should endure pain and troubles and calamities.”⁴ The answer to the question of the “origin of evil” is here provided in the fact that man corrupts the good world (Gen 1:31)

¹Ibid., 94.

²Ibid. Cassuto discusses this section according to its logical divisions. The introductory verse and transition from the previous section is 2:4. Seven paragraphs emerge: creation of man—2:5-7; planting of the garden of Eden—2:8-14; Adam’s task in the garden of Eden—2:15-17; Creation of woman—2:18-25; Adam’s sin—3:1-7; the judgment and the sentence—3:8-21; and the expulsion from the garden of Eden—3:22-24 (ibid., 96-177).

³Ibid., 15.

⁴Ibid., 71. McKenzie submits that “the paradise story is . . . anthropocentric; it is a story of human sin, of a fall from a primitive state which was free of sin and its consequences. . . . The narrative . . . is intended to signify that the ills of mankind arise from sin. Sin . . . disturbs the order of creation” (“Literary Characteristics of Genesis 2-3,” 568). This is evident because of the fact that the paradise story precedes the account of the spread of sin and the degeneration of mankind in the chapters that follow the story.

by his conduct and brings evil into it as a result of his corruption (Gen 3:16-19). Gen 3 has been concisely described as asserting that “all sorrow comes from sin.”¹

These two sections also combine to teach other lessons:

We learn of the necessity of discipline founded on God’s statutes; of man’s innate conscience; of the law of Divine reward and punishment; of the bonds of brotherhood uniting the inhabitants of the world, who are all descended from one human pair, are all akin and all equal to one another; of the humane treatment that we should accord to animals, for like ourselves they were formed of the earth; of the value of marriage; of the importance of monogamy; of the humility with which it behooves us to conduct ourselves, seeing that we are dust and unto dust we return, and similar ideas.²

The theme of creation of man in God’s image has been observed in this section. “The garden of Eden story of Gen 2-3 is an expansion of the image of God story in chapter 1.”³ This concerns human beings, human nature, and their resemblance to God. The resemblance of God is mentioned at the beginning of Adam’s story as “image of God” (Gen 1:26), at the end as “like one of us” (Gen 3:22), and in the middle (by the serpent) as “you will become like God (or gods), knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5).⁴

Man, in his entirety, corporeally as well as spiritually and intellectually, is to be designated as a creature in God’s image. . . . This in no sense means a “likeness to God’s image” which man could count as his possession and by virtue of which he, apart from the Creator, could think of himself as the crown of creation. This designation of man means, rather, that man can maintain his humanity only in the

¹von Rad, *Genesis*, 101. Clines declares: “The flood is only the final stage in a process of cosmic disintegration which began in Eden” (*Theme of Pentateuch*, 81).

²Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:71.

³John F. A. Sawyer, “The Image of God, the Wisdom of Serpents and the Knowledge of Good and Evil,” in *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden*, ed. Paul Morris and Deborah Sawyer, JSOTSup, 136 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1992), 64.

⁴*Ibid.*, 65. The image of God is not totally obliterated from humankind even after the Fall. Reference is made to it in Gen 5:1; 9:6.

presence of God. Man separated from God has not only lost God, but also the purpose of his humanity.¹

Another theme that emanates from these “twin” chapters is “Separation and Discrimination.” Man and animal were separated from the ground to which they will return (explicitly for man and implicitly for the animals).² A distinction is also made between “all living creatures of the field” and “all birds of the heavens” (Gen 2:19). While naming them, Adam further divides the “living creatures” into two parts distinguishing domestic ones (cattle) from wild animals.³

Another separation is the gulf created between the Adam and his wife when he passed the blame for his deed onto her.⁴ Their relationship of equals and corresponding partners is reduced to one of dominance and dependence.⁵ In like manner, estrangement later occurs between man and the ground from which he was taken (3:17).

¹Westermann, *Genesis Accounts of Creation*, 20-21. Westermann notes that “God has made man to communicate with him, so that man might speak to God and he might hear God’s word” (p. 21). See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatic*, vol. 3, *The Doctrine of Creation*, Part I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958).

²Jonathan Magonet, “The Themes of Genesis 2-3,” in *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden*, ed. Paul Morris and Deborah Sawyer, JSOTSup, 136 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1992), 41.

³Ibid. Cattle seems to be a generic term for domesticated animals, those with a permanent relationship with man. All others are the living creatures of the field. See Gen 1:24-26; 7:14, 21; 9:10; Exod 20:10; Lev 19:19, etc. The snake is further separated from other living creatures of the field, living apart from man, as being more cunning than the rest. He tempted man to fall.

⁴von Rad, *Genesis*, 91.

⁵Phyllis Trible, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41 (1973): 30-48.

Transformations and reversals in Gen 2-3

Certain transformations are recognized within these two chapters:¹

1. Fruit of tree not given to Adam (2:17), woman gives fruit of tree to her husband (3:6)
2. Man/woman not ashamed (2:25), later recognized nakedness and were ashamed (3:7)
3. Serpent most crafty animal (3:1), becomes the most cursed animal (3:14)
4. Fruit pleasing to woman (3:6), causes labor pain of the woman (3:16)
5. Man eats fruit of forbidden tree (3:6), bread from sweat and thorns (3:18-19)
6. Humans made leaf aprons (3:7), God made skin garments for them (3:21)
7. Woman's fascination for the serpent (3:13), woman's enmity for the serpent (3:15)
8. Man "ruling" woman (3:16), man listening to woman (3:17).

The carefully crafted and chiasmic structure of Gen 2-3 enunciates the theme of the "Great Reversal" brought about by the entrance of sin into God's perfect world. Chap. 3 contains a reversed order of similar elements and events found in chap. 2. These two chapters "come together to present the first of many reversals in the Bible."²

For the sake of comparison, these chapters can be divided up to reveal their distinctive themes and reversals.³ Gen 2:4 remains the introductory verse which alludes

¹Patte and Parker, 55-75.

²Stefanovic, "The Great Reversal," 51-56. See idem, "Daniel: A Book of Significant Reversals," *AUSS* 30 (1992): 139-150.

³Stefanovic, "The Great Reversal," 53.

to the reversal in the rest of the story.¹ The rest reveals a chiasm as follows:

- A** Created and Settled (2:5-8)
 B Blessings and Order (2:9-17)
 C Woman Created (2:18-23)
 CLIMAX (2:24-25) Happiness in sinless and innocent human relationship
 C' Woman Tempted (3:1-13)
 B' Curses and Disorder (3:14-21)
A' Judged and Expelled (3:22-24)

The climax of these twin chapters seems to occur at Gen 2:24-25, according to this chiasm. These verses describe full happiness in sinless and innocent human relationship.²

Several reversals of themes are further observed within each of these sections:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| A. Created and Settled (2:5-8) | — | A'. Judged and Expelled (3:22-24) |
| 1. Innocent life | — | 1. Man knows good and evil |
| 2. No man to work the ground | — | 2. Man to work the ground |
| 3. Man obedient, could live forever | — | 3. Man disobedient, would die |
| 4. God plants a garden in the east | — | 4. God places cherubim in the east |
| 5. Man settles in the garden | — | 5. Man expelled from the garden. |
|
B. Blessings and Order (2:9-17) | — |
B'. Curses and Disorder (3:14-21) |
| 1. Pleasing, edible trees and plants grow | — | 1. Thorns and thistles grow |
| 2. Blessings of four-headed river | — | 2. Punishments: snake, woman, man, ground |

¹Ibid., 51. The words of Gen 2:4 are marked by the use of double chiasm. The subject/verb order is reversed—"heaven/earth" and "created" are reversed to "made" and "earth/heaven." The subject order is also reversed—"heaven/earth" is reversed to "earth/heaven."

²Westermann insists that vs. 25 is "the climax of the creation" (*Genesis 1-11*, 190). Stefanovic adds: "The climax of the Story of Creation was reached when God rested on the seventh day (2:2-3). The climax of the story of the Garden of Eden focuses on man's relationship to other human beings, beginning with the family unit. The climax speaks of a sinless, harmonious and happy life in all its innocence. A supernatural unity is related here in which two beings are able to become . . . 'one flesh' (2:24)" ("The Great Reversal," 56).

3. Havilah's three-fold blessing	–	3. Serpent's three-fold curse
4. Man keeps the garden with ease	–	4. Man sweats to till ground
5. Law: eat and die	–	5. Verdict: return to dust at death
C. Woman Created (2:18-23)	–	C'. Woman Tempted (3:1-13)
1. Man lonely, God concerned	–	1. Man sins and hides, God concerned
2. Man needs a helper	–	2. Man and helper are helpless
3. God provides helper	–	3. Man blames helper
4. Man's lordship	–	4. Man afraid, naked, ashamed
5. Animals in harmony with mankind	–	5. Animal deceives mankind
6. Woman taken from man	–	6. Woman takes fruit and gives to man
7. Man admires woman	–	7. Woman admires fruit
8. Happy intimate relationship	–	8. Fear, shame, blame in relationship

We will now examine the structure of Gen 3, which is the immediate context of Gen 3:15, our primary text. This affects our understanding and analysis of the "seed."

The Literary Analysis of Gen 3

It can be seen that the discourse beginning from Gen 1 and 2 culminates in chap.

3. The structure of this chapter clearly reveals a chiasm which shows the intention of the writer to bring out a special message at the center of the story:¹

¹The following structures have been influenced by similar ones presented separately by two lecturers of the Andrews University Theological Seminary: Jacques Doukhan, "Literary Structure of Gen 3:15," Class Handout for OTST 653, 1997; and Warren Johns, "Literary Structure of Genesis 3." Lecture Notes for OTST 653, 1997. See Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse*, JSOTSup, 170 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1994), 17.

A Serpent and Woman alone. God absent. Prohibition of eating from the tree. Eve enticed to “knowing good and evil” (vss. 1-5)

B Adam and Eve naked, clothed themselves (vss. 6-7)

C God walks in the garden and “called unto Adam” (vss. 8-9a)

D God speaks to Adam (vss. 9a-12)

E God speaks to the woman (vs. 13)

F God speaks to the Serpent (vss. 14-15)

E' God speaks to the woman (vs. 16)

D' God speaks to Adam (vss. 17-19)

C' Still in the garden, “Adam calls his wife’s name Eve” (vs. 20)

B' God clothed Adam and Eve (vs. 21)

A' God alone. Prohibition of eating from the tree.
Humans “knowing good and evil”

It is important to note that vss. 14 and 15 constitute the chiasmic climax of Gen 3. Thus, it is shown that the message of these verses is central in the context.

Numerical pattern in Gen 3

Seven expressions of the introductory formulae of the divine “direct speeches” in the discourse between God and the other characters in the story can be found in Gen 3. These do not include those of the indirect speeches in 3:1, 3, and 17. This number is significant because the chapter is organized in the form of speeches. This signifies

completeness and fullness.¹ They are as follows:²

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. The Lord God <i>called</i> to the man and said to him | 3:9 |
| 2. And he said | 3:11 |
| 3. And the Lord said to the woman | 3:13 |
| 4. And the Lord God said to the snake | 3:14 |
| 5. To the woman he said | 3:16 |
| 6. To the man he said | 3:17 |
| 7. Then the Lord God said (deliberation) | 3:22. |

It is noticeable that the middle (4th) one of the seven speeches in Gen 3 happens to God's speech to the serpent (i.e., vs. 14). This is the core/center of Gen 3, suggesting great relevance for its intended structure and central message.

Analysis of Gen 3:14-19

Our key verses (14-15) belong to a unique subset in this chapter. Vss. 14-19 comprise a poetic piece set in the midst of what is essentially narrative. This is a rhetorical device to draw special attention to this central section.³ It is marked off by an *inclusio* constituted by repetition of the word **אֶפְרָח**, "dust," in vss. 14 and 19.

Furthermore, this subsection uses the curse-form, which is used in the covenant or legal

¹See, for instance, the seven days of creation in Gen 1-2:4.

²Labuschagne, 61. He continues with the other four direct speeches in Gen 4 thus following one of the perceived formulas of fulfillment: $7 + 4 = 11$. See below in the section on the links between Gen 3 and 4.

³Graham S. Ogden, "A Fresh Look at the 'Curses' of Genesis 3:14-19," *Taiwan Journal of Theology*, no. 7 [1985]: 129-140, esp. 130. John T. Willis explains: "Perhaps these curses were given in poetry for easy memorization because they were frequently sung, or because it was customary to announce curses in poetic verse" (*Genesis* [Austin, TX: Sweet, 1979], 126). Westermann confirms: "The rhythmic, poetic form is to be explained from the function of the pronouncements; they declare a punishment; they portray an event which corresponds to the ancient legal pronouncements which are also presented in rhythmic and poetic form" (*Genesis 1-11*, 257). Meanwhile, Skinner says: "The form of the oracles is poetic; but the structure is irregular, and no definite metrical scheme can be made out" (*Genesis*, 78).

context of Deut 27-28.¹ This immediately suggests that a covenant is involved here.²

More factors which point to the distinctiveness and unity of Gen 3:14-19 include the “use of assonance throughout: *shûp* (vs. 15), *shûq* (vs. 16), *shûb* (vs. 19); *bên* (vs. 15), *ben* (vs. 16).”³ The reiterated “labor/pain/sorrow” links Gen 3:16-17 and the duplicated “to eat all the days of your life” in Gen 3:14, 17 exhibits more internal links. Lastly, “the ‘enmity’ between snake and mankind and between mankind and earth (vss. 15, 18) is contrasted with the mutual longing of the man and woman in vs. 16.”⁴

We can be certain that the whole chapter is integrally connected, as demonstrated in the structure above. The curse-unit is well integrated into the narrative in which it rests.⁵ There is a deliberate reversal in the order in which the players in the drama of Gen 3:9-13 appear (man-woman-snake) in vss. 14-19 (snake-woman-man). There is a conscious play on words used to describe the serpent in 3:1 as עָרָם “clever” and אָרָר “cursed” in 3:14. “The keyword *’akal*, ‘eat,’ is found throughout 3:1-13 as

¹Ogden, 132. This general curse-form varies slightly all over the OT as can be seen also in Gen 4:11; 49:7; Josh 9:3; Jer 17:5-6; 20:14-16; and 1 Sam 26:19. The curses in Gen 3:14-19 contain all the elements and are the most expanded curse-forms in the OT. See W. M. Clark, “Law,” in *Old Testament Form Criticism*, ed. J. H. Hayes (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1974), 113-116; and D. R. Hillers, *Treaty Curses and O. T. Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964).

²O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), 67-107.

³Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 78.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.* Wenham reiterates that the curses in 3:14-19 are “rhythmical, though the meter is irregular and they contain clauses in prose that make the rhythms still more uneven” (*ibid.*). He then remarks: “The introductory ‘Because you have done this’ echoes vs. 13, while ‘You are more cursed’ than ‘all wild animals’ echoes 3:1, ‘the snake was more shrewd than all the wild animals,’ in sound as well as phraseology” (*ibid.*).

well as five times in 3:14-19.”¹ Also, mankind originates from the earth (2:7; 3:19, 23).²

Victor Hamilton noted when God came to interrogate the humans, the reference to the sins of the man (Gen 3:9-11), the woman (Gen 3:12), and the serpent (Gen 3:13) are presented in a chiastic arrangement with the punishments for the serpent (Gen 3:14-15), the woman (Gen 3:16), and the man (Gen 3:17-19).³

Syntactically, Gen 3:14-19, dealing with the punishment of the serpent, woman, and man respectively, forms a single unit. The unit begins with a series of waw-consecutive imperfect verbs (vs. 14), continues with respect to the woman using a prepositional phrase and perfect verb (vs. 16), and concludes with a section on the man (vs. 17), a manner similar to the woman.⁴

Gen 3:14-19 stands out as the “grammatical peak of the discourse”⁵ through some grammatical signals which are mentioned below. This signifies the juncture where “narrative tension is the highest and the release of that tension begins.”⁶ Gen 3:14-19

¹Ogden, 132.

²Ibid. The phrase “more than any beast of the field” from vs. 1 is reiterated in vs. 14. The key word *ʾakal*, “eat,” is found throughout vss. 1-13 as well as five times in vss. 14-19.

³Hamilton, *Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 196. See H. Van Dyke Parunak, “Oral Typesetting: Some Uses of Biblical Structure,” *CBQ* 62 (1981): 164.

⁴Eric W. Bolger, “The Compositional Role of the Eden Narrative in the Pentateuch” (Ph.D. dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, 1993), 148. He observed that the “Samaritan Pentateuch has slightly different syntax through the addition of a waw at the beginning of vs. 16 (wʾl)” (ibid.). See also John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:57.

⁵Stephen Kempf, “Genesis 3:14-19: Climax of the Discourse?” *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 6 (1993): 354.

⁶Ibid.

seems to points ahead while also ending with the resolution of the problem.¹

The grammatical peak, usually connected with certain grammatical signals, occurs where “the tension is the greatest and the release of that tension begins, i.e., at the turning point.” This draws attention to and highlights the resolution of the issues raised in the discourse within which it occurs.² This is where the narrative tension “intensifies, reaches its highest point and where the release of that tension begins.”³

Gen 3:14-19 contains three judgments in three sentences each of which in a symmetrical pattern.⁴ Other grammatical signals and rhetorical features show Gen 3:14-19 as the grammatical peak of Gen 2-3:

1. In Gen 3:14-19 the audience gets the “longest and most detailed account of the ideological and psychological view of the central character.” The three judgments emphasize God’s pronouncements but “suspend the action of the story.”⁵

2. In Gen 3:14-19, the time frame is advanced “beyond that of the plot of the

¹Ibid. Kempf used a linear perspective to demonstrate that this is the climax of the discourse of Gen 2-3 by looking at the paragraph structure and prominence of Gen 3:14-19 and the grammatical peak and resolution of the plot structure of Gen 2-3 (ibid.).

²John Beekman, John Callow, and Michael Kopesec, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 138-9.

³Kempf, 356. For Robert Longacre, at the climax, “everything comes to a head”; the conflict and tension reach their highest point (*The Grammar of Discourse* [New York: Plenum, 1983], 20-21).

⁴Kempf, 362, 365. Kempf uses the hortatory genre discourse to analyze this text. He elaborates: “While the imperative is the highest ranking form on the prominence scale of hortatory discourse, the judgment of the serpent is announced by a *qal* passive participle *ʾarʾar ʾatā* ‘cursed are you.’ In this context the force of the participle must be considered equal to an imperative. . . . Details of this curse are described in the form of paraphrase paragraphs, where imperfect verbs are employed as mitigated imperatives” (362).

⁵Ibid., 368.

story. The audience identifies with the announcement of the three judgments,"¹ which "also project to a future time."² The reader can identify with the message and its application.

3. Gen 3:14-19 exemplifies analytical complexities. First, perfect verbs are used "with fore-fronted indirect objects in Gen 3:16 and 17 rather than the usual event-line *waw*-consecutive verbs."³ The "asyndeton" of the quote in 16a resembles an apposition. The quote formulas in 14a and 16 have indirect objects in chiasmus with verbs, and "this stylistic feature closely joins the first two pronouncements together. . . . The quote formula in 3:17 is parallel to the formula in 16a. This links the third judgment with the two."⁴

4. In Gen 3:14-19, "each of the three judgments is characterized by paraphrase paragraphs or embedded paraphrase paragraphs,"⁵ "generic specific"⁶ semantic relations, and "syntactic and semantic parallelism."⁷ As a result, the pace of the action slows down, giving a "solemn and sober quality to the pronouncements of judgment."⁸

5. All the major characters involved in the story are present in Gen 3:14-19.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 369.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

“YHWH God, the man, the woman, and the serpent are all on stage at the same time.”¹

The resolution of the tension/problem of Gen 2-3 “is found in the way this section ties up loose ends that are found at the beginning of the discourse. The judgment of the man in Gen 3:17-19 shows important features of coherence with the beginning of the discourse. It is as if to say what ‘was not’ in Gen 2:4b-6 has now come to ‘be’”²:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 2:5a - no “wild shrubs” | – 3:18 - “thorns and thistles” appear |
| 2:5 - no “cultivable plants” | – 3:18b - man to eat “cultivable plants” |
| 2:5a, 9 - verb “to sprout” | – 3:18 - verb “to sprout” |
| 2:5d - none “to work the soil” | – 3:18-19, 23 - “sweat of brow”/ “work the soil” |
| 2:7 - man of “dust of the soil” | – 3:19b-e, 23 - man returns to “dust” and “soil.” |

Analysis of Gen 3:14-15

The analyses above point to Gen 3:14-15 already mentioned as the chiasmic center of Gen 3.³ It appears that the central message of this passage culminates in these verses. This is the most important message of the chapter, and the goal towards which Gen 1-3 leads.

The thematic structure and word rhythm of this climax (Gen 3:14-15) suggest two strophes. “After an introductory statement of three words (or ‘anacrusis’), the first strophe (vs. 14) progresses in six lines with an irregular word rhythm (2, 2, 3, 3, 2, 3)”⁴:

¹Ibid., 370. Longacre calls such “notional climax” a “crowded stage” (50).

²Kempf, 372-373.

³See page 98.

⁴Doukhan, “Class handout,” 2.

Anacrusis: "Because you have done this" (3 words)

1. "Cursed you are" (2 words)
2. "More than all cattle" (2 words)
3. "And more than every beast of the field" (3 words)
4. "On your belly you shall go" (3 words)
5. "And you shall eat dust" (2 words)
6. "All the days of your life" (3 words).¹

"After an anacrusis of one word, the second strophe (vs. 15) progresses in four lines with a regular word rhythm (4, 4, 3, 3)"²:

Anacrusis: "Enmity" (1 word)

1. "I will put between you and the woman" (4 words)
2. "Between your seed and her seed" (4 words)
3. "He shall bruise your head" (3 words)
4. "And you shall bruise his heel" (3 words).³

Gen 3:15 also contains an interesting progression of parallelism as follows:

Serpent ("you")	---SINGULAR---	Woman
Seed of Serpent	---COLLECTIVE---	Seed of woman
Serpent ("you")/ "Your head"	---SINGULAR---	"he"/ "his heel"

The significance of this parallelism will become more apparent in our discussion of the seed and its related pronouns later in this chapter.

Structural and Terminological Links Between Gen 2-3 and Gen 4

It has long been argued that Gen 4 forms a complete unit in itself, originally

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

independent of Gen 2-3, having its own motifs and perspectives.¹ To the contrary, the garden of Eden account in Gen 2-3 and the story of Cain, Abel, and Seth in Gen 4:1-26 have been closely interwoven literarily, structurally, terminologically, and thematically to form one continuous unit.² The events of Gen 4 are the consequence of the Fall of man in Gen 3.

Structural links

There are very strong structural similarities and parallels between Gen 2-3 and Gen 4:1-16. The following numbered correlations exhibit how the same patterns are intentionally employed in both sections:³

1. The principal characters in both stories are introduced in terms of their functions. Adam's function was to till the ground and keep the garden (2:5, 15, 19, 23) while Eve was his companion (2:18-25) and child-bearer (3:16, 20; 4:1-2, 25). Abel is presented as a keeper of sheep (4:2) while Cain is a tiller of the ground (4:2).

2. Each story contains two primary intimate contemporary human beings created

¹Alan J. Hauser, "Linguistic and Thematic Links Between Genesis 4:1-16 and Genesis 2-3," *JETS* 24 (1980): 297. This neglect of the context encourages the *Sitz im Leben* fantasy and causes "an unfortunate myopia that obscures many of the delicate and subtle syntactical structures present in the text" (*ibid.*). See Driver, *Genesis*, 63, 71-74; T. H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper, 1975), 51-75; J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (Cleveland: World, 1957), 308-309, 324; and von Rad, *Genesis*, 99-105.

²Hauser asserts that "it is not just the case that a clever editor has constructed links between the two originally independent stories. . . . Any attempt to interpret the accounts without reference to their unity is likely to obscure and distort what the writer intended to say" (305).

³*Ibid.*, 297-298. See also Garrett arguing: "Genesis 2:4-4:26 is a tightly interwoven text. . . . It reads as a single narration" (Garrett, 188-189). Cf. W. Malcom Clark, "The Flood and the Structure of Pre-patriarchal History," *ZAW* 83 (1971): 196-197.

or born so close in time. Their harmony is soon tragically broken in each case as they are severely alienated from one another (3:7-14; 4:8-9).

3. In both stories, God issues a word of warning before the disobedient acts are perpetrated (2:17; 4:7).

4. The guilty principal characters were confronted by God with their sinful deeds by means of leading questions. God interrogated Cain (4:6, 10) and also interrogated the first sinners (3:9, 11, 13). Their responses in each instance give the climax of their alienation from God and from each other (3:9-13; 4:9).

5. God pronounced the sentences and curses brought by their offenses (3:16-19; 4:11-12). Adam and Cain were alienated from the ground which would no longer be friendly but rather hostile and hazardous to them (3:17-19; 4:12).

6. They were driven from their original context of abode and livelihood: Adam and Eve from the garden (3:24), Cain from the ground, the source of his livelihood (4:14).

7. These guilty persons were hiding from the face of God as a direct result of their sinful acts (3:8; 4:14, 16).

8. In the aftermath of each episode, the guilty parties dwelt east of Eden (3:24; 4:16).¹

¹Beyond the eight items above, Garrett adds that, in addition, both responded to their punishment (3:20; 4:13-14). "Yahweh then mitigates the effects of the curses (3:21, garments of animal skins; 4:15, the mark of Cain)" (Garrett, 189). Further, Fishbane itemizes the relationships between Gen 3 and 4:1-16. For example, he links the rhetorical questions "Where are you?" (3:9) with "Where is your brother?" (4:9). Cain is "cursed from the earth" (4:11), while the "earth is cursed" because of Adam (3:17) ("Genesis 2.4b-11.32: The Primeval Cycle," 26-27). Fishbane sees this as "a deliberate intertextual feature serving to occasion the concordance of Genesis 3 and 4:1-16 in the reader's mind" (*Text and*

The structural links within Gen 2-4 can be seen in light of ancient epic structure, which has an introduction, three threats, and a conclusion or resolution, as follows:¹

A	Intro. to 1 st Threat	– Creation= ‘births’	–	2:4-25
B	1 st Threat	– Fall= ‘death’(2 nd :17)	–	3:1-24
A’	Intro. to 2 nd Threat	– Births of Cain/Abel	–	4:1-3
B’	2 nd Threat, part 1	– Murder of Abel	–	4:4-16
A’’	Intro. to 2 nd Threat, part 2	– Genealogy-Lamech’s birth	–	4:17-8
B’’	2 nd Threat, part 2	– Murders by Lamech	–	4:19-24
A’’’	Intro. to Conclusion	– Births of Seth/Enosh	–	4:25-26a
B’’’	Conclusion	– People call on Yahweh	–	4:26b.

Also, the 7 + 4 = 11 pattern clearly emerges, “linking the Story of the Fall (Genesis 3) with that of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4).”² This concerns the expression of the introductory formula of the divine direct speeches in the discourse between God and the other characters in the stories. The seven found in Gen 3: 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, and 22 are complemented, completed, and fulfilled by the four found in Gen 4: 6, 9, 10, and 15.³

16. For example, he links the rhetorical questions “Where are you?” (3:9) with “Where is your brother?” (4:9). Cain is “cursed from the earth” (4:11), while the “earth is cursed” because of Adam (3:17) (“Genesis 2.4b-11.32: The Primeval Cycle,” 26-27). Fishbane sees this as “a deliberate intertextual feature serving to occasion the concordance of Genesis 3 and 4:1-16 in the reader’s mind” (*Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* [New York: Schocken, 1979], 145, n. 9).

¹Garrett, 190.

²Labuschagne, 61.

³Ibid. This exempts the introductory formula of the indirect speeches in 3:1, 3, and 17.

Terminological links

Below are several terminological and vocabulary links between Gen 2-3 and Gen 4 which prove beyond reasonable doubt that these two sections are intended to be a unified whole:¹

1. The use of the verb יָדָע “know” in 4:1, 9, 17, 25 points back to Gen 2-3 to knowledge as both a desire (3:5-6) and a consequence of nakedness and alienation (3:7-13) all associated to the Fall. This knowing involves “good and evil.” Hence, even though it brings new life (3:15-16, 20; 4:1, 19, 25), enmity, alienation, and death accompany it unavoidably (3:15-19, 21, 23; 4:8-16).

2. The use of the verbs הָרָה “conceive” and יָלַד “bear” together in 4:1, 17 point back to the sentence God pronounced upon the woman in 3:16 where both verbs were used together, and also to the act that led to the sentence.² To add more emphasis to this fact, the writer uses the verb “bear” alone in 4:2, 18, 20, 22, 25-26.

3. “His brother” was used to express Cain’s intimacy with (4:2) and alienation from Abel (4:8-11). This parallels the uses of “his wife” and “the woman” in Gen 2-3 to express Adam’s intimacy with (2:23-25, 3:8) and alienation from Eve (3:12, 20-21 [and also 4:1]).

¹Hauser, 298-303. More links between the vocabulary of Gen 2-3 and Gen 4 can be seen in the following works: Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 174; David J. A. Clines, “The Tree of Knowledge and the Law of Yahweh,” *VT* 24 (1974): 8-14; M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1958), 367-408; and M. Weinfeld, “Sabbath, Temple and the Enthronement of the Lord, The Problem of the Sitz in Leben of Gen 1:1-2:3,” in *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux en l’honneur de H. Cazelles* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1981), 501-512.

²The exact sequence of wording is found in the similar phrases of Gen 3:16 and 4:7. I owe this awareness to Dr. Richard M. Davidson.

4. Adam's second son was given a symbolic name: אָבֶל "Abel" which means "breath' (and life) that is fleeting and transitory" (see Pss 62:10; 144:4; Job 7:16)¹; and refers to the "short and temporary status of human existence" (Eccl 3:19; 11:8, 10).² This is intended to contrast the "breath of life" (נְשֵׁמַת חַיִּים) signifying "the bounty of new life" which God breathed into man at creation (Gen 2:7). Subsequent to the Fall, man's life was shortened to become merely fleeting and temporary. Life is "vanity," Abel. This fact is underscored by the sudden and untimely demise of Abel.

5. Adam's occupation was to "till the ground" (2:5, 15, 17-19, 23). Cain's occupation was also as "a tiller of the ground" (4:2, 12).

6. Cain's use of the פְּרִי "fruit" of the ground as an offering to God played a significant role in the offense he committed. This serves as a deliberate reminder of the פְּרִי "fruit" of the tree in the midst of the garden which constituted the temptation and the offense of Adam and Eve. "The reader is thus led to parallel the offense of Cain with that of Adam and Eve."³

7. The verbal root נָדַח "to be driven" used in 4:14 to describe Cain's expulsion and banishment from the ground parallels its earlier use in 3:24 to describe the expulsion and banishment of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden.

8. Cain's anger, described with the double use of the word "face" in 4:5-6, is the cause of his sinful act and subsequent alienation from God and the ground, which were

¹Hauser, 299.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 300.

also described with the double use of the word “face” in 4:14. These deliberate mentions of “face” refer back to 3:8 where Adam and Eve’s sinful act and alienation from God caused them to hide from the “face” of God.

9. The words “east of Eden” (4:16) form a terminological link with 3:24 showing that both parents and Cain ended up away from the original idyllic Edenic home.

10. Furthermore:

God used the words of his oracle for the woman (3:16) in his warning for Cain (4:7); the voice of Abel’s blood cried out against Cain (4:10), and the voice of the Lord God was heard in the garden (3:8); Cain denied being his brother’s keeper (4:9), and God placed the man in the garden to keep it (2:15) but subsequently installed the angels to keep the way to the tree (3:24).¹

Gordon Wenham also recognized that it is only in Gen 3:14 and in 4:11 “does God actually use this traditional formula ‘Cursed are you’; elsewhere some third person pronounces the curse (e.g., Deut 28:16).”²

Syntactic Analysis of Gen 3:14-15

Prior to translating, understanding, and interpreting a verse or sentence in a narrative or direct speech text, one must faithfully understand the function or syntax of the verb forms in the text. “Syntactic analysis should never follow the lead of interpretation and semantics,”³ but rather precede them. This section seeks to do just this

¹Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 154.

²Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 78.

³Niccacci, 182. He insists: “One should not begin with semantics or interpretation but with morphology and function. Semantics is important but subservient to morphology and function (syntax)” (p. 168). He also adds: “Syntax assists interpretation. . . . By means of the syntactic devices of Biblical Hebrew the biblical authors presented their information in a structured form. Our interpretation must be

by syntactically locating Gen 3:14-15 within the flow of the text¹ of Gen 1-3.

Gen 2:4 ends the first creation story that begins in Gen 1:1.² The second creation story begins in 2:5 and ends in 2:25. It begins in 2:5-6, “with nominal sentences and *weqatal* forms, all of them conveying information antecedent to the story that follows. The main narrative line begins in 2:7.”³

The next completely demarcated text extends from Gen 3:1 to 3:24. Gen 3:1 contains a *waw-qatal* form (i.e., a compound nominal clause) and therefore is dependent upon a narrative *wayyiqtol*. Despite the word echo from Gen 2:25, Gen 3:1 “is better understood as connected with the following *wayyiqtol*. The main reason is that a new

based on them, not on our modern understanding or taste” (p. 177-178). See also idem, *Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose* (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1990).

Contra: Y. Endo, *The Verbal System of Classical Hebrew in the Joseph Story: An Approach from Discourse Analysis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1996); and Ronald S. Hendel, “In the Margins of the Hebrew Verbal System: Situation, Tense, Aspect, Mood,” *ZAH* 9 (1996): 129-181. Both Endo and Hendel rely on semantics in classifying tenses without due respect for the function (syntax).

¹Niccacci defined a text as “a logical (i.e., intelligible and consistent) sequence of linguistic signs, placed between two significant breaks in communication” (“Analysis of Biblical Narrative,” 177, referring to H. Weinrich, *Tempus: Besprochene und erzählte Welt*, 4th ed. [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1985]). Niccacci then adds this clarification: “A biblical text, for the most part, is generated by a chain of the same type of verb forms (the chain of *wayyiqtol* in narrative and of *weqatal* in direct speech)” (177). He continues: “Chains of *wayyiqtol* in narrative and of *weqatal* in direct speech enhance the ‘textuality’ of a text; that is, they confer its coherence and consistency” (ibid., 178).

²Niccacci seriously contends that Gen 2:4, “a simple nominal clause,” cannot be broken up into two as commonly suggested (“Analysis of Biblical Narrative,” 183). “The chiasmic arrangement of the text makes it impossible for me to accept the splitting of 2:4 in two halves as literary critics commonly do. The verse is, in fact, one literary unit” (ibid.). Furthermore, he defends: “Semantics and literary analysis suggest that 2:4 is connected with the preceding text. In fact, the key terms of 1:1 are resumed. Actually, the phrases in 2:4 אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם / הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ and אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם / בְּהַבְרָאָה echo בָּרָא and אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם / אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ of 1:1. . . . Literary analysis shows, however, that 2:4 is background information to the preceding story rather than antecedent information to the following one” (ibid., 184).

³Ibid., 187. This section ends in vs. 25. Niccacci verifies: “Since the *wayyiqtol* in 2:25 has a conclusive function, we translate it ‘*Thus* (i.e., *because they were one flesh*), the two were naked, namely, the man and his wife, *while* (or *although*) they were not feeling shame’” (ibid., 189).

character is introduced, the serpent, and the serpent is going to be important in the following story.”¹

This text evidently closes in Gen 3:24 “because in 4:1 we find a compound nominal clause that interrupts the main line of narrative in order to convey antecedent information”² before the next demarcated text, which tells the story of Cain and Abel.³

Naccacci explains:

Between the two significant breaks in the communication (3:1 and 4:1) the texts flow without major interruption from the beginning to end. Direct speeches are dominant throughout. . . . Indeed, the speeches are of special importance for the development of the message. . . . The text advances directly and quickly without allowing any pauses and the tension remains high throughout.⁴

¹Ibid., 189. He continues: “If this understanding is correct, Gen 3:1a conveys information previous to the main narrative. It is a kind of an indirect appeal of the writer to the reader, as if he were saying that from the outset the reader should know that the serpent was the most cunning beast of the earth. This is ‘comment’ (*besprechen*), not ‘narrative’ (*erzählen*)” (ibid.).

Francis Andersen, discussing “Episode-Initial Circumstantial Clause,” recognizes that Gen 3:1 and 4:1 are exemplify such: “The onset of a new episode is often marked by introducing a new *dramatis persona* by means of a circumstantial clause. In Gen 3:1 a new *dramatis persona* (the snake) is introduced, and a new episode inaugurated, by means of a circumstantial clause: ‘now the snake was the cunningest animal. . . . A new development in a story may be marked by a circumstantial clause, even though the subject is not a new character. So the story of Cain begins: ‘. . . and Adam knew Eve his wife (4:1).’ After that, regular *waw*-consecutive with prefixed (imperfect) verb (sequential past) clauses continue the story” (*The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, [The Hague: Mouton, 1974], 79).

²Niccacci, “Analysis of Biblical Narrative,” 194.

³Ibid. This compound nominal clause is translated with his explanation, as follows: “Now (*from the outset the reader should know that*) Adam knew Eve his wife . . .” (emphasis his).

⁴Ibid., 194-195. He clarified: “Verbal sentences make up the main level of the narrative and nominal sentences a secondary level. By using both verbal and nominal sentences, the writer can indicate progress, pause, and interruption in the communication, allocating all information to either the main or the secondary level (i.e., foreground or background). His choice is indicated by the verb forms used in the narrative” (ibid., 175).

Naccacci indicates that “a chain of *wayyiqtol* constitutes the mainline of communication in narrative.” For direct speech, however, “a chain of *weqatal* constitutes the mainline of communication” (“Biblical Hebrew Verb System,” 177). “The chain of *wayyiqtol* in narrative as well as the chain of *weqatal* in direct speech goes on without interruption until the author intends to signal a change” (ibid.).

Gen 3:11, 13, 14 each begin with *wayyiqtol* and “are presented as discrete, coordinate items, all on the same linguistic main level and successive one to the other: ‘He said . . . *Then* the Lord God said to the woman . . . *And then* the Lord God said to the serpent.’”¹

Gen 3:14-15 belongs to the syntactical unit of vss 14-19.² Naccacci comments on the syntactical arrangement of the quotation formulas of the three divine speeches of Gen 3:14-19 (vss. 14, 16, and 17):

The first speech involves a *wayyiqtol* form: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶל-הַנָּחָשׁ “and Yahweh God said to the serpent.” The next two formulas are (*waw*)-*qatal*: אֶל-הָאִשָּׁה אָמַר “to the woman he said” and וְלָאָדָם אָמַר “(and) to the man he said . . .” The two *qatal* constructions (whether with or without *waw*) are compound nominal clauses signaling a secondary line in narrative. They are not independent but rely upon an independent *wayyiqtol*. Because, in 3:14-17, this *wayyiqtol* precedes, the two *qatal* convey background information. We can render this as follows: “Then Yahweh God said to the serpent . . . To the woman, *for her part*, he said . . . To the man, *for his part*, he said.” Thus, the three speeches do not stand on the same level, as the syntax clearly shows, but the second and the third are related to the first. If, on the contrary, they were all expressed with a *wayyiqtol*, they would be successive speeches standing on the same level: “*Then* Yahweh God said to the serpent. . . .

He may, for a special purpose, want to “communicate a piece of information in a subsidiary line (background) instead of in the mainline (foreground). The verb forms that signal an interruption in narrative are those in the nominal clauses, either simple or compound” (ibid.).

Naccacci then demonstrates the syntactical flow on Gen 3:1-24 on the basis of the main and the secondary level of information (ibid., 189-192).

¹Naccacci contrasts: “On the contrary, in verses 14, 16 and 17 the three speeches— the first introduced with *wayyiqtol*, the other two with (*waw*)-*qatal*— are presented as related items, in the sense that the second and the third are related to the first as background to foreground” (“Basic Facts and Theory of the Biblical Hebrew Verb System in Prose,” 177).

²See above on the section of the structural links of Gen 3:14-19. See also Sailhamer, “Genesis,” 57.

Then he said to the woman. . . . Then he said to the man."¹

The important implication of this is that Gen 3:14-15 remains the central message of Gen 3 because syntactical and literary structural analysis prove it as such. It becomes the watershed message that supersedes the punishments of the woman (vs. 16) and man (vss. 17-19), which emanate from it. Gen 3:16-19 seems to further expand the ramifications of the message of Gen 3:15.

Both vss. 14 and 15 evidence "expositions in apposition"² which entail "a more extended exposition in apposition of material which is not necessarily implicit in the lead clause."³ Each verse has three or more clauses in apposition to the lead clause of each apposition, "making it more parenthetical than circumstantial."⁴

Francis Andersen observed that "it is customary for a curse or blessing to take the form of a general first statement in precative mood, followed, in apposition, by a detailed prediction, in indicative mood, of what the curse or blessing will entail." There is a "switch in mood at the point of apposition" in Gen 3:14, 17; 4:11; and 9:26. On the

¹Niccacci, "Analysis of Biblical Narrative," 194. Niccacci further clarifies: "*Wayyiqtol* and related *qatal* construction make up an indivisible syntactic unit. The *qatal* is syntactically dependent on the *wayyiqtol* sentence" ("Basic Facts and Theory of the Biblical Hebrew Verb System in Prose," 177). He continues to explain that the *Wayyiqtol* is the main-line verb form in biblical Hebrew narrative while *qatal* is a secondary-line verb form, used for antecedent information, circumstance or contrast (178).

²Andersen, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 49.

³Ibid. Andersen earlier clarified: "An apposition sentence consists of two or more clauses in juxtaposition (no conjunction). Such sentences may be arranged on a spectrum depending on how much semantic overlap there is between the constituent clauses" (ibid., 36).

⁴Ibid., 50. This explains Gen 3:15 where the expository apposition "gives details of the enmity between the snake and the woman" stated in the lead clause. Similar constructions in Gen 44:12; 12:8 have been called "circumstantial" (Paul Joüon, *Grammaire de l'Hébreu Biblique* [Rome: Pontificio istituto biblico, 1947], 487; and A. B. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1901], 188).

other hand, the lead clause is indicative (predictive) as in the following apposition clauses in Gen 3:15, 16; and Deut 7:14.¹

Gen 3:14 begins with a causal clause. Wenham noted that “it is unusual for a כִּי (because) clause to precede the main clause. . . . When causal clause precedes the main clause, it underlines its importance. The most important clause comes first.”² The causal particle כִּי here governs “two juxtaposed clauses the first of which is logically subordinate.”³ The complete causal phrase reads: “. . . Because you have done this . . .”

Gen 3:14 consists of a protasis clause: כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת “Because you did this.”

The rest of the clauses in the verse constitute the apodosis:

אָרִיר אֶתָּה מִכָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה וּמִכָּל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה
עַל-גַּחֲזֵק חַלְדָּי וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל כָּל-יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

“You are cursed among all the animals and among all the living things of the earth. Upon your belly shall you go all the days of your life.” For Naccacci, the fact that the verb הָיָה ‘be’ does not appear in the protasis means that “the sentence is an affirmation rather than a command: ‘*You are* the most cursed among the beasts of the earth.’” This contrasts with the affirmation phrase of vs. 3:1 which reads: “Now, the serpent was the most

¹Andersen, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 54.

²Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 48, n. 14a. See also Gen 3:17. With the two juxtaposed clauses that the causal particle governs, Paul Joüon and Takamitsu Muraoka also observe that: “The order of the constituent members depends on the relative importance of each of the two. . . . כִּי is often in second position: Gen 8:9; but it is sometimes in first position: Gen 3:14, 17” (*A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Subsidia 14 (Roma, Italia: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1983), 2:640, §170n).

³Joüon and Muraoka, 2:638, §170d, citing 1 Sam 26:23 as another such instance. He adds: “The various nuances of causality are usually rendered by particles. The most common conjunction is כִּי, one of whose many meanings is that of ‘because, for’” (p. 638).

cunning among the beasts of the earth.”¹ The protasis clause, **כִּי עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת** “because you did this,” is presumably “an abbreviated reference representing all that is outlined in 3:1-13.”²

The phrase **אָרְרָךְ אֱתָהּ** consists of a Qal, passive, masculine, singular participle as predicate, followed by a second-person masculine singular pronoun as subject. This is a nominal clause with optative force.³ “The optative force is especially conspicuous when the predicate is a passive participle and precedes the subject.” Gen 9:25, **אָרְרָךְ כְּנֶעַן**, is similar to Gen 3:14, **אָרְרָךְ אֱתָהּ**. “The reverse sequence is also attested as in Gen 27:29.”⁴

Generally, the subject precedes the predicate in the majority of the occurrences of nominal clauses in biblical Hebrew narratives.⁵ It is possible that some emphasis is intended when the predicate precedes the subject. “A personal pronoun tends to occupy the second slot when prominence is intended to be given to it. . . . The predicate

¹Niccacci, “Analysis of Biblical Narrative,” 194.

²Ogden, 134. See Norman Henry Snaith, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of Genesis I-VIII* (London: Epworth, 1947), 34.

³Joüon and Muraoka, 2:615, §163b. It is found in greeting formulae as in Judg 6:23, “greetings to you!”; Ruth 2:4, “Yahweh be with you!” It is also found in blessings and curses as in Gen 9:26, “Yahweh be blessed!”

⁴Ibid., 2:566, §154e. See also Francis I. Andersen, *The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch*, Journal of the Bible Literature Monograph Series, 14 (New York: Abingdon, 1970), 38, 49 passim. Joüon and Muraoka generalized: “The jussive of optative sentences is mostly found before the subject” (2:566, §155L). See Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24; 27: 41; Exod 5:21; Num 6:24, 25 (priestly benediction); 20:24; Ps 128:5.

⁵See Joüon and Muraoka, 2:567-568, §154f. These statistics are based on a study of selected portions of the OT: see Andersen, *Verbless*, 31; and Takamitsu Muraoka, *Emphatic Words and Structures in Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 6 passim.

preceding a pronominal subject often does receive some prominence.”¹ Furthermore, Jan Joosten argues for an aspectual difference between the two sequences, subject-participle and participle-subject. The subject-participle sequence indicates “contemporaneity” or “actual present” while the participle-subject sequence indicates “simultaneity” or “factual present.”²

This nominal clause is “descriptive” or “classificatory” or “classifying” in that “the predicate describes the entity represented by the subject, to indicate in what state, condition or location the subject is found, or to what class or category it can be assigned.”³

The outline of the last portion of Gen 3:14: **עַל-בְּטֶנְךָ תֵּלֵךְ וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל** is:

“Upon your belly / you will walk

and dust / you will eat . . .”

These consist of two “Declarative Conjunctive sentences” which are usually described as sentences used to make “statements to two (or more) related and contemporary facts which are not contrastive nor antithetical. The facts may be past (using ‘perfect’ verbs), future (using ‘imperfect’ verbs), or timeless (using quasiverbals or verbless predication).”⁴ Here, imperfect verbs are used; these two sentence clauses are

¹Joüon and Muraoka, 2:268-569, §154fa. See Muraoka, *Emphatic*, 15; and idem, “On the Nominal Clause in Late Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew,” in *Languages Studies IV*, ed. Mosheh Bar-Asher (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990), 219-252.

²Jan Joosten, “The Predicative Participle in Biblical Hebrew,” *Zeitschrift für Althebraistik* 2 (1989): 128-159. See Joüon-Muraoka, §154fc, 570-571.

³Joüon-Muraoka, §154ea, 566-567.

⁴Andersen, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 99.

also called “Conjoined Predictive clauses.” These are clauses referring to “concomitant or parallel future events by means of imperfect verbs are likely to be conjoined.”¹

The final phrase of Gen 3:14 is כָּל־יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ “. . . All the Days of Your Life.” This is a type of “Indirect Accusative” called an “Accusative of temporal determination” answering the questions “when?” and “how long?”² “The indirect accusative is indirectly subordinated to the verb (*ad-verbial* accusative). It indicates a determination of the verbal predicate.”³ In this verse, the verbs that govern this indirect accusative are תֹּאכַל and תִּלְךָ.⁴

The MT of Gen 3:15 can be divided up as follows:

15(a) וְאִיבָה אֲשִׁית

15(b) בְּיַד וּבִין הָאִשָּׁה

15(c) וּבִין זְרַעַךְ וּבִין זְרַעָהּ

¹Ibid. He continues: “Since imperfect verb clauses rarely begin with the verb, conjunctive sentences with imperfect verbs often resemble contrastive sentences and whether such a sentence is antithetical or not is determined more by semantic content alone, more in this case than others” (ibid.). Gen 22:17 is another example of this usage.

²Joüon-Muraoka, § 126i, 458-459. Examples given include: “this day”; “today”; “this night” (2 Sam 19:8); “in the evening, in the morning, and at noon I will cause my complaint to be heard” (Ps 55:18); “this year” (Jer 28:16); “in that year” (Gen 26:12); “(in) one day” (Gen 27:45); “six days” (Exod 20:9, 11).

³Ibid., § 126a, 455.

⁴Ibid. Furthermore: “In some categories of the indirect accusative, that of time and place in particular, the syntactic relationship is sometimes made more explicit by the use of an appropriate preposition or by the use of a noun with a paragogic vowel” (ibid.). Joüon-Muraoka gives the following as examples:

1. Predicative accusative of state: using Adjective, Participle, Substantive;
2. Accusative of limitation; (3) Accusative of local determination (place);
4. Accusative of temporal determination; (5) Accusative of measure;
6. Accusative of cause; and (7) Accusative of instrument (§ 126, 455-9).

15(d) **הוּא יְשׁוּפֵךְ רֹאשׁ**

15(e) **וְאַתָּה תִּשְׁפָּנוּ עִקֵּב**

In Gen 3:15, emphasis is given to the noun **וְאַיִבָּה** “enmity” because it is placed at the beginning of the sentence. It stands at the head of the lead clause in the apposition as the operating word there. The word guides the meaning and movement of the remaining clauses and phrases of the verse which serve to explain it. Thus, it carries the most weight in that verse, syntactically.

On a closer look, indeed, the word **וְאַיִבָּה** “enmity” runs through all the Gen 3:14-19 pronouncements as they have been described as being syntactically united. “Enmity is ‘established’ between the human and the animal world, between man and nature, and between humans as well.”¹

The application and demonstration of this enmity happens at different levels. There is an obvious shift from the single individuals: **וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה וּבֵין הַנָּחָשׁ** “The serpent and the woman,” to the plural collective: **וּבֵין זֶרְעֵךְ וּבֵין זֶרְעָהּ** “The seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman,” and finally to a definitely single individual representative locked in a duel: “The serpent and the Woman’s Seed,” understandable from the phrases **וְאַתָּה תִּשְׁפָּנוּ עִקֵּב הוּא יְשׁוּפֵךְ רֹאשׁ**. This evidences the *narrowing* from collective to individual, from plural to singular. This has very significant theological implications for the understanding and application of this verse.²

¹G. Savran, “Beastly Speech: Intertextuality, Balaam’s Ass, and the Garden of Eden.” *JSOT* 64 (1994): 41.

²See Chapter 5 below.

The final part of Gen 3:15 reads: **הוּא יִשׁוּפֵךְ רֹאשׁ וְאַחַהּ תִּשׁוּפְנִי עֶקֶב**

“He shall aim at (or crush) your head, whilst you will aim at (or crush) his heel.” These are two instances of an “independent pronoun added to a finite verbal form.”¹ Joüon-Muraoka wrote:

Since a finite verbal form in itself indicates the person, it can be said that, whenever a verb occurs with a pronoun, some nuance is intended. Generally speaking, the addition of a pronoun gives some special prominence to the person or persons indicated by it, comparable to the close-up focus in photography. The person or persons may be perceived by the speaker or writer as prominent *per se* or in relation to some other person or persons.²

Each of these two phrases has an indirect accusative, in particular, the “accusative of limitation.” This describes “the part to which an affirmation is limited in the accusative.”³ This accusative points out “that part or object, or that member, which is specially concerned, and to which, along with the leading idea, special prominence is to

¹Joüon-Muraoka, § 146a, b, 539.

²Ibid., 539-540. “The pronoun is used in cases of disjunction or adversative juxtaposition, a weaker form of contrast” (p. 539). Another example is Ps 109:28, ‘they shall curse but you shall bless.’ “The pronoun is readily added in certain sentences with an emphatic nuance” (p. 540). It is used in reminding someone of a fact as in Josh 14:6. It is used particularly in the case of a promise as in Gen 21:24, “I am willing to swear it”; 38:17, “I will send you a kid” (promise); 47:30, “I will do as you have said,” (solemn promise); Judg 6:18; 2 Sam 3:13; 21:6; 1 Kgs 2:18; 5:22; 2 Kgs 6:3.

“In actual speech situations, utterances such as these may well have been accompanied by some appropriate gesture like a finger pointed at the person addressed. So in a rebuke, e.g., Judg 10:13, ‘you have forsaken me,’; Jephthah gives vent to his indignation in Judg 11:7, ‘Did you not hate me and drive me out of my father’s house?’” (ibid.).

“The pronoun can precede or follow the verb, apparently without any difference in meaning; in most cases it precedes” (ibid.).

³Ibid., § 126g, 457. See other discussions above. It is called in Arabic terminology: *tamyiz* “specification.” See 1 Kgs 15:23; Gen 41:40; 17:11; 37:21; Exod 6:3; Josh 7:8, 12; Jer 2:16, 27; 18:17; 32:33; Ps 3:8; Deut 22:26; 33:11; 2 Sam 3:27.

be assigned.”¹ In this case, it is the “second object of the active verb.”²

These two phrases are set in contrast to each other. Andersen translates:

“. . . He (*on the one hand*) will crush you head;
and you (*on the other hand*) will crush him heel.”³

These identical verbs “point to similarity, while ‘head’ versus ‘heel’ is contrastive. But neither of these pairs is brought into prominence. The contrast is between ‘he’ and ‘you.’”⁴ These two phrases describe two parallel simultaneous but different activities. The participants in this contrast have been “brought into prominence by realizing them as grammatically similar items in pre-verbal positions. The use of explicit pronominal subjects here is the common way of achieving this.”⁵

Paul Saydon contends that the correct translation demands a conative sense as follows: “He will attack you in the head, and you will try to attack him in the heel,” i.e., “the woman’s seed will completely defeat the serpent, while the serpent will only try, but in vain, to bite the heel of his adversary.”⁶ Knut Holter strongly disagrees, saying that

¹Heinrich Ewald, *Syntax of the Hebrew Language of the Old Testament*, trans. James Kennedy (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1879), 54. See also Ps 68:22; 1 Kgs 19:21: “he cooked them (as regards) the flesh,” i.e., cooked their fleshy parts. Deut 22:26 reads: “he strikes him (in the) soul,” i.e., in the life, i.e., dead.

²Ibid.

³Andersen, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 151.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid. Andersen also indicated that: “A mild contrast between two related clauses can be secured without advancing to the outright opposition between antithetical and exclusive clauses” (ibid.)

⁶P. P. Saydon, “Conative Imperfect in Hebrew,” *VT* 12 (1962): 124-6.

this does not take the perpetual aspect of the sentence into account, and that the verb should really be read iteratively, whereby both action or attacks happen on the same level.¹

At this juncture, a few remarks are needed on the *waw* joining Gen 3:15d and 15e, that is, וַיִּנְחַם.² Several options have been given on how to rightly construe this conjunction:

1. וַיִּנְחַם as adversative: This makes the last clause subordinate to the first.

Combining this with the inchoative gives the idea, “he will crush your head, while you will only try (and fail) to bite, etc.” This translation, by subordinating the last clause, does not digress from the curse but rather intensifies it, making the failure of the snake to inflict mortal damage part of his curse, and thus it reinforces the human salvation sense. The main problem for this translation, however, is that it requires the insinuation of the word ‘only’ and the inchoative sense. If we ask what in the context would give this insinuation, the only answer is that which other interpreters have given; namely the head/heel antithesis, which suffers from the fact that a wound from the snake in the heel may be fatal.³

2. *Waw* in וַיִּנְחַם as introducing a causal clause:⁴ Using a causal clause “because” makes Gen 3:15e “an explanation statement put at the end of the curse, explaining the guilt of the snake.”⁵ This means that the curse starts and ends with an explanation as follows: “because you have done this” (vs. 14), and “because you

¹Holter, 110.

²See Haspecker and Lohfink, 359-371.

³Ronning, 93; Haspecker and Lohfink, 359-360.

⁴See Emil Kautzsch, ed., *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, trans. A. E. Cowley (Oxford, England: Clarendon, 1910), 492, §158a, where Gesenius notes that as a rule, however, a causal clause is introduced with a causal preposition. This work is hereafter cited as *GKC*.

⁵Ronning, 94.

attack(ed) his heel.” This presents the curse “more as a judicial pronouncement than as a graphic image of a battle between a man and a snake.”¹

An explanation statement usually employs the perfect sense, although the imperfect is possible. “As Gesenius notes, however, all these passages are in the context of a conditional future, where the punishments may be avoided, so they cannot provide a precedent for Gen 3:15.”²

3. *Waw* in וַיִּנְקַח, not strictly causal, but also comparative, introducing the “measure for measure” idea: “The English ‘as,’ meaning both ‘because’ and ‘like,’ would suggest this dual sense better than the German ‘weil.’”³ Haspecker and Lohfink support this comparative sense in Gen 3:15 with certain biblical and non-biblical comparison materials:

a. Retaliation thought in Gen 9:6, “he who sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed.” This would reflect in Gen 3:15 as “he will crush your head, because/like you tried to snap after his heel.”⁴

b. Form-critical study by Westermann of prophetic judgment announcement type whereby Gen 3:15 is similar to Gen 3:17-19; 4:10-12; 49:66-67; Deut 28:15-46; 1 Sam 15:23; 2 Sam 12:12; 1 Kgs 21:19; 2 Chr 12:5; 24:20; Hos 4:5-6 showing that both punishment and the reason for the punishment are given together.

¹Ibid. Cf. Haspecker and Lohfink, 360-361.

²Ronning, 94. See *GKC* § 158d. Cf. Deut 7:12; 8:20; and 1 Kgs 8:35.

³Ronning, 94. See Haspecker and Lohfink, 362-363.

⁴Ronning, 94.

“Applied to Gen 3:15, the punishment is ‘he will crush your head,’ and the reason is, ‘you snapped after his heel.’”¹

c. A line in the Ugaritic epic of Aqhat where El gives permission to the goddess Anat when she was seeking a revenge: Driver translates, “He who hinders you shall be utterly struck down,”² while Coogan translates “Whoever slanders you will be crushed.”³

d. In the ancient pictorial depictions of battle and victory, “crushing of the head is either the end of the fight, or a victory gesture over a dead body.”⁴ In *Enuma elish*, Marduk tramples Tiamat’s dead body, and Naram-Sin of Akkad stands on two dead bodies after a victory. “These and other examples suggest that Gen 3:15 is a picture of complete victory, rather than of a battle.”⁵

4. The imperfect sense in Gen 3:15d and Gen 3:15e has a present/future connotation. “The snake will continue to waylay humans (as the prediction of enmity implies), because it is its nature to do so; therefore the punishment to be inflicted is not

¹Ibid., 95. “Further, it is typical in these prophetic judgments for there to be a verbal association between guilt and punishment; for example ‘eat’ in Gen 3:17, and this common feature explains the double use of אָכַל in Gen 3:15” (ibid.). Cf. Haspecker and Lohfink, 365-367.

²Ronning, 94.

³Ibid. See also Haspecker and Lohfink, 362-363. Cf. *ANET*, 500; Michael David Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 38; and J. C. L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1977), 111 (Aqhat 18.i.19).

⁴Ronning, 95.

⁵Ibid.; Haspecker and Lohfink, 371.

only for the original offense, but for all of those which will be committed in the future.”¹

The third and fourth options seem to fit the context and the grammar best of all. The *waw* is not strictly causal, but also comparative, introducing the idea of “measure for measure.” Both attacks happen simultaneously and also have a futuristic application to them. The implications of this verse are exhibited in the religious history of mankind.

The matter of whether the serpent loses to the special Seed of the woman in this conflict or not continues to recur. The thematic context and semantics of Gen 3:14-15, and their intertextuality, shed more light on this matter. The points of attack also seem to suggest the more serious wound, whether to the head or to the heel. This does not overlook the fact that each attack had fatal intention and capabilities. We shall now turn to the semantic analysis and word studies.

Morphological and Semantic Analysis

One of the important exegetical processes is the semantic analysis and study of word use in the text in question. This is the purpose of this section of this chapter. It concentrates on the major words and significations in Gen 3:14-15 and pronominal and definite referents to preceding and/or succeeding verses.

שֶׁנָּחָשׁ “The Serpent”

שֶׁנָּחָשׁ is a singular masculine noun, with the definite article. It was first introduced and mentioned by name in the narrative in Gen 3:1 where it was described as “more subtle than any beast of the field.” In this narrative, it is always appearing with the

¹Ronning, 95; Haspecker and Lohfink, 369.

article.¹ This suggests also that the writer understands that the serpent must have been earlier introduced to Adam and Eve prior to Gen 3. God must have warned the couple about an enemy of God and God's creations somehow before the serpent himself appeared to them. This appears logical from the use of the definite article.

Referring to Gen 2:15, God put man in the garden **לְעִבְרָהּ וּלְשֹׂמְרָהּ** “to work/cultivate it and to watch/guard/protect/retain/keep it.” The first verb of action **עָבַד** also connotes the fact that the couple were like servants working for a superior. This use here may already be a reminder for loyalty to God rather than another impostor or enemy.

The second verb **שָׁמַר** more clearly hints at what was coming. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. The varied nuances of this word, as mentioned above, clearly point to the underlying root meaning: “to pay careful attention to.”² This includes focusing on “oneself, on others over whom one has charge, or on the expressed or implicit will of one's superior.”³ Further light is shed on the intensity of the responsibility and warning by the use of the same verb in Gen 3:24. Here, the verb **שָׁמַר** is used to indicate the mandate God gave for the Cherubim and the flaming sword to guard the garden by preventing access to the tree of life by sinful humans.

¹Walter C. Kaiser concludes that since the Serpent, “always with the article and thus, no doubt, referring to a title” (*Toward an Old Testament Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978], 36).

²Keith N. Schoville, “שָׁמַר,” *NIDOTTE* (1997), 4:182; see also pp. 183-184. See J. Hermann Austel, “שָׁמַר,” *TWOT*, 2:939-942; *BDB* (1996), s.v. “שָׁמַר”; Georg Bertram, “φυλάσσω, φυλακή,” *TDNT*, 9:236-244; Walter C. Kaiser, “שָׁמַר,” *TWOT*, 2:594-595; Harald Riesenfeld, “τηρέω,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 8:140-151; Hans-Georg Schütz and Colin Brown, “Guard, Keep, Watch,” *NIDNTT*, 2:132-137; and Marvin R. Wilson, “שָׁמַר,” *TWOT*, 2:576-577.

³Schoville, 182.

Another hint for the reader about the prior warning given to Adam and Eve comes from the etymology of the name of the forbidden tree in the middle of the garden of Eden found in the expression in Gen 2:17: **וְרֵעַ טוֹב הַדַּעַת** “but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” The phrase **וְרֵעַ טוֹב** “good and evil” later appear in the story of the fall in Gen 3:5, 22. The warning about evil that was looming through an enemy of God was given to them. Similarly, the mention of the possibility of dying (Gen 2:17) collaborates this reasoning.

שָׁחַט is the verb derived from **שָׁחַט**. The verb appears only in Piel, meaning “practice divination, divine, observe signs” “learn by omens,” e.g., Gen 30:27; 44:5; Lev 19:26; 2 Kgs 21:6; 2 Chr 33:6.¹ This reveals more of the nuances of the word for snake.

The generic term for snake is **שָׁחַט**. However, it has several synonyms in the Bible. **אֲשָׁפ** is called a venomous snake.² **עֶכְשָׁב** is an *hapax legomenon* found only in Ps 140:3 [MT 4] “where it is clearly a snake (may be the horned viper, *Cerastes*

¹BDB (1996), s.v. “שָׁחַט.” Studies on the Serpent/Snake are found in: I. Aharoni, “On Some Animals Mentioned in the Bible,” *Osiris* 5 (1938): 461-478; Robert L. Alden, “שָׁחַט,” *TWOT*, 2:571-572; Hans Bietenhard and Philip J. Budd, “Dragon, Serpent, Scorpion, Sting,” *NIDNTT*, 1:507-511; F. S. Bodenheimer, *Animal and Man in Bible Lands* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 65-68; G. Cansdale, *All the Animals of the Bible Lands* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 202-210; Alfred Ely Day and Gregory D. Jordan, “Serpent,” *ISBE*, 4:417-418; Heinz-Josef Fabry, “שָׁחַט,” *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 5:384-397; Werner Foerster, “ὄφις,” *TDNT*, 5:566-582; K. R. Joines, “The Bronze Serpent in the Israelite Cult,” *JBL* 87 (1968): 245-256; idem, *Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament: A Linguistic, Archaeological, and Literary Study* (Haddonfield, NJ: Haddonfield House, 1974); idem, “Winged Serpents in Isaiah’s Inaugural Vision,” *JBL* 86 (1967): 410-5; Gary L. Knapp, “Viper,” *ISBE*, 4:988-989; W. Stewart McCullough, “Serpent,” *IDB*, 4:289-291; Robert C. Stallman, “שָׁחַט,” *NIDOTTE*, 3:84-88; and D. J. Wiseman, “Flying Serpents?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 23 (1972): 108-110.

²Robin Wakely, “אֲשָׁפ,” *NIDOTTE* (1997), 3:1289. It is used in apposition to the word **שָׁחַט** in Num 21:6 and Deut 8:15 to mean fiery serpents probably to reflect “the nature of the venom of the snakes” or the “burning inflammation resulting from a snakebite” (ibid.).

cornutus).¹ נָחָשׁ refers to “cobra” in Ps 58:4[MT 5]. שָׁפִיפָה “appears only in Gen 49:17 and may be the horned viper.”²

נִפְעָנִי means “viper” in Prov 23:32; Jer 8:17; Isa 11:8. אֲנָפֶה means the “adder” in Job 20:16. עֲפָע means “viper” in Isa 14:29 as used in Ps 58:4-5[5-6] associating it with the act of charming, like the Egyptian cobra (also called *uraeus*, *Naja haje*). קִפְזָה is also an *hapax legomenon* found in Isa 34:15 which may be “a dialectic equivalent of owl”³ or just the harmless “arrow snake (*Eryx jaculus*),”⁴ or the common “tree snake (*Coluber jugularis*).”⁵

Paul Joüon considers the word “snake” as synonymous to “reptile” in Gen 3:14, reasoning that snakes have not always walked on their bellies. However, he prefers the translation “dragon” to both “snake” and “reptile” because “dragon” also signifies a supernatural being that may even possess wings. He argues that the Hebrew word שָׁרָפָה has a wider semantic range than the word “serpent.” He believes the curse of Gen 3:14

¹Stallmann, 85.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, 87.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.* Additionally, שָׁרָפָה is “a geographical name and may stand in Ps 68:22[23] as the extreme opposite of the bottom off the sea (cf. similar language in Amos 9:3), but on the strength of Ugaritic evidence might also be another name of *tannin*, the sea monster” (87). Cf. Ugaritic *bt_n*; Akkadian *bašmu*; Arabic *batan*. Finally, שָׁרָפָה “designates a range of creatures, from those in the sea (Gen 1:21; Ps 148:7), to land snakes (Exod 7:9, 10, 12; Deut 32:33; Ps 91:13), to a mythological sea monster (Job 7:12) that signifies the kings of enemy nations (Jer 51:34; Ezek 29:3; 32:2) and appears in parallel with Leviathan (Ps 74:13; Isa 27:1) and Rahab (Isa 51:9)” (*ibid.*, and *ibid.*, 4:313-314).

resulted in the actual physical bodily degradation of the dragon into the form of a snake.¹

There is no justification for taking the serpent other than the simple natural snake that God made at the beginning. Gen 3:1 mentions that the serpent is one of the “beasts of the field which the Lord had made.” Those beasts were all under the sovereignty of Adam. They were not supernatural. Hence, the serpent was an ordinary snake, although it may indeed have originally had the ability to fly, as Paul Joüon suggests.²

שָׁרָפִי is also used figuratively; of oppressor (Isa 14:29), of Dan (Gen 49:17); symbolically, of world-powers (Isa 27:1); and mythologically (Job 26:13; 3:6). It is used in the form of a simile of perniciousness of ungodly (Pss 58:5; 140:4), of the effect of wine (Prov 22:32), and of eating dust (Gen 3:14; Isa 65:25; Mic 7:17).³ This sheds more light on the negative connotation of the serpent as representing an evil power.

While the text of Gen 3:1 refers to an ordinary snake made by God, there are also hints in the text that more than a mere reptile is involved. Kaiser rightly argued this:

Note the intelligence, conception, speech, and knowledge the serpent possesses—indeed, a knowledge that surpasses either what the man or woman have. The tempter speaks as if he has access to the mind of God—or at least to the supernatural world. “The Serpent” is clearly individualized, for the pronoun used of him in Hebrew is the second person masculine singular pronoun. Furthermore, the serpent of the temptation is the serpent of the final conflict; he is someone whom a future male descendant of the woman will strike with a crushing blow to his skull. Thus, the designation “the serpent” is probably a title, not the particular shape he assumed or the instrument he borrowed to manifest himself to the original pair. . . . Even the alleged demotion of the means of locomotion for

¹Paul Joüon, “Le grand Dragon, l’ancien Serpent: Apoc. 12,9 et Genèse 3,14,” *RSR* 17 (1927): 444-446. He commends Jerome for using “draconem” in Exod 7:15, and John for using “snake” and “dragon” interchangeably in Rev 12.

²Ibid.

³*BDB* (1996), s.v. “שָׁרָפִי.”

reptiles from a upright walking position to that of crawling on one's belly and eating dust (Gen 3:14) is insufficient to demonstrate that this being had a reptilian form when he appeared to the first couple. Had not God made creeping things that crawled on their bellies in the first chapter of Genesis and called them "good" (1:24-25)? The words of the curse on the serpent, therefore, must be figures of speech, vividly picturing those who had been vanquished and who must now lie face down in the dirt while the conquering king literally makes these enemies his footstool. When all these details are taken into account, the identity of the tempter can be none other than Satan, that old dragon, the serpent.¹

The OT often describes the serpent as God's cosmic enemy. This is stated in Isa 27:1: "In that day the Lord with His severe sword, great and strong, will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, Leviathan that twisted serpent."² This explicitly described in Job 41:1-34 (Heb 40:25-41:26). "Leviathan" לִוְיָתָן has cognate in Ugaritic, *ltn*, referring to the seven-headed sea/chaos monster.³

¹Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 38-39. NT identified the serpent of Gen 3:15 as Satan in Rom 16:20; 2 Cor 11:3, 14; and Rev 12:9 (ibid., n. 4). Briggs agrees that the serpent's "intelligence, conception, speech, and knowledge higher than that of the man or the woman" indicate that it was more than just an ordinary animal (72-77). The serpent was an evil spirit appearing in the form of a snake in like manner as God incarnated in human form. See also Ronning, 73; referring to the views of Procksch, *Die Genesis*, 34-35. Willis recommends: "The context of Genesis 3 indicates that (a) the serpent is a wild animal, but also that (b) he has abilities above and beyond that which is typical of wild animals" (127).

²Leviathan is mentioned as an animal 5 times in the OT. See Ps 74:13-14; 104:26; Job 3:8-9; 41:1 (Heb 40:25); and Isa 27:1. Maarten J. Paul notes: "In many passages in the OT, such as Pss 74, 89, 93, 104, Job 9, 26 and 38, there are allusions to a conflict between Yahweh and a dragon (variously termed Leviathan, Rahab, twisting serpent, or simply dragon) or the sea at the time of creation. . . . Yahweh's defeat of the chaos monster in the past is appealed to as a ground of confidence for him to act to deliver his people in the present" ("לִוְיָתָן," *NIDOTTE*, 2:778-780). See for further studies: John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); T. N. D. Mettinger, "Fighting the Powers of Chaos and Hell: Towards the Biblical Portrait of God," *Studia theologica* 39 (1985): 21-38; John N. Oswalt, "The Myth of the Dragon and Old Testament Faith," *Evangelical Quarterly* 49 (1977): 163-172; Mary K. Wakeman, *God's Battle with the Monster: A Study in Biblical Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); and David Wolfers, "The Lord's Second Speech in the Book of Job," *VT* 40 (1990): 474-499.

³More stories about the battle between a god and a sea/chaos monster are found in *ANET*, 66-68 and 125-126; and James Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures* (Princeton: Princeton University

Similarly in Mic 7:16-17, the enemies of God and His people are said to be ܫܢܢܝܢ “like the serpent” which licks the dust and crawls on their bellies.¹

Justin gives a Samaritan Aramaic etymology of Satan (*Satanas*), which consists of “apostate” (*sata*) and “snake” (*nas*; i.e., ܫܢܢܝܢ without the middle guttural).² “There is a very close relationship between serpent and divination, particularly seen in the same word stem for ‘serpent’ and ‘divination.’”³ Also, the serpent ܫܢܢܝܢ “is presumably related to the word meaning bewitchment or magic curse.”⁴

Distinguishing between the natural serpent and the evil power that possessed it in Gen 3, Ephrem the Syrian mentioned that the serpent was inferior to human beings, though more subtle than other animals.⁵ Thus, the Serpent was definitely acting as “the obedient instrument of ‘the Evil One,’ and the ‘executor of the intentions of Satan.’”⁶

Press, 1954), nos. 651, 670, 671, and 691.

¹Prophet Micah must have intentionally used the same definite article with the serpent in order to link his imagery to Gen 3:1. Furthermore, the description of licking the dust and crawling echoes Gen 3:14. See also Ps 72:9.

²ANF, 1.250-251, and A. Lukyn Williams, *Justin Martyr: The Dialogue with Trypho, Translation, Introduction, and Notes*, Translations of Christian Literature, Series I - Greek Texts (London: MacMillan, 1930), 216, ns. 5, 6.

³Charles A. Haun, *Genesis: Chapters One Through Five* (Goldsboro, NC: Teaching All Nations, 1984), 133. ܫܢܢܝܢ is a masculine noun meaning “divination, enchantment” both found in the story of Balaam in Num 23:23; 24:1 (*BDB* (1996), s.v. “ܫܢܢܝܢ”).

⁴Burns, 8. See William Lee Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 235.

⁵Kronholm, 89, 93.

⁶*Ibid.* He expatiates: “The seducing Serpent was a reptile of an entirely natural character. . . . It was under the sovereignty of man, to whom the Creator had given the royal dominion over the created universe. . . . This total inferiority of the Serpent implies that its pre-eminent subtility, noted in Gen 3:1, is confined to the animal world, to the singular exclusion of man. . . . For Adam/man was wiser than all

The *Wisdom of Solomon* 2:24 also designates the serpent of Eden as the Devil. Likewise, rabbinic exegesis is filled with the teaching that this serpent represents Satan.¹ Cassuto also witnessed to this understanding of the serpent as “the symbol of evil,”² and the “foe of man.”³

The serpent of Gen 3 has been erroneously interpreted as “intellectual curiosity,”⁴ “craftiness,”⁵ “desire,”⁶ “an embodiment of the animal principle *in man*,”⁷ and “God in disguise.”⁸ Robert C. Stallmann adds that “snakes used in simile and metaphor indicate wicked behavior that wounds society (Deut 32:33; Pss 58:4[5]; 140:3[4]; Isa 59:5), the misery of a hangover (Prov 23:32), and the ultimate anguish of the wicked, whose pleasures are only short-lived (Job 20:14, 16).”⁹ I disagree with these

the beasts— he who had been instituted the ruler and leader of the beasts— and more subtle than all of them— he who determined the names of them all. . . . Although, (the Serpent) was more subtle than the beasts, he was a fool (in comparison) with Adam and Eve, the rulers of the beasts” (pp. 88-89).

¹See *Miqraoth Gedoloth* on Gen 3:1. Two such notable Jewish scholars are Ibn Ezra and Sforino.

²Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:142.

³*Ibid.*, 160.

⁴Norman P. Williams, *Ideas of the Fall and Original Sin: A Historical and Critical Study* (London: Longmans, Green, 1927), 44.

⁵Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:142, see pp. 139-143.

⁶Fishbane, “Genesis 2.4b-11.32: The Primeval Cycle,” 22. Fishbane adds: “The serpent symbolizes the instinctual, rebellious urges fueling that desire and ‘cleverly’ concocting justifications for it” (*ibid.*).

⁷Rosenberg, 8. Cf. Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora*, 101-102.

⁸Burns, 8. Andrews, 29, n. 52, calls this “an eccentric view.”

⁹Stallman, 87. Other figurative uses are found in the NT: Matt 3:7; 23:33; Luke 3:7; Matt 10:16. Skinner believes: “The marvellous agility of the snake, in spite of the absence of visible motor organs, its

allegorical conjectures because God recognized the serpent as an individual being and so addressed him separately from the human pair, rather than as a mere thought or feeling residing in humans.

אָרַרְךָ אֱתָהּ מִכָּל “You Are Cursed Above . . .”

This is the first occurrence of divine curse. Its root (אָרַר) appears fifty-five (55) times in the OT, predominantly in the Pentateuch with eight occurrences in Genesis (Gen 3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25; 12:3; 27:29; and 49:7). Kenneth A. Matthews elaborates:

“Curse” conveys the idea of imprecation where verbal or written utterances invoke misery against a person or thing. The word *ālā* (“curse”) commonly is used for such imprecations, whereas *ʾārar* often indicates a decree or pronouncement against someone by an authority. Only God can actually impose this decree, and thus it supposes, even if spoken by a man, that the power carrying out the malediction can come only from deity (as Noah’s curse, 9:25). “Cursed” (*ʾārar*), as found here and in vs. 17, is the typical way of introducing a decree of doom (also 4:11; 9:25; cf. 27-29; Deut 27:15-26; 28:16-20).¹

In Gen 3:14, the form is a Qal passive participle אָרַרְךָ. This same form occurs thirty-nine times in pronouncements of curses of both the deterrent and judicial types, and most conspicuously in Deut 27-28.²

stealthy movements, its rapid death-dealing stroke, and its mysterious power of fascinating other animals and even men, sufficiently account for the superstitious regard of which it has been the object amongst all peoples” (72).

¹Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 244. See also H. C. Brichto, *The Problem with the “Curse” in the Hebrew Bible*, SBLMS 13 (Philadelphia: SBL, 1968), 114-115; Josef Scharbert, “אָרַר,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 1:405-418, esp. 415.

²Robert P. Gordon, “אָרַר,” *NIDOTTE*, 1:524-526. In Deut 27-28, “long series of curses, in a manner redolent of the Near Eastern vassal treaties, warn against Israel’s defection from the God who has conferred his benefits on her and has brought her into a covenant relationship with himself. There is an occurrence of the qal passive participle in the Siloam Tomb inscription (eighth century), ll.2-3 (‘Cursed is the man who opens this’); cf. Gibson, *Textbook*, 1, 1971, 23-4” (*ibid.*, 525).

The Hebrew אָרָר is a cognate with the Akkadian *arāru*, “curse, treat with disrespect,” and its associated noun *arratu* (curse). It also has South Arabic and Ethiopic cognates.¹

“The most frequent OT use of the curse-form is in the covenant or legal context of Deut 27, 28.”² This constitutes the basic curse-form pattern for other examples, “though some do have other minor features as well.”³ Hence, the curse-forms in Gen 3:14-15, 17-19 are the most expanded curse-forms in the OT. They are “formally more complex than the most basic requirements of the curse as it occurs elsewhere in the OT, and thus they probably represent an expansion of the basic form.”⁴

“The qal passive participle אָרָר occurs in a curse formula pronounced at Qumran ceremonies of initiation (see IQS 2:5, 7), and again in a general curse uttered against Belial and ‘all the spirits of his lot’ in IQM 13:4. There are also reconstructed occurrences of the qal passive participle in several other Dead Sea Scroll texts” (ibid., 525-526). Cf. *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (1993), s.v. “אָרָר.” See also S. H. Blank, “The Curse, Blasphemy, the Spell, and the Oath,” *HUCA* 23, no. 1 (1950-1): 73-95; E. Combs, “Has YHWH Cursed the Ground? Perplexity of Interpretation in Genesis 1-5,” in *Ascribe to the Lord*, ed. L. Eslinger and G. Taylor (London: Sheffield, 1988), 265-287; T. G. Crawford, *Blessing and Curse in Syro-Palestinian Inscriptions of the Iron Age* (New York: P. Lang, 1992); Scharbert, “אָרָר,” 405-418; and A. C. Thiselton, “The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings,” *JTS* 25 (1974): 283-299.

¹Gordon, “אָרָר,” 525. Cf. *CAD* (1968), s.v. “Arāru.”

²Ogden, 132.

³Ibid. “In Deut 27:15-26 there are twelve examples all conforming to the pattern, ‘cursed is the man who . . .’ Each occurrence of the form contains the *‘arūr* formula together with the object of the curse. There is no motive clause present, nor is mention made of the content of the curse. In Deut 28:16-19 the *‘arūr* formula is used six times, followed by the object ‘you’, together with an adverbial clause introduced by *be*” (ibid., 132). The few examples of curses with the *ki*-clause appended include Gen 49:7 and 1 Sam 26:19, both of which have the *ki*-clause after the *‘arūr* formula rather than preceding it as in Gen 3:14, 17.

⁴Ibid. How the form evolved was discussed by Clark, “Law,” 113-116; Delbert R. Hillers, *Treaty Curses and O.T. Prophets* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1964); W. Schottroff, *Der israelitische Fluchsprache*, WMANT, 30 (Neukirchen: Neukirchen Verlag, 1969); and H. Schulz, *Das Todesrecht im A. T.*, BZAW, 114 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1969).

The curse-forms of Gen 3:14-15, 17-19 both include:

- (a) *kī*-clause in which the reason for the curse being pronounced is identified;
- (b) the curse-form *'ārūr*;
- (c) the object of the curse (“you”, “ground”);
- (d) an adverbial clause introduced by *al* (vs. 14) and *be* (vs. 17), which begins the detailed description of the curse’s outworking or effect;
- (e) a further clause introduced by *waw* (vss. 15, 18), elaborating the curse’s effects in terms of enmity or alienation.¹

Preuss explained that curses are usually not extended to descendants in the distant future. “Its purpose was the immediate or at least speedy extermination of the person addressed and his ‘descendants’ . . . And by its very nature a curse formula cannot apply both to the person cursed and to his descendants.”² Hence, the serpent is the recipient of God’s curses, and his followers receive it only by extension. Moreover, death and defeat are the implication of the curse to the serpent.³ On the other hand, victory belongs to the woman and her seed because they are never cursed.

¹Ogden, 31.

²H. D. Preuss, “עָרַר,” *TDOT*, 4:158. Preuss cites conforming examples such as: Lev 26:9, 29; Deut 28:4, 11, 18, 32, 41, 50, 53; 30:19; 32:25. The exception is Deut 30:19, “where it is not the curse but life that is extended to the descendants. There are probably several reasons that brought about this evident limitation on the effects of a curse. In the first place, we have the conviction that a curse should take effect rapidly but not extend through a period of generations. . . . And by its very nature a curse formula cannot apply both to the person cursed and to his descendants” (ibid.). See also Josef Scharbert, *Solidarität in Segen und fluch im AT und in seiner Umwelt*, BBB, 14 (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1958), 47, 103, 128-131, 251-5.

³David C. C. Watson postulates: “It is very likely that God’s curse upon the serpent reduced its ‘brain-power.’ . . . Though the snake is now far less ‘intelligent’ than the elephant, dolphin, chimpanzee and dog, he is still the Artful Dodger of the animal world” (*Myths and Miracles: A New Approach to Genesis 1-11* [Worthing, Sussex: H. E. Walter, 1976], 63-64). He enumerates: “Snakes also have a transparent cap over their eyes, instead of eyelids, so it is difficult to tell whether they are asleep— or watching you. . . . By nature a snake’s tongue is not now adapted for speech; but it once may have been, just as parrots and mynahs can learn to talk—although their tongues were obviously not *made* for this” (p. 64).

It is noteworthy that it was the Lord God אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה who pronounced the curse on the serpent. “For a curse to be effective it had to have divine authority and to be properly directed.”¹ The curse of Gen 3:14 is divinely instituted and thus irrevocable. Its purpose is to safeguard His creation order. This in itself suggests utter defeat for the serpent and what it represents, while assuring victory for humans.

The preposition מִן in Gen 3:14 has received wild conjectural interpretations that I do not see as most appropriate for this context.² Kaiser treats it as a “particle of distinction and eminence, not a partitive (‘any of the cattle’); rather, it is the comparative form (‘above the cattle’).”³ The “serpent,” distinguished from other divine creations, is “marked off for greater rebuke.”⁴

¹Robert P. Gordon, “Curse, Malediction,” *NIDOTTE*, 4:491-493. He clarifies: “Divine involvement in the curse is an idea that Israel shared with its Near Eastern culture partners” (p. 492). The primeval history in Gen 1-11 significantly demonstrates this fact. “There are, however, countervailing elements of hope in these chapters. First, the story of the Fall sees God curse the serpent and the ground (3:14, 17), but not the human pair caught up in the act of disobedience that brought the loss of Eden” (ibid.).

²For example, Hamilton posits that the serpent is alienated from the animal world by this curse; “hence the translation ‘banned’ rather than ‘cursed’” (*Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 194). He refers to Gesenius’s use of מִן with separating force—“taken from” (*GKC*, § 119w). Brichto defined the notion broadly as “to bind (with a spell), hem in with obstacles, render powerless to resist” (82-87). In Gen 3:17-18 and 4:11, it can only mean “to lie under a spell or ban.” “In 4:11 the spell is on Cain, barring (or banning) him from the earth’s fertility; in 3:17-18 the spell is on the soil, rendering it recalcitrant to the ministrations of the first man and his descendants. In both cases the colloquial expression ‘hexed’ could be applied to that which is ‘*arur*’” (Brichto, *The Problem of “Curse” in the Hebrew Bible*, 85). See also E. A. Speiser, “An Angelic ‘Curse’: Exodus 14:20,” *JAOS* 80 (1960): 198. Elsewhere, Speiser proposes the translation: “Banned shall you be from all the cattle” (22, 24).

Also, Young posits that God cursed the serpent “‘away from’ the cattle and beasts of the earth. The thought is not that of comparison, as though the Lord had said that all the beasts would be cursed, but that the serpent would be cursed more than any” (*Genesis* 3, 97).

³Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 36.

⁴Ibid. Kaiser reports that the same particle is seen in Judg 5:24: “Blessed above women”—blessed like no other woman (cf. Deut 33:14)” (ibid.). Nothing indicates that all animals are cursed. Only

This particule is in the sense of “out of the number of.”¹ This particular or exclusive meaning of **בְּ** is established by cases such as Exod 19:5; Deut 14:2; 33:24.

“Therefore, this beast is singled out for a curse over against ‘all the animals’ (*behemah*) in general as well as over against ‘the wild beasts’ (*chayyath hassadheh*) in particular.”²

This indicates “selection.”³

The curse pronounced upon the literal serpent was also intended for the tempter

the serpent and the ground are cursed. Cassuto substantiates that because the serpent was “cunning above all beasts,” he is also “cursed above all beasts. . . . Not only is the expression *above all* repeated here, but there is a play on the assonance between **בְּ** (cunning, shrewdness) and **בְּ** (cursed). The verbal correspondence points to parallelism of thought” (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:159). Hengstenberg confirms that “this does not necessarily imply that the other animals are also cursed, any more than the words ‘subtle above all the beasts’ imply that all other beasts are subtle” (*Christology of the Old Testament and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*, 1:14, quoted in Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 79). Wenham adds this is the common use of **בְּ**, and “the close parallel with 3:1 makes this much the most likely construction here” (*Genesis 1-15*, 79).

Contra Willis, who insists that “since man originally sinned in response to a beast’s temptation, God apparently curses not only the serpent but all beasts. . . . This agrees with Paul’s words in Romans 8:19-23 and with the obvious hostility that exists between man and beast” (128). This view is supported by Richardson, 74. Haun said that “all the animals are to be cursed. The innocent are to suffer because of the sins of others. . . . However, the brunt of the judgment is borne by the guilty” (164). Keil and Delitzsch contradict this view of Rom 8:20, 21, positing otherwise, that creation has been “made subject to vanity” and “the bondage of corruption,” in consequence to the sin of humanity (3:98). “Yet this subjection is not to be regarded as the effect of the curse, which was pronounced upon the serpent, having fallen upon the whole animal world. . . . The creation was drawn into the fall of man . . . but not the animal world for the serpent’s sake, or even along with the serpent” (*ibid.*).

¹Leupold, 1:161.

²*Ibid.* Haupt used: “Singled out from” i.e., “Thou alone of all animals” (159).

³Dillman, 157. See also Judg 5:24; 1 Sam 2:28; Amos 3:2. “There may be other animals which are repugnant to men and fill them with vague dread, but so far as man knows, a formal divine curse attaches to this beast only” (*ibid.*).

Dillman objects to translations such as “cursed by all cattle” (*ibid.*) inasmuch as they hate and shun the serpent, which was suggested by Eichhorn, Gesenius, and others. He rejects this because the curse comes from God and not from the animals because they have no reason to curse the serpent. He also objects to “cursed before all cattle” meaning “more than they,” because there was no reason for other animals apart from the serpent to be cursed (*ibid.*).

in a figurative or symbolical sense. The curse was more for this spiritual tempter than for the non-morally culpable beast who was a mere symbol. “The proof, therefore, that the serpent was merely the instrument of an evil spirit, does not lie in the punishment itself, but in the manner in which the sentence was pronounced.”¹ This curse applies to more than the literal snake because in the OT, animals are never treated as morally culpable themselves. Here the curse was intended for the power operating through the snake.

עַל-גִּחְוֹנָךְ תֵּלֵךְ “Upon Your Belly Shall You Go”

This phrase is comprised of a preposition which describes location; a masculine singular noun plus second-person masculine pronominal suffix; and a Qal imperfect second-person masculine singular verb. “Belly” is probably from the root גִּחַן (Aramaic) = “curve” or “bend,” similar to Syriac. It is also suggested to be related to the Assyrian *gihinnu*, meaning “cord.”² W. Gesenius cites the cognates Arabic *ḡanaha* and Egyptian Aramaic גִּחַן, meaning “to prostrate oneself”; and the Jewish Aramaic גִּחַן, Syriac *ghen* and Mandaic *GHN*, meaning “to humble oneself.”³

The word for “belly” occurs again only in Lev 11:42, also of a reptile crawling on its belly. In Gen 3:14 the word is contained in God’s curse for the serpent, “which may mean that the serpent must bow down in the dirt as an acknowledgment of God’s

¹Keil and Delitzsch, 3:99.

²*BDB* (1996), s.v. “גִּחַן.” The meaning “cord” may be from twisting.

³W. Gesenius, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, I (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1987).

authority.”¹ In Lev 11:42, where an animal that moves “on its belly” is included among those abominable animals which are unclean for human consumption, “creeping on the earth is characteristic of an unclean animal.”²

This noun is probably related to the verb root **הָרַג**, which means “to draw from (the womb)” in its only occurrence in Ps 22:10. The serpent going on its belly may mean that it will “without feet glide along the ground.”³ The name of serpent in Sanskrit is *uraga*, i.e., “Going on the breast,” as noted by Tuch.⁴ “The serpent is the only animal among those having bony skeletons that goes upon its belly.”⁵

Skinner imagines the snake pre-Fall, moving erect *without* legs, and thus writes, “the assumption undoubtedly is that originally the serpent moved erect, but not necessarily that its organism was changed (*e.g.* by cutting off its legs, etc.).”⁶ Some snake species are still able to erect “relatively long portions of their bodies for certain periods of time.”⁷ Since there were “creeping things” on earth before the Fall (Gen 1:26, 30), “the divine curse may not be the crawling movement of the serpent but a new

¹Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., “**הָרַג**,” *NIDOTTE*, 1:851. See Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora*, 112-113; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 79.

²Stallman, 86. See also Deut 32:24 of snakes. Cf. Rogers, 851.

³Dillman, 157.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, trans. Sophia Taylor, vol. 1 (New York: Scribner & Welford, 1889), 161.

⁶Skinner, 78.

⁷Willis, 128.

significance given to this as a result of the Fall.”¹

We have just noted the possibility that the snake could probably fly before the Fall. This underscores the seriousness of its change in locomotion from flying to crawling as a result of its participation in deception of mankind. It must have possessed a dazzling beauty that supercedes other animals.²

The serpent’s locomotion is describe with the verb לָּךְ , translated as “walk,” or more generally, “to go about.” A serpent is also described as “walking, or marching” in Jer 46:22.³ Rabbinic sources understood the serpent as having stood upright.⁴ “It is barely possible that inspection of snake skeletons, which preserve vestigial legs, abetted such speculations.”⁵

¹Ibid. Willis compares: “As a parallel, it seems likely that there were rainbows prior to the flood, but after the flood God gave the rainbow a new significance for man (Gen 9:13)” (ibid.). Kaiser also recalls that “God had already made ‘creeping things’ in His creation and had pronounced them ‘good’” (*Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 36).

²Wiseman referred to the winged serpents of Arabia (“Flying Serpents?” 108-110).

³Andrews, 22.

⁴See for example, *Gen. Rab.* 19:1. Note that the serpent (MT *tannim*) of Ezek 32:1-8 has legs (vs. 2).

⁵William H. Propp, “Eden Sketches,” in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters*, ed. William H. Propp, Baruch Halpern, and David N. Freedman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 195. He supposes that it implies that “the serpent has originally been legged, that is, a lizard” (ibid.). He avoids translating as “snake” or as “reptile” which he actually prefers; in favor of a traditional term which is the “more ambiguous ‘serpent’ (< *serpo* ‘creep’), which etymologically includes both snakes and lizards” (ibid.).

Propp discourages any speculation of the species of the snake of Gen 3:15 as frivolous. Nonetheless, he notes that the “wordplay in Gen 3:15 involving the root(s) *šwp*, however, brings to mind the *šēpīpōn*, a species (conventionally, the horned viper) said to attack the heels of horses in Gen 49:17, just as the serpent of Eden attacks the heels of humans” (ibid.).

Crawling on the belly is a “common shaming technique used in warfare.”¹ It is not unusual for superior victors of wars to “shame the defeated warriors by forcing them to crawl on their bellies, with their faces in the dust, in an attitude of inferiority and defenselessness—thus psychologically eliminating their initiative for reprisal.”² This shows that this phrase also has an intended figurative meaning for the tempter’s power behind the literal serpent. The choice of this description was intended to refer to both the snake and the moral agent instigating it. The phrase is programmatic, indicating a new destiny and expected future for the arch-deceiver.

וְעָפָר הָאֲכֹל “And Dust You Shall Eat”

This sentence is comprised of a conjunction, a masculine singular noun, and a second-person masculine singular Qal imperfect verb. The noun עָפָר means “dry earth, dust, loose soil, rubble, plaster.” The Hebrew root עָפַר has etymological associations with the Ugaritic *ʿpr*, dust. The noun is used one hundred and ten times in the OT in a great variety of ways.³

¹Lyn M. Bechtel, “Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4b-3:24,” in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1997), 92 and n. 1.

²Ibid. See idem, “Shame as a Sanction of Social Control in Biblical Israel: Judicial, Political, and Social Shaming,” *JSOT* 49 (1991): 47-76. Kaiser also accepts that “creeping on the belly i.e., the posture of the serpent, came to be regarded as contemptible (Gen 49:17; Job 20:14, 16; Ps 140:3; Isa 59:5)” (*Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 36).

³Roy E. Hayden, “עָפָר,” *NIDOTTE*, 3:472-473. It is used literally as dry, loose earth (Lev 17:13; Job 2:12; 39:14; Mic 1:10); as serpent’s food (Gen 3:14; Isa 65:25; Mic 7:17); human body material (Gen 2:7; 3:19; Job 4:19; 8:19; Ps 103:14; Ecc 3:20; 12:7); surface of the ground (Exod 8:12, 13; Isa 25:12; 26:5; Job 19:25); holes in the ground (Job 30:6; Isa 2:19); powder (Deut 9:21; 2 Sam 22:43; Ps 18:42[43]; 2 Kgs 23:6, 12, 15; Num 19:17); debris of ruined cities, either as dust or rubble (1 Kgs 20:10; Ezek 26:4, 12); material of which the earth is composed, and material used for mortar, clay, plaster (Lev 14:41, 42, 45; Prov 8:26; Isa 40:12). See David Miall Edwards, “Dust,” *ISBE*, 1:998.

The figurative uses of the noun עָפָר include that of expressing abundance in Gen 13:16; 28:14; 2 Chr 1:9; Num 23:10; Job 27:16. Dust is used figuratively for how the King of Aram destroyed Israel's army (2 Kgs 13:7; Isa 41:2). It expresses judgment as in Zeph 1:17. Raising someone from the dust is found in 1 Sam 2:8; Ps 113:7; 1 Kgs 6:2; Isa 52:2.¹ The connection between the dust and death can be found in Gen 3:14, 19 and Job 5:3-7; 21:26 and other verses in the OT.

Haupt understands that the phrase “thou wilt eat dust” (bite the dust) means “thou wilt be prone on the ground” or “thou wilt grovel.”² “Biting the dust” means “to fall, be thrown, vanquished.”³

The verbal root לָחַץ “lick up,” also describes similar processes of consuming. “The Hebrew idiom ‘lick up dust’ is often used of the vanquishing of enemies. Of the nations that will one day be defeated before Israel, Mic 7:17 says, ‘they will lick up dust like the serpent.’”⁴ This alludes to Yahweh's curse upon the serpent in Gen 3:14, “dust shall you eat.”

“This ‘eating’ of dust does not imply that dust would be the main food supply for the serpent, but rather that in the process of crawling around on its belly it would get dust

¹Hayden, 472-473.

²Haupt, 159.

³Ibid., 159-160.

⁴Robert H. O'Connell, “לָחַץ,” *NIDOTTE*, 2:785. See also Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1959-1981), 2:759a. See Ps 72:9; Isa 49:23; and the Akkadian idiom *qaqqaru . . . našāqu*, “to kiss . . . the ground.”

in its mouth.”¹ Hamilton reiterates the fact that “snakes do not eat dust, and no ancient writer ever thought they did.”²

This leads one to take this passage more symbolically than literally. If the decree *On your belly shall you crawl* is taken literally as “a change in the snake’s mode of locomotion, then to be consistent one must also see in the decree *dust shall you eat* a change in the snake’s diet.”³ Since snakes’ diet is not dust, then this passage is not merely etiological concerning “why snakes no longer walk on legs and why they lost their legs. . . . The writer clearly intends these two facts to be expressions of humiliation and subjugation (as in Ps 72:9; Isa 49: 23; Mic 7:17).”⁴

Cassuto reiterated: “Measure for measure: having sinned in the matter of eating, he was punished in the same respect.”⁵ The man’s punishment is based on the same principle. In the expression: “and dust you shall eat,” “there is possibly to be heard an echo of the ancient tradition concerning the subjugation of the serpent and the monsters

¹G. Aalders, *The Book of Genesis*, Bible Student’s Commentary, trans. William Heynen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 1:105. Cf. Dillman, 157.

²Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*. 196-197.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. Kaiser joins in construing the phrases: “On your belly you shall go” and “Dust shall you eat” as “a reference not to the diet and locomotion of ‘the serpent’ but of his humiliation and subjugation” (*Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 36, 77-79). He noted also that “‘to eat dust’ equaled ‘to descend to the grave’ in Descent of Ishtar 5:8; also, note Amarna E. A. 100:36” (79). Cf. idem, *Messiah in the Old Testament*, 38-9. Leupold also concurs that the serpent’s movement by gliding through the dust “reflects her humbler station” (1:162). That the serpent would eat dust “all the days of” its life also indicates that “there will be a continual suffering of defeat ‘all the day’ of her existence” (ibid.).

⁵Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:159.

by God.”¹ The idea of eating dust occurs in a metaphorical sense in several places in the Bible “in reference to the plight of conquered foes.”²

כָּל־יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ “All the Days of Your Life”

This final phrase speaks to the “ultimate end of the serpent and its offspring. ‘Your life’ may be allusion to the snake’s false promise, ‘You will surely not die’ (vs. 4), made to Eve.” This indicates that “the serpent has a limited life expectancy that will come to a violent end.”³ This follows the pattern that someone beyond the literal serpent is intended in this curse.

אִי־בָ “Enmity”

The noun אִי־בָ *'eyvah* is rare, appearing only five times in the OT in Gen 3:15; Num 35:21; Ezek 25:15; 35:5.⁴ It means both enmity and hostility.⁵ אִי־בָ is the verb,

¹Ibid., 159.

²Ibid., 160. See especially Isa 27:1; 65:25. This is definitely “a literary echo only, for Torah . . . is opposed to the actual legend” (ibid.).

³Mathews describes how, by an intriguing twist of fate, Eve is “later recognized as the source of ‘all the living’ (3:20). Hence, the snake brought about his own death by his treachery, but ultimately Eve through her seed will outlive her adversary” (245).

Cassuto adds: “The boundary between the primeval serpent and his successors is somewhat blurred; here the pronoun *you* addressed to the former includes the latter too, whereas in the following verse the first serpent is distinguished from his issue” (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:160).

⁴Stanley N. Rosenbaum observes that most English language translations like the RSV, KJV, New English Bible, New Jewish Publication Society, etc., translate the term as “enmity,” a word “which no longer signifies much to the average Bible reader” (“Israelite Homicide Law and the Term ‘Enmity’ in Genesis 3:15,” *Journal of Law and Religion* 2 [1984]: 145).

⁵See Tyler F. Williams, “אִי־בָ,” *NIDOTTE*, 1:365-371. Williams mentions that the noun אִי־בָ is translated in the LXX three times by *echthra*, “enmity” (Gen 3:15; Num 35:22; Ezek 35:5[?], and once by *mēnis*, “wrath” (Num 35:21) (ibid., 370).

See for further studies: G. Anderson, “Enemies and Evildoers in the Book of Psalms,” *Bulletin of*

“be an enemy”; אֵיב is Qal participle, “enemy,” “foe.” The root אֵיב occurs two hundred and eighty-three (283) times in the OT, fifty-four (54) of which are in the Pentateuch.¹ This root אֵיב is well attested in ANE literature. The Akkadian. *ayyābu*, “enemy,” occurs in letters, historical, omen, and literary texts to designate individual and national enemies.²

The Ugaritic *ib*, “enemy,” turns up in some letters,³ as well as in the Aqhat legend.⁴ In the Baal cycle *ib* appears parallel to *šrt*, foe, *šnu*, “one who hates” and *qm*, “adversary”; all refer to enemies of Baal.⁵

John Rylands University Library of Manchester 48 (1965-66), 18-29; T. Hobbs and P. Jackson, “The Enemy in the Psalms,” *BTB* 21 (1991): 22-29; O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (New York: Seabury, 1985); Thomas E. McComiskey, “אֵיב,” *TWOT*, 1:36-37; Hans Bietenhard and Horst Seebass, “Enemy, Enmity, Hate,” *NIDNTT*, 1:553-557; J. Rogerson, “The Enemy in the Old Testament,” in *Understanding Poets and Prophets: FS George Wishart Anderson*, ed. A. G. Auld (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 284-293; J. Scharbert, “Enemy,” *Bauer Encyclopedia of Biblical Theology* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1970), 220-224; Werner Foerster, “ἔχθρός, ἔχθρα,” *TDNT*, 2:811-815; Helmer Ringgren, “אֵיב,” *TDOT*, 1:212-218; and Erich Zenger, *A God of Vengeance? Understanding the Psalms of Divine Wrath*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1996).

¹Williams mentions the NT uses: The noun *echthra* “enmity” is found six (6) times. It is used to signify the enmity between Pilate and Herod (Luke 23:12); the sinful mind and God (Rom 8:7; cf. Jas 4:4); and Jews and Gentiles before Christ effected reconciliation on the cross (Eph 2:14, 16) (Williams, “אֵיב,” 370).

²*Ibid.*, 365. Cf. *CAD* (1968), s.v. “Arāhu.”

³Williams, “אֵיב,” 370. Cf. M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartín, eds., *Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*, I, AOAT 24 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1976), 2.33.10, 17, 29; 2.39.31, hereafter referred to as *KTU*.

⁴Williams, “אֵיב,” 370. Cf. *KTU*, 1.19.4.58.

⁵Williams, “אֵיב,” 370. Cf. *KTU*, 1.2.4.8; 1.3.3.37; 1.4.7.35, 38; and 1.10.2.24. “The substantive *ʿwyb* appears about 50 times in the non-biblical manuscripts from Qumran, with over half occurring in IQM, predominantly in the laws concerning warfare in cols. 2-14 (24 of 27 times). In IQpHab 9.10 the wicked priest is said to have been delivered into the hands of his enemies (*byd ʿwybyw*) because of his actions against the Teacher of Righteousness. The noun *ʿybh* is used to describe Esau’s hostility for Jacob in IQJub b 1.2 (Jub 35.9) and the unending enmity (*ʿybt ʿwlm*) between truth and

The verb **אִי־בִּי** denotes “hatred and active hostility on the part of a person or group of persons (e.g., a nation) directed towards an individual, group, or nation.”¹ The noun, “enmity, hostility” shows unending hostility among nations in Ezek 25:15 (Philistines versus Israelites) and Ezek 35:5 (Edomites versus Israelites). In Num 35:21-22, it distinguishes between intentional (with hostility or hatred) killing and unintentional (without hostility or hatred) killing, the latter allowing the culprit to flee to a city of refuge, the former requiring the killer’s death.²

In its first occurrence, Gen 3:15, **אִי־בִּי** is the first word in the sentence and serves as the object of the verb. This word receives the greatest emphasis in this sentence. Stanley Rosenbaum treats it as a technical and legal term that informed the later definition and development of the homicide law. On the surface, **אִי־בִּי** seems to be the punishment for a “mere act of deception” recorded in Gen 3:15. “If we accept the Biblical principle of ‘measure for measure,’ then the vendetta between the two species

injustice in IQS 4.17” (Williams, “אִי־בִּי,” 370).

¹Williams, “אִי־בִּי,” 370. Williams explains that **אִי־בִּי** occurs as a finite verb in Exod 23:22, showing active hostility. The second instance has the verb in participial form in 1 Sam 18:29 where “Saul remained David’s enemy the rest of his days.” The remaining 281 occurrences are Qal Substantive Participles, i.e., “one who is an enemy.” It is a substantive in the fullest sense rather than a temporary characterization as “one who hates” (ibid., 366).

This participle **אִי־בִּי** has similar, but not synonymous, words with which it sometimes occurs such as “adversary,” “foes,” “those who rise up against,” and “wicked.” It is also found as an opposite to terms like “neighbor,” “friend,” “one’s equal,” and “companion.”

²Ibid., 369. Jack B. Scott supports that the two appearances of the word *’eyvah* in Num 35 are within the context “dealing with the law concerning murder and pronounces the death sentence on anyone who kills another out of enmity” (“The Place of Enmity in Scriptural Teaching,” in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed., John H. Skilton et al. [Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974], 128-129). Similarly, the two appearances in Ezek 25:15 and 35:5 qualify the word “enmity” with the word “perpetual” referring to enmity between Israel and other nations (Philistia in 25:15 and Edom in 35:5).

mandated in 3:15b must indicate that a far more serious crime is involved, more serious even than the exile of mankind from the Eden would imply.”¹

Upon examining the other biblical texts relating to homicide, Rosenbaum found that “hatred” and “enmity” are related but are not simple synonyms. So also are enmity and rivalry.² A state of “permanent belligerency”³ exists between humans and snakes as “permanent mortal enemies.”⁴ Rosenbaum then concludes:

Broadly speaking, the real fruit of that deception which took place in Eden was murder. By robbing Adam and Eve of immortality the snake and its descendants are the murderers of our ancestors and, by extension, of ourselves as well. Any human death, whatever the apparent cause, is another crime to be laid at the den of the serpent.⁵

The perpetual aspect of the fight between the woman and the serpent, lasting for a long time, is strengthened by the word אִיְבָהּ. Two of the other four places this word is used in the Old Testament, in addition to Gen 3:15, include Ezek 25:15 and 35:5. “Both use the expression אִיְבָהּ עוֹלָם ‘ancient enmity,’ which indicates that the enmity is something old and never-ending.”⁶

It can be concluded from the scriptural usage of the root אִיב, that enmity, like

¹Rosenbaum, 146-147.

²Ibid., 147-150.

³Ibid., 147.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 150. However, seeing that more than a mere snake is involved here, Satan is the one against whom this charge must be laid primarily.

⁶Holter, 110. Ogden agrees: “Enmity may be thought of as a breakdown in relationships. Such an antipathy is a permanent feature of life, as mention of the extension to future generations implies (vs. 15a)” (134).

its verb root, is not applicable to non-morally culpable beasts¹ but only “between persons or morally responsible agents.”² Hence, this “rules out the idea of mere *hostility*, which is not enmity, between man and serpents. The personal tempter emerges ever more distinctly as the verse progresses.”³

The fact that the on-going enmity between the serpent and the woman is perpetual has caused many scholars to erroneously insist that neither side of the duel is victorious, “except on a temporary basis.”⁴ They appeal to the text and theme of the passage and fail to see anything beyond an endlessly hopeless battle.⁵

However, this position is fallacious because the curse is on the serpent and not on the humans and thus cannot result in a draw but victory for humanity.⁶ A draw will mean a promotion for the serpent rather than demotion and can hardly be a curse for it.⁷ God’s part in the enmity He established is to protect His followers while putting fear in

¹Leupold, 1:164.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 164-165. Westermann calls the hostility “institutional” (*Genesis 1-11*, 259).

⁴Ogden also declares: “The suggestion that vs. 15 speaks of the victory of the woman’s seed (Christ) over the serpent (Satan) fails to recognize that the theme here is perpetual enmity, not victory. To suggest that the serpent’s head is more vulnerable than the woman’s heel, and thus that the serpent will be defeated also fails to take account of this theme” (134).

⁵Scholars who hold that there is no victory in the battle in Gen 3:15 include: Dillmann, saying that a serpent’s bite is just as deadly as a blow to the serpent’s head and that there is no mention of victory, only enmity, in the text (161); von Rad, insisting that this is no promise but a curse, the “terrible point” of which is the “hopelessness of this struggle in which both will ruin each other” (*Genesis*, 90); Fishbane, “Genesis 2.4b-11.32: The Primeval Cycle,” 21; Procksch, 35; Richardson, 4; Vawter. *On Genesis*, 83-4; Walsh, 175, n. 35; and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 259.

⁶Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 79-81.

⁷Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 45.

the hearts of, dispossessing, and destroying their enemies, thus assuring His children victory.¹ Several scholars, especially in the Christian era from medieval times to date, have defended this conclusion.² This victory was set in motion by God in order to return to normalcy the distorted hierarchy of creation and lordship of humanity over other creatures (Gen 1:26-29; 2:19-20).

Furthermore, the view that the text is only etiological about human-snake enmity is inadequate because “there are no real threats to man from non-poisonous snakes—many people keep them as pets. To talk of natural antipathy between man and snake and to attribute this state of affairs to man’s sin is fatuous.”³

אָפִּי “I Will Put”

This is the second word in Gen 3:15. It consists of the Qal imperfect verb and the first-person singular subject. God, the speaker, is identified in the first singular

¹Scott, 132-3. See Gen 35:5; Exod 11:2, 3; 14:26; 17:11; 23:27-28; Num 21:34; 25:17-18; 31:2-3; 33:51-52; Deut 7:24-25; 12:2, 3, 10; 31:3-4.

²For example: Kidner, *Genesis*, 70; Saydon, 126; Walsh who argues that serpent’s head is more vulnerable (161-177). Dillmann backs up with a theological view that “a struggle ordained of God cannot be without prospect of success” (161). This is similar to Driver, *Genesis*, 48.

³Ogden elaborates: “Unless the curse in its present context has acquired a representative function, the serpent representing all living animals, then vs. 15 has little significance. The enmity theme depicts the alienation of mankind from the remainder of the created world. But this too is a poetic attempt to make a theological statement that sin alienates. It does not explain scientifically why there are these enigmas in creation. An old etiology (vs. 14) has become the means for illustrating the principle (vs. 15) that sin may alienate” (135). See also Hauser, 20-36.

Contra Alter, who insists that the curse on the serpent “records a primal horror of humankind before this slithering, vicious-looking, and poisonous representative of the animal realm. It is the first moment in which a split between man and the rest of the animal kingdom is recorded” (*Genesis: Translation and Commentary* [New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1996], 13). He strips this text of anything “satanic” in his view of the serpent. Rather, “behind it may stand, at a long distance of cultural mediation, Canaanite myths of a primordial sea serpent” (*ibid.*).

personal pronoun. The root of this verb is **אָשׂוּ**. It means “to put, set, place; set up; impose; appoint; lay, put; pick up; deposit; inflict; fix.”¹ This verb is broadly attested in Phoenicia, Ethiopia, Ugaritic, Akkadian, Aramian, and Epigraphic South Arabic.²

Leupold points out that “the present of the verb (*'ashith*) is the type of present or future that is used in depicting a future scene in a more elevated rhetorical style. The marvelous promises of God’s achievements can be recounted by this type of form.”³

The subject of the verb exercises power and authority. “The object or person placed in a new position need not be moved easily, or even willingly, but the fact that it is accomplished implies that the one who effects the movement has either the requisite authority or the competence to achieve the task.”⁴

Scott rightly observes that the Creator presented in Gen 1-2 is now introduced as the “establisher of enmity between the woman and her seed, of the one hand, and the serpent and his seed on the other hand.”⁵ He links this with that “characteristic of the Creator as the distinguishing God already seen in Gen 1:4, 6, 7. In this case God makes a

¹See *BDB* (1996), s.v. “אָשׂוּ”; H. J. Van Dijk, “A Neglected Connotation of Three Hebrew Verbs,” *VT* 18 (1968): 16-30; Sam Meier, “אָשׂוּ,” *NIDOTTE*, 3:1237-1241; Heinz-Josef Fabry, “אָשׂוּ,” *TWAT*, 5:696-697; G. Vanoni, “אָשׂוּ,” *TWAT*, 7:761-781; and idem, “אָשׂוּ,” *TWAT*, 7:1296-1306. Meier describes that “as a verb of spatial displacement, it is characteristically associated with prepositions that specify the kind of location” (“אָשׂוּ,” 1237-1238). For example, “in” (Ruth 4:16); “beside” (1 Sam 5:2); “upon” (Gen 9:23); and “between” (Gen 3:15; 30:36; 32:16[17]; Exod 8:19; Deut 14:1; Josh 24:7).

²*BDB* (1996), s.v. “אָשׂוּ.”

³Leupold, 1:165.

⁴Meier, 1237-1238.

⁵Scott, 128.

distinction between men and sets enmity between the two to maintain that distinction.”¹

This second-place verb shares in the emphasis of the first-place noun אֱלֹהִים.

This verb “emphasizes that it is God who will not suffer this enmity to die down: ‘I will put.’ God wants man to continue in undying opposition to this evil one and He rouses the enmity Himself. . . . True enmity on man’s part against the evil foe is a virtue.”² It will be wrong to conversely charge God with rousing Satan to enmity against humanity as this will “make God the author of evil.”³

This verb underscores the divinely-implanted hatred⁴ between humanity and the evil one. The enmity was not going to come about naturally but to be the continued action of God. The enmity was not to end immediately after the Fall. The verb form indicates its application in the present, at the moment of its pronouncement by God, as well as its perpetuity beyond the Fall. This also helps us to see that there was a moral blame consequent to the disobedience of the parties accused by God.

אִשָּׁה “The Woman”

This word is comprised of the definite article and a singular feminine noun. It definitely refers to the woman already mentioned and encountered in the story prior to Gen 3:15, and also further described in the rest of Gen 3-4. There was no other primal woman apart from Eve in these stories. אִשָּׁה is feminine noun meaning “woman, wife,

¹Ibid.

²Leupold, 1:165.

³Ibid.

⁴Kaiser calls it “a divinely instigated enmity” (*Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 79).

female.”¹

There are two namings of the woman. The first is in “the poetic fragment Gen 2:23 where the companion for the man” is named “woman” אִשָּׁה. This shows a “deliberate play on *'iš/ 'iššā*.”² “The name *'iššā* is given in the context of the man’s naming all the other creatures which Yahweh formed in order to find a ‘helper corresponding to him’ (2:18, 20).” This naming was divinely inspired.³ It seems clear that אִשָּׁה is a “generic term” because it is frequently used along with the article or third person masculine singular suffix.”⁴

The second naming of the woman is in Gen 3:20 which is a personal name חַוְוָה. “There can hardly be any doubt that the narrator connects *ḥawwā* (Eve) very closely with

¹BDB (1996), s.v. “אִשָּׁה.” N. P. Bratsiotis points to the uncertainty of the etymology of both אִשָּׁה and אִשָּׁה (“אִשָּׁה and אִשָּׁה,” *TDOT*, 1:222-223). “It is usually derived from the root *'ns*, ‘to be sick, weak’” (ibid., 223). אִשָּׁה is probably a primary noun which is not based on a verbal root. אִשָּׁה is found in the singular and the plural (אִשָּׁה) in the OT 775 times while אִשָּׁה occurs 2160 times. Each אִשָּׁה and אִשָּׁה is found “almost uniformly both in OT literature (including Sirach) and in the ancient Hebrew inscriptions, it is impossible to speak of an earlier or later use of this word, as can be done with some combinations of words” (ibid., 223).

²Howard N. Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, Harvard Semitic Monographs 32 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1985), 147. He further comments that “G, Sam, Tgs read *ki mē 'išāh*, ‘for from her husband’ for MT *ki mē 'iš*, ‘for from man.’ The former readings are probably secondary with the extra euphony of *'iššā/ 'išāh*” (174, n. 8).

³Doukhan argues that Gen 2:23 contains a pair of passives (*niphal*, *pual*) “which conveys the idea of an intervention from outside, hence God” (*Genesis Creation Story*, 46-47). This indicates that the designation of “woman” was actually given by God while Adam only recognized this designation just as he recognized that it was God who took her “out of man.” See further, Phyllis Trible, “A Love Story Gone Awry,” *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 99-100; and Gerhard Hasel, “Equality from the Start: Woman in the Creation Story,” *Spectrum* 7, no. 2 (1975): 23-24.

⁴Wallace, 147.

the Hebrew word *ḥay*, *ḥayyā* i.e., life. . . . ‘Mother of all living’ is a name of honor.”¹

This etymology of the name of Eve reflects her role as “first woman and progenitress of humankind.”²

Already in the judgment of the woman in Gen 3:16, God has ascribed the role of giving life to the woman. This was another opportunity for the man and woman to be directly informed of that role, though Gen 1:28 hinted at it and Gen 3:15 implied it. It is not surprising, therefore, that “the next statement involving the woman is the attribution of a name which defines that unique aspect of her role in bearing life. The giving of a

¹von Rad, *Genesis*, 96. The history of similar interpretation is summarized in J. Heller, “Der Name *Eva*,” *Archiv orientální* 26 (1958): 636-656; and A. J. Williams, “The Relationship of Genesis 3:20 to the Serpent,” *ZAW* 89 (1977): 357-374. Young supports that “Eve” means “she who gives life. . . . One who is engaged in the work of giving life. . . . She is the life-giver *par excellence*, for she is the mother of all who live” (*Genesis* 3, 141-143). Rosenberg adds that the name ‘Havvah’ “resembles the noun-pattern denoting the practitioner of a craft, skill or habit, may be translated as ‘Life-bearer’” (“The Garden Story,” 14).

²Wallace, 147. Cf. Jacques Doukhan, “Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vhymeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 29-43.

Wallace enumerates: “The relation between *ḥawwā* and *ḥay* in the present form of the text depends more on euphony than on any philological connection evident in biblical Hebrew. . . . Possible phonological connections exist between *ḥawwā* and words meaning ‘life,’ ‘to live,’ etc. In both Phoenician and Ugaritic the m. sg. adjective, ‘alive,’ is *ḥy* and the plural form *ḥym* means ‘life, health, etc.’ The verb ‘to live’ is a ll-w form, *ḥwy*. In later Aramaic, the adjective is *ḥay*, as in Hebrew, and the noun *ḥayyīn*, but the verb ‘to live’ is *ḥāyā*, or *ḥāyī*, a ll-y form as is the case with Heb. *ḥāyā*. Arabic has the verb *ḥayya*, ‘to live;’ the adjective *ḥayy*, ‘alive;’ and the noun *ḥayāh*, pl. *ḥayawāh*, ‘life.’ We should also note the Ethiopic *ḥaywa*, ‘to live.’ The word for ‘life’ is *ḥeywat*. The root *ḥyw* is opposed to *ḥwy* indicated in Ugaritic and Phoenician. The Old South Arabic evidence is mixed. The most frequent verb, ‘to live,’ is *ḥyw* with the corresponding nouns *ḥyn*, ‘life, health,’ and *ḥywt*, ‘life.’ However there also exists *ḥwy*, ‘life’ and *ḥyy*, ‘to live.’” From the evidence above, especially the Ethiopic and Old South Arabic, we could posit in early Semitic alloroots of the verb ‘to live,’ *ḥwy* and *ḥyw*, with *ḥyy* arising secondarily” (Wallace, 150-151). See also J. C. Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaean Dialect*, Harvard Semitic Studies, 25 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1982), 168-169, 173-174; and Richard S. Hess, *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1-11*, *Alter Orient und Altes Testament*, 234 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Becker, 1993), 22-24.

name in this text reflects a discernment which recognizes a role assigned by God.”¹

זָרַע . . . זָרַעָה “Your Seed . . . Her Seed”

The noun זָרַע is a masculine singular collective that may also represent the plural. The most general translation which encompasses its semantic range is “seed.”² It may be traced to a Proto-Semitic root *zr'* which seems to be a conflation of the two roots of *zr'* ‘to sow’ and *ḏrw* ‘to scatter.’ It remains *zr'* in Hebrew, Aramaic, Phoenician, Arabic, Syriac, and Ugaritic.³

The verb זָרַע and the noun זָרַע are used in a literal sense of sowing seed in a field (e.g., Gen 26:12; Isa 37:30), although this usage is less frequent than the metaphorical meanings. The verb זָרַע appears fifty-six (56) times: forty-six (46) times in

¹Hess, 111.

²“Seed” is defined as: “The fertilized and mature ovule of a flowering plant which enables the species to perpetuate itself” (J. D. Douglas, “Seed,” *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 3:1411). Seed is also called “a fertilized and ripened egg cell of a plant, capable of sprouting to produce a new plant” (Ronald F. Youngblood, ed., *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995], 1142). For Larry G. Herr, “Seed” is “the part of a flowering plant that contains the embryo from which a new plant will grow” (“Seed,” *ISBE*, 4:380). Seed was similarly defined as “the essential plant organism which enables the species to reproduce itself (Gen 1:11) and of the human male semen (Lev 15:16, 18)” (Charles Pfeiffer et al., eds., *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 2 [Chicago: Moody, 1975], 1543).

³See T. Desmond Alexander, “From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis,” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 61, no. 1 [1989]: 5-19; M. Dahood, *Ugaritic-Hebrew Philology: Marginal Notes on Recent Publications*, *Biblica et Orientalia*, 17 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), 6; Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook: Grammar, Texts in Transliteration, Cuneiform Selections. Glossary, Indices* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), chap. 5: nos. 3-4; chap. 19: nos. 702, 705; Victor P. Hamilton, “זָרַע,” *NIDOTTE*, 1:1151-1152; Walter C. Kaiser, “זָרַע,” *TWOT*, 1:252-253; Lewis, “The Woman’s Seed,” 299-319; S. E. Loewenstamm, “The Ugaritic Fertility Myth: The Result of a Mistranslation,” *IEJ* 12 (1962): 87; *CAD* (1992), s.v. “Zēru”; Siegfried Schulz, “σπέρμα,” *TDNT*, 7:536-547, especially 538-542; and Preuss, 143-162.

Qal,¹ once in Pual,² six times in the Niphal,³ and three times in Hiphil.⁴ Literally, it refers to the action of sowing seed in the fields.⁵

Figuratively, it is used “in connection with moral actions: to sow justice (Prov 11:18), righteousness (Hos 10:12), light, i.e., happiness (Ps 97:11), wickedness (Prov 22:8), trouble (Job 4:8), and wind (Hos 8:7).”⁶ It also represents Israel’s practicing idolatry (Isa 17:10). In Ps 126:5, it depicts “the grief of hard work followed by joyous results.”⁷ It sometimes represents “reigns of kings and princes under the figure of trees (Isa 40:24).”⁸ In the Niphal it is used to describe “a woman being made pregnant (Num 5:28) or bearing a child (Hiphil Lev 12:2).”⁹

¹Gen 1:29 (2x); 26:12; 47:23; Exod 23:10, 16; Lev 19:19; 25:3, 4, 11, 20, 22; 26:16; Deut 11:10; 22:9 (2x); Judg 6:3; 9:45; 2 Kgs 19:29; Job 4:8; 31:8; Pss 97:11; 107:37; 126:5; Prov 11:18; 22:8; Eccl 11:4, 6; Isa 17:10; 28:24; 30:23; 32:20; 37:30; 55:10; Jer 2:2; 4:3; 12:13; 31:27; 35:7; 50:16; Hos 2:25; 8:7; 10:12; Mic 6:15; Hag 1:6; and Zech 10:9.

²Isa 40:24.

³Lev 11:37; Num 5:28; Deut 21:4; 29:22; Ezek 36:9; and Nah 1:14.

⁴Gen 1:11, 12; and Lev 12:2.

⁵Kaiser, “זָרַע,” 252.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid. More of such metaphorical uses are described on this same page concerning: “the Lord’s sowing (planting or establishing) Israel in the land of Palestine in a future day (Hos 2:25) or of his confession that though he has scattered (i.e., sown) Israel among the countries of the earth, he will also gather them one day in the future (Zech 10:9)” (252). See more in Preuss, 144-149. Preuss indicates that the “LXX usually renders the verb by means of *speirō* or *diaspeirō*; once (Nu. 5:28) it uses *ekspermatizō* (144). Bruce A. Demarest mentions that *speirō* is used 52 times as verb in the LXX and 53 times in the NT (Bruce A. Demarest and Colin Brown, “Seed, Plant, Grass, Flower, Harvest,” *NIDNTT*, 3:521-523).

The noun עֲרֵב means “sowing, seed, offspring.” It occurs 226 times in the OT.¹

The four basic semantic categories into which it can be classified include: (1) “The time of sowing, seedtime”²; (2) “The seed as that which is scattered or as the product of what is sown”³; (3) “The seed as semen”⁴; and (4) “The Seed as the offspring in the promised line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or in other groups separate from this people of

¹The statistics for the OT usage of the noun עֲרֵב is as follows:

Out of the 226 times that noun עֲרֵב appears in OT, it occurs 108 times in the Pentateuch (i.e., 48%); 77 times in the Prophetic books (i.e., 34%); and 41 times in the Writings (i.e., 18%). The details are:

Gen 1:11 (2x), 12 (2x), 29 (2x); 3:15 (2x); 4:25; 7:3; 8:22; 9:9; 12:7; 13:15, 16 (2x); 15:3, 5, 13, 18; 16:10; 17:7 (2x), 8, 9, 10, 12, 19; 19:32, 34; 21:12, 13; 22:17 (2x), 18; 24:7, 60; 26:3, 4 (3x), 24; 28:4, 13, 14; 32:13; 35:12; 38:8, 9 (2x); 46:6, 7, 19, 23, 24; 48:4, 11, 19 = 59 times.

Exod 16:31; 28:43; 30:21; 32:13 (2x); 33:1 = 6 times.

Lev 11:37, 38; 15:16, 17, 18, 32; 18:21; 19:19; 20:2, 3, 4; 21:15, 17, 21; 22:3, 4 (2x); 26:16; 27:16 (2x), 30 = 21 times.

Num 5:28; 11:7; 14:24; 16:40 (Heb 17:5); 18:19; 20:5; 24:7; 25:13 = 8 times.

Deut 1:8; 4:37; 10:15; 11:9, 10; 14:22; 22:9; 28:38, 46, 59; 30:6, 19; 31:21; 34:4 = 14 times.

Josh 24:3 = 1 time. Ruth 4:12 = 1 time.

1 Sam 1:11; 2:20; 8:15; 20:42 (2x); 24:21 (Heb. vs. 22) = 6 times.

2 Sam 4:8; 7:12; 22:51 = 3 times.

1 Kgs 2:33 (2x); 11:14, 39; 18:32 = 5 times. 2 Kgs 5:27; 11:1; 17:20; 25:25 = 4 times.

1 Chr 16:13; 17:11 = 2 times. 2 Chr 20:7; 22:10 = 2 times.

Ezra 2:59; 9:2 = 2 times. Neh 7:61; 9:2, 8 = 3 times.

Esth 6:13; 9:27, 28, 31; 10:3 = 5 times. Job 5:25; 21:8; 39:12 = 3 times.

Pss 18:50; 21:10 (Heb 11); 22:23 (Heb 24) [2x], 30 (Heb 31); 25:13; 37:25, 26, 28; 69:36 (Heb 37); 89:4 (Heb 5), 29 (Heb 30), 36 (Heb 37); 102:28 (Heb 29); 105:6; 106: 27; 112:2; 126:6 = 18 times.

Prov 11:21 = 1 time. Eccl 11:6 = 1 time.

Isa 1:4; 5:10; 6:13; 14:20; 17:11; 23:3; 30:23; 41:8; 43:5; 44:3; 45:19, 25; 48:19; 53:10; 54:3; 55:10; 57:3, 4; 59:21 (3x); 61:9 (2x); 65:9, 23; 66:22 = 26 times.

Jer 2:21; 7:15; 22:28, 30; 23:8; 29:32; 30:10; 31:27 (2x); 31:36, 37; 33:22, 26 (3x); 35:7, 9; 36:31; 41:1; 46:27; 49:10 = 21 times.

Ezek 17:5 (2x), 13; 20:5; 43:19; 44:22 = 6 times. Dan 1:3; 2:43 (Aramaic); 9:1 = 3 times.

Amos 9:13 = 1 time. Hag 2:19 = 1 time. Zech 8:12 = 1 time. Mal 2:3, 15 = 1 time.

²Kaiser, “עֲרֵב,” 252.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

promise.”¹

“The primary meaning comes from the realm of agriculture.”² This includes seedtime or sowing; seed itself which is planted; the seeds of the harvest; and time of harvest. This “thereby accords well with the Akkadian *zēru* ‘cultivated land. . . . Thus the whole agricultural cycle is practically summed up in the word *zera*’; from the act of sowing to the seed planted, to the harvest taken.”³ It appears as plural only once and that is in 1 Sam 8:15 with reference to the seeds demanded by the monarch as part of the taxation system in ancient Israel.

The figurative uses of the noun זָרַע include the following:

1. זָרַע refers to Judah’s idolatry (Isa 17:11). “They are planting ‘pleasant plants’ along with ‘strange slips.’ This refers either to the Ugaritic *n’mn* of the Tammuz-Adonis cult or to the folly of planting thorns and thistles and expecting a crop of flowers or vegetables.”⁴

2. זָרַע refers to semen in Num 5:28, “she shall be made pregnant with seed.”

Frequently it occurs in the expression “flow of semen” (Lev 15:16, 32; 22:4).⁵

3. זָרַע is also used as the accusative of mode and translated euphemistically as

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid. “In Old Akkadian, *zar’um* is used for ‘seed,’ ‘descendants’; the later form is *zēru(m)*. Note also the phrases *zē bit abi*, ‘family’; and *zē napsāi*, ‘living creatures’” (Preuss, “זָרַע,” 145).

⁴Kaiser, “זָרַע,” 252.

⁵Ibid., 252-253.

“lying carnally with a woman” (Lev 15:18; 18:20; Num 5:13; Jer 31:27).¹

4. עֲרֵבָה as collective noun in the singular. It is never in plural form to refer to “posterity or offspring.” It designates “the whole line of descendants as a unit, yet it is deliberately flexible enough to denote either one person who epitomizes the whole group . . . or the many persons in that whole line of natural and/or spiritual descendants.”²

This noun עֲרֵבָה may seem “indefinite” because it may “consist of a whole tribe or of one son only (iv. 25; xxi. 12, 13), and on the other hand, an entire tribe may be reduced to one single descendant and become extinct in him.”³ Hence, the identity of the Seed who will crush the Serpent’s head can only be determined by first of all examining the context following the developing history of the human race as recorded in the canon.⁴

There is the mention of the עֲרֵבָה of animals (Gen 7:3), which is similar to the עֲרֵבָה of the serpent in Gen 3:15. The Old Testament uses עֲרֵבָה infrequently for the offspring of animals.⁵ Does the word עֲרֵבָה indicate the “offspring” or “brood” of snakes? The Gen 7:3 passage does not answer this convincingly. “The purpose for taking the animals into the ark was not actually to keep their offspring alive. This offspring was not

¹Ibid., 253.

²Ibid. “LXX usually renders the noun by means of *spérma*, less often by means of *spóros* or *sporá*” (Preuss, “עֲרֵבָה,” 144). Demarest and Brown notes that LXX uses *spérma* as noun 217 times, while the NT uses it 44 times (521-523).

³Keil and Delitzsch, 3:101.

⁴Ibid.

⁵BDB (1996), s.v. “עֲרֵבָה.” Two main examples include Gen 3:15 and 7:3.

yet present at the time these words were spoken. How could it have been kept alive in the ark?" Some translations, avoiding the use of "seed" or "offspring" in Gen 7:3, use "their kind" (JB, RSV).¹

Other figurative meanings of "seed" include "a whole family" (Gen 17:12) or specifically the "royal family" (1 Kgs 11:14; 2 Kgs 25:25; 2 Chr 22:10; Jer 41:1; Ezek 17:13; Dan 1:3; Ezra 2:59; Neh 7:61). "Seed" could be both children and grandchildren (Gen 46: 6-7). It became a name for the people of Israel: "seed of Abraham" (Isa 41:8; 2 Chr 20:7; Jer. 33:26), and also "seed of Jacob or Israel" (Isa 43: 5; 45:19, 25). Also, "Seed of Israel/Jacob/ the people" is used by later prophets, of "future generations" in addressing the people (Deut 28:46, 59; 30:6, 19; 31:21; Jer 30:10; Isa 54:3; 66:22).²

Late Judaism uses seed-sowing and harvest ethically in an apocalyptic context. This also involves the implanting of the law in the heart.³ "In Philo *sperma* is interpreted as the starting point of the universe (*Plant.* 48) and of all that exists (*Leg. All.* 3, 185). Man's body originates from human seed, but the soul from divine seed (*Vit. Mos.* 1, 279)."⁴

The reference to the seed produced by the woman in Gen 3:15 raises the issue of whether females can be said to produce seed. Women are represented as possessing

¹Marten H. Woudstra, "Recent Translations of Genesis 3:15," *Calvin Theological Journal* 6 (1971): 197.

²*BDB* (1996), s.v. "זרע."

³Demarest and Brown, 522. See 2 Esdr 4:28ff.; 9:17, 31.

⁴*Ibid.* Philo's interpretation continues: "God sows every chaste virtue in the soul (*Cherubin* 52) and wisdom, the daughter of God, sows knowledge and discernment. But man possesses the capacity of sowing both good (*Leg. All.* 1, 80) and evil (*Conf. Ling.* 152) seed."

“seed” in Gen 4:25; 16:10; 19:32, 34; 24:60; Lev 12:2; Num 5:28; and Rev 12:17.¹

However, Hamilton retorts that to read “the LXX as ‘her sperm’ and the Vulgate as ‘her semen’ . . . in order to see a hint here of the virgin birth of this seed (the absence of a sperm-supplying father) is farfetched indeed.”² Gen 4:25 is cited to invalidate such a proposal because Eve exclaimed that God has given her “another seed,” “and certainly Seth was not born of a virgin!”³

Determining the intended meaning of עֲרִוּיָא in Gen 3:15 depends on some other considerations in the text, the first being the identity of the parties to the conflict foretold in the verse. An actual literal snake seems to be present in Gen 3 because it is actually compared and related with all the other beasts of the field which the Lord had made. This suggests that עֲרִוּיָא of snakes is better understood as “brood” of snakes.⁴

However, the story of Gen 3 suggests the presence of a demonic force acting behind and through the snake, which then necessitates another dimension in the meaning

¹Wolde recalls that the woman is intentionally given the capacity for procreation, and the responsibility for human survival (see 3:16). She is given a name that specifically indicates this life-giving function (3:20) (*Stories of the Beginning*, 50-51). See also Pieters, 87.

Adrien Janis Bledstein concludes: “Both woman and man are mutually interdependent for reproduction and equally responsible for the fates of their children” (“The Genesis of Humans: The Garden of Eden Revisited,” *Judaism* 26 [1977]: 198). Referring to Gen 24:60 and 16:10, she adds: “Rebekah becomes the dominating personage in her generation. . . . Both Hagar and Sarah actively influence the fates of their children. . . . If the woman is not merely the incubator of man’s seed, neither is she the Creatrix” (*ibid.*).

²Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 199.

³*Ibid.* Cf. F. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time* (Downer’s Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1972), 103.

⁴Woudstra, 197.

of the word עֲרֵב in Gen 3:15.¹ “The Bible nowhere suggests that demons can have offspring in the sense of progeny or posterity. When, nevertheless, the word עֲרֵב is used with respect to the serpent it must, when Satan is in view, have a non-literal meaning.”² This shows the complex meaning of עֲרֵב. This word refers to literal offspring of the woman, but less likely concerns literal offspring of snakes. Its non-literal use points to the “one whom the serpent represented as spokesman.”³

This leads us to the other figurative or metaphorical usages of עֲרֵב which include expressions such as “seed” of righteousness (especially in the Psalms: Pss 25:13; 37:25-26; 69:37; 102:29; 112:2; cf. 22:31); and the “seed” of wicked (Pss 21:11; 37:28). In these cases, “seed” is used as a mark of “Moral Quality” to refer to persons or community of a particular quality. It is used in a good sense (Prov 11:21; Jer 2:21; Mai 2:15) or in a bad sense for the “community of evil-doers” (Isa 1:4; 14:20; 57:3-4).⁴

Other passages illustrating the use of “seed” as moral quality include Jer 2:21; Isa 61:9; 65:9 and 23. The renderings of Isa 65:23: “. . . for they will be a race blessed by Yahweh, and their children with them” (JB); or “. . . for they are the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring with them” (ASV), show that the word עֲרֵב “may be distinguished from ‘offspring.’”⁵ Woudstra then correlates this meaning of עֲרֵב with

¹Ibid. Woudstra elaborates: “There is a diabolical subtlety in the serpents’ suggestions which points to a sinister background to his words. Later Scripture abundantly confirms this opinion” (ibid.).

²Ibid., 198.

³Ibid.

⁴*BDB* (1996), s.v. “עֲרֵב.”

⁵Woudstra, 198.

its use in Gen 3:15 as follows:

One might, while retaining something of the “offspring” notion, understand the two “seeds” to stand for two “races,” two “communities,” each marked by a moral quality. These communities are headed up by two distinct principals, the one principal being the woman, the other the serpent, each of which had just been set at enmity with the other by God himself. Upon this view both “seeds” could be found among the children of men. This would then alleviate the difficulty of having to take the word literally in the one instance and figuratively in the other.¹

These two moral groups which constitute the opposing race-seeds can be easily demonstrated first of all in the contrasting nature of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-15). Cain is evil while Abel is righteous. Subsequently, in Gen 4-11, these two seed-groups work their ways out.

The rebellious seed (descendants) of Cain follow his unrighteous footsteps by setting God aside (Gen 4:16-24), while the seed (descendants) of Seth, chosen in place of murdered Abel, “call on the name of the Lord” (Gen 4:26). The evil genealogy of Cain (Gen 4:16:24) contrasts the righteous genealogy of Seth (Gen 5:3-32), traced directly from Adam, instead of his evil surviving brother Cain (Gen 5:1-3).

Adam is said to be created in the likeness and image of God (Gen 5:1, cf. Gen 1:27). This makes Adam the “son of God” in verity. Seth is specifically said to have been begotten by Adam in his likeness and image, thus qualifying Seth to be rightly called the “son of God” too (Gen 5:3). Hence, the genealogy of Seth constitutes the “sons of God,” i.e., the righteous seed-group (best exemplified in the life of Enoch [Gen 5:19-24]).

Moreover, the “daughters of men,” representing the evil lives of Cain and his

¹Ibid.

descendants (most evident in the wickedness of Lamech [Gen 4:19-24]), are contrasted with the “sons of God,” representing the righteous seeds of the Sethites¹ (Gen 6:1-4).

There seems to be a trend that whenever “seed” refers to “an individual child” (Gen 4:25; 15:3; 19:32, 34; 21:13; 38:8-9; 1 Sam 1:11; 2:20; 2 Sam 7:12), it is usually an immediate descendant. However, when referring to “distant offspring or a large group of descendants, עֲרֵב is a collective, ‘they’ (Gen 9:9; 12:7; 13:16; 15:5, 13, 18; 16:10; 17:7-10, 12; 21:12; 22:17-18).”² Notwithstanding, the NT applies “2 Sam 7:12 to Jesus, and not only to Solomon (see Heb 1:5).”³ This punctures any definite conclusion that where עֲרֵב points to a distant descendant it has to be a collective plural.⁴

¹See Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 79-80; Adam Co, “The Probable Identity of the ‘Sons of God’ in the Literary Context of Genesis 6:1-4,” (Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelistic Theological Society, Nov. 17, 1999, Danvers, MA), 1-20; Delitzsch, *Genesis*, 131-138; Gerhard Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific, 1980), 151-152; Leupold, 249-254; John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 243-249.

I reject the other major theories that identify the “sons of God” other than the Sethites, which is the only meaning of the term which duly respects the literary context of Gen 4-6. These theories include the identity as “Divine beings”: Driver, *Genesis*, 82-83; Ronald S. Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4,” *JBL* 106 (1987): 13-26; Speiser, *Genesis*, 44; “Angels”: Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:291-294; Dillman, 233-234; F. B. Huey, Jr., “Are the ‘Sons of God’ in Genesis 6 Angels? Yes,” in *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions about Creation and the Flood*, ed. Ronald F. Youngblood (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 184-209; von Rad, *Genesis*, 113-114; Skinner, 141-142; Willem A. VanGemeren, “The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4,” *WTJ* 43 (1981): 321; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 140; and “Rulers”: Meredith G. Kline, “Divine Kingship in Genesis 6:1-4,” *WTJ* 24 (1962): 187-204; Emil G. Kraeling, “The Significance and the Origin of Genesis 6:1-4,” *JNES* 6 (1947): 193-208; John J. Walton, “Are the ‘Sons of God’ in Genesis 6 Angels? No,” in *The Genesis Debate: Persistent Questions about Creation and the Flood*, ed. Ronald F. Youngblood (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 184-209; and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 370-373.

²Hamilton, “עֲרֵב,” 1152. Hamilton pleads for caution “about seeing too quickly a clear-cut reference to some remote individual” (*The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 198). For Skinner this means that “the Messianic application therefore is not justified in grammar” (79).

³Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 198, n. 16.

⁴*Ibid.* Rom 1:3 and 2 Tim 2:8 discuss Jesus as “Seed of David.”

Furthermore, as it is argued below, in Gen 3:15 and some other Genesis references to seed, both singular individual and plural collective applications are intended in the same text. There is a narrowing from the collective to the singular representative, hence the immediate individual descendant, the resultant future multiple descendants, and distant individual representative descendant are in view at the same time in the same text.¹

הַשְׂפָּנוּ . . . יִשְׂפָּךְ הוּא “He, He Shall Bruise You . . . You Shall Bruise Him”

This portion of Gen 3:15(d and e) begins with the use of the singular third-person pronoun הוּא “He” to refer to the hitherto collective plural connotation of עֲרֵעַ earlier in Gen 3:15. Obviously, this singular third-person pronoun הוּא has the collective עֲרֵעַ as its definite referent.

Next, the imperfect verb יִשְׂפָּךְ has the third-person singular as its subject, referring incontrovertibly only to the same collective עֲרֵעַ. Lastly, the imperfect verb הַשְׂפָּנוּ has as its pronominal suffix, a third-person singular pronoun which also refers clearly to the very same collective עֲרֵעַ. These three powerful witnesses in this passage reveal its inherent intention to underscore the narrowing down from the collective plural seed to a singular representative seed.²

¹See chapters 2 and 3 below for discussions on the narrowing and movement from Plural to singular Seed in each of the following verses such as Gen 3:15; 15:13; 22:17-18; 24:60; Deut 10:15-19; 1 Sam 20:42; and 2 Sam 7:12.

Kaiser agrees that in Gen 3:15, “‘seed’ can be collective noun and embrace one’s whole biological progeny. At the same time, however, there is something distinctively singular and individualistic about this seed . . . even though ‘he’ acts only as one of the woman’s many descendants” (*Messiah in the Old Testament*, 49).

²Cf. Delitzsch, *OT History of Redemption*, 26; idem, *Messianic Prophecies*, 27-29; Keil and Delitzsch, 3:100-101; Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 82-89; Pareus, 102; Robertson, 99-100; Schurb, 35; and Young, *Genesis* 3, 118-120. More elaborations will be given to this phenomenon later in this dissertation.

Two verbal expressions are used to signify the reciprocal actions of the serpent and the seed representing the woman's side. The action of the woman's Seed is expressed with a Qal imperfect, third-person masculine singular with a second-person singular suffix. Similarly, the action of the Serpent is expressed with a Qal imperfect, second-person masculine singular plus a third-person masculine singular suffix. The root for both verbs seems to be clearly **קָנַח**.

The form of **קָנַח** of Gen 3:15 recurs only in Job 9:17 and Ps 139:11, and in both, text and meaning are doubtful. There are a couple of verbs that are similar or comparable to this verb **קָנַח**. One of such is the verb **קָנַח** which usually refers to the biting of snakes but once metaphorically describes false prophets as biters, signifying the deadly effect of their appetite (Mic 3:5). The verb is found in Qal (Num 21:8-9; Amos 5:19; 9:3; Gen 49:17; Eccl 10:8, 11, etc.; and also in Piel (Jer 8:17; Num 21:6). It is found in the Ugaritic root *ntk* and Akkadian *našāku*.¹ Furthermore, a cognate Arabic word, *shaffa*, applies to a cloud approaching and "skimming over the earth."²

Another comparable verb is **קָנַח**(II) which means "shall pierce, wound, bite."³ It is the assumed root of **קָנַח** which stands for "adder" or "horned snake" in Gen 49:17.⁴ It is also the suggested root for **קָנַח** (or **קָנַח**) which is a noun of a

¹Stallman, 85-87.

²Driver, "Some Hebrew Verbs, Nouns, and Pronouns," 371-378, quoted in Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, WBC, vol. 21 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 251, n. 11c.

³H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, eds., *The Pulpit Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 1:66.

⁴*TWOT* (1980), s.v. "קָנַח"; and *BDB* (1996), s.v. "קָנַח."

personal name, Shephuphan or Shupham, son of Bela and grandson of Benjamin. This root is also related to the word for “serpent.” So also is שִׁפְּחָנִי, an adjective for a people called Shuphamites who are also Benjamites, the descendants of Shupham. So also is שִׁפְּחָנִי, called Shuppiym or Shuppim, the same as Shupham above or perhaps a Merarite Levite, son of Hosah, in charge of the West Gate of the temple in the time of David.¹

The third comparable verb is שָׁנַף (I) which has a fairly wide range of meaning including “to gasp, pant, pant after,” or “to gasp or pant (with desire), be eager for,” or “breathe heavily,” or “snuff up.” It could also mean “to swallow up.” It has stronger connotations like “to crush, trample, trample upon,” “to devour,” or “to pulverize by rubbing, pounding, stamping, treading, beating, or grinding.”² It could be used figuratively to mean “to thirst for one’s blood (from actions of animals).”³ It is used metaphorically as “desire, earnestly desire, long for.”⁴

The meaning and intention of the roots in both usages in Gen 3:15 has engendered numerous speculations which also include the suggesting of different or similar root forms and derivatives for the verbs. Some have also postulated text emendations for these verbs to fit some particular form and meaning. The context of this verse and the obvious nature and behavior of the two parties involved in the duel have

¹BDB (1996), s.v. “שִׁפְּחָנִי.” See Num 26:39; 1 Chr 7:12, 15; and 8:5.

²BDB (1996), s.v. “שָׁנַף (I).”

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. See TWOT (1980), s.v. “שָׁנַף (I) and (II);” Daniel C. Fredericks, “שָׁנַף,” NIDOTTE, 4:11; and Bible Works. See Isa 42:14; Jer 2:24; 14:6; Amos 2:7; 8:4; Ezek 36:3; Job 5:5; 7:2; 36:20 Pss 56:2; 57:4; 119:131; Eccl 1:5 among others. Spence and Exell also suggest meanings such as “shall watch, lie in wait” for the root שָׁנַף (“Genesis and Exodus,” 66).

“snap at”; linked to the cognate Arabic term meaning “look at.”¹ Westermann concurs that they are taken from two different roots translating “crush” and “snap at” respectively, because “the two actions are different, corresponding to the different bodily forms of the parties.”²

The transformation back and forth from רָנַח to רָנַח has been discussed by Skinner. He observed how in the Aramaic and New Hebrew (the language of Mishnah, Midrashim, and parts of Talmud) the root רָנַח or רָנַח has the primary sense of “rub,” hence “wear down by rubbing”=“crush.” In Syriac, it also means “to crawl.” There are a few examples of a tendency of רָנַח verbs to strengthen themselves by insertion of נ ,³ and it is often supposed that in certain passages (Ezek 36:3; Amos 2:7; 8:4; Pss 56:2, 3; 57:4) רָנַח is disguised under the by-form רָנַח .⁴

Skinner contends that the only places where the assumption is at all necessary are Amos 2:7; 8:4 where the נ may be simply *mater lectionis* for the *â* of the participle (cf. רָנַח , Hos 10:14); in other cases the proper sense of רָנַח (‘pant’ or metaphorically, “long for”) suffices. The reverse process (substituting of רָנַח for רָנַח) is much less likely; and the only possible instance would be Job 9:17, which is too uncertain to count for anything. Therefore, there is not much ground for supposing a confusion in Gen 3:15.

¹Cornelis Van Dam, “ רָנַח ,” *NIDOTTE*, 4:67.

²Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 260. Gunkel also translates: “He may tread upon thy head, and thou mayest snap at his heel” (*Genesis*, 20).

³Eduard König, *Die Genesis* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1925), 439.

⁴Skinner, 79-81.

Haupt discovers a similar verb in Arabic signifying “to foot, to persecute.”¹ The Hebrew verb is derived from “a noun for *foot* corresponding to Assyrian *šēpu*,”² and used in the first instance of Gen 3:15. The second usage here, as a “denominative verb does not mean *to tread under foot*, to crush, but to *tread on the heels of*, i.e., to track, stalk, hunt down, waylay, seek to injure, persecute.”³

Both Verbs with Same Root and Translation

Several scholars and sources argue that these two verbs in Gen 3:15 come from the same root and are to be translated identically. Some translate them with strong words like “bruise,”⁴ “crush,”⁵ “strike,”⁶ or “attack fiercely.”⁷ “This approach is usually based on an appeal to the Aramaic ܫܦܫܫ, ܫܦܫܫ (e.g., *Tg. Onq. Deut* 9.21; *Tg. Job* 14.19) and the Syriac *shaf*, ‘rub off, grind’ (e.g., Exod 32.20), or the Akkadian *shapu*, ‘to tread with the feet.’”⁸

Furthermore, translating identically portrays “the reciprocal nature of the

¹Haupt, 158.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 159. He realizes that the meaning “to persecute” suits both usages in Gen 3:15 and also the other occurrences in Job 9:17 and Ps 139:11. However, he rejects the translations “to fall on, to assail” as inaccurate (ibid.).

⁴For example, Driver, *Genesis*, 48.

⁵For example, Skinner, 79-80.

⁶For example, Speiser, *Genesis*, 23; and Hamilton, *Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 198.

⁷L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, and J. J. Staum, eds., *Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament*, 5 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1967-1995). It is from the translation “hart angreifen.”

⁸Andrews, 24, n. 24.

passage. Also, the sense of ‘crush’ or ‘batter’ fits the two other occurrences of the verb in Job 9:17 and Ps 139:11.”¹ Wenham uses “batter” in both instances.²

Keil argues for the sense of “crush” in both uses of שָׁרַשׁ and more so because “crush” agrees with Rom 16:20. Both parties intended to destroy each other. Human triumph is ultimately assured as suggested by Gen 1:28 where Adam is given rulership over all animals. He sees this fact as further evidence that the curse of Gen 3:14-15 involves a higher being; otherwise it would be redundant with Gen 1:28 if it referred only to an animal.³

Delitzsch agrees with the translation “crush” based on the use of the double accusative, claiming that it is used only for “verbs signifying a hostile meeting.”⁴ The idea of crushing is also represented by Greek translations of Aquila and Symmachus, some LXX recensions, and Jerome.⁵

Calvin concludes that the word שָׁרַשׁ, which means the same thing both times (bruise, or strike), was chosen to allude to the name of the serpent, in Hebrew שָׁרִיפִי.

¹Cf. G. R. Driver, “Some Verbs, Nouns, and Pronouns,” *JTS* 30 (1928-29): 375-7; and Alfred Guillaume, “Paronomasia in the Old Testament,” *JSS* 9 (1964): 286-288. Van Dam writes: “In Job 9:17, *šwp* describes being crushed by a storm. In Ps 139 the image of darkness so thick that it can crush and overwhelm is graphically portrayed by the use of *šwp*. There is no need to emend this text” (“שָׁרַשׁ,” 67). See further W. A. VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), esp. pp. 92-94.

²Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 79-81. He also uses “hostility” for “enmity.”

³Keil and Delitzsch, 3:98-100.

⁴Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies*, 29. He distinguished between the verbs of hostile *endeavour* from those of hostile achievement (e.g., פָּרַעַ).

⁵Skinner, 78-80. The Codice A of the LXX gives the idea of “pant after.”

The difference he sees in the verse is related only to the head and heel.¹ Vos saw his clue for choosing “bruise” as the fact that “both in Greek and Aramaic the words for ‘beating’ and ‘striking are used of bites and stings.”²

For lack of “evidence in the Hebrew text to support divergent readings,”³ Hamilton considered it “unwise” and “artificial” to present a double translation of these two verbs. “It forces on the text a focus that is not there.”⁴ He also believes that such double translation erroneously “creates the impression that the blow struck at the serpent is fatal—its head is crushed—while the blow unleashed by the serpent against the woman’s seed is painful but not lethal—it comes away with a bruised heel.”⁵ In contrast, “the contrast is not only between *head* and *heel* but between *it* and *you*.”⁶ He therefore uses “strike at” as the right translation of פָּגַע in both cases. This covers “the reciprocal moves of the woman’s seed and the serpent’s seed against each other.”⁷

Woudstra recognizes that Gen 3:15 places a “relatively heavy emphasis” on the

¹Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis*, 168-9.

²Vos, 52-54. According to Warren Austin Gage, “the word play in Gen 3:15, ‘you shall bruise him on heel’ but ‘he shall bruise you on the head’” is an “irony of degree” (*The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* [Winona Lake: Carpenter, 1984], 46).

³Hamilton, *Genesis: Chapter 1-17*, 197.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 198-199.

⁶Ibid., 199.

⁷Ibid., 199-200.

idea of “enmity.”¹ Therefore, “it would seem that the conclusion is warranted that the emphasis was placed not so much, or at least not in the first place, on the victory gained in the conflict, but on the fact of the conflict itself and on the way in which this conflict was to express itself as long as it lasted.”² Hence, he preferred a “weaker word” than “crush,” as a translation of **רָשַׁח** because by “crushing” the head of the serpent, “in terms of this passage at least, the enmity of which it speaks could no longer be exercised. One of the combatants would have been knocked out.”³ He saw this necessary because “this enmity and its mutual expression in terms of the Hebrew verb *shuph* . . . stand out in this passage.”⁴

Manfred Görg argues that the root **רָשַׁח** is derived from the Egyptian *hf*, or the reduplicated *hfhf*, which is also found as *šp*, and *špšp*, and generally means “damage” or “demolish.” He indicates that it corresponds with the verbal root **כָּתַח** used to describe Hezekiah’s action of destroying the bronze snake statue.⁵

¹Woudstra, 200. His reason is that “this word, by virtue of its forward position in the Hebrew sentence, a position which interrupts somewhat that normal flow of the Hebrew sentence structure, indicates the true purpose of the divine deliverance at this point” (ibid.).

²Ibid., 201.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. The choice of the translation as “strike at” makes it easy to use “one and the same word” for both activities and avoids the difficulty of “how to conceive of the attack of a snake upon a man’s heel in terms of ‘crushing’” (ibid.). He reasons further: “The surrounding context seems to suggest a situation which reaches as far as the horizon of time. The snake’s curse, woman’s childbirth in pain, man’s work in the sweat of his face, these are conditions that are coextensive with mankind’s history short of consummation. Would it be strange if, in this setting, the Lord had spoken of a perennial and sustained enmity, set and maintained by him, which was to last as long as time would last?” Another reason to prefer the translation, “strike at” (p. 202).

⁵Görg, 132-139.

Other translations each used for both verbal expressions include “to watch, guard” from the LXX and “seek to come at,” drawing from the meaning “pant,” etc., from the root פָּנַח.¹ Driver appeals to Syriac to support his translation: “he shall graze your head and you shall graze his heel.”²

Same Root but Different Meanings

The root פָּנַח is given the two meanings “crush” and “snap at, snatch at.”³ It is taken to be a by-form of the root פָּנַח, meaning “crush” (Amos 2:7); and “gasp for, long for” (Jer 14:6).⁴ The Vulgate seems to be the precedent for translating *sûp* in two different ways, using *conterero*, “to crush, grind, bruise,” the first time, but shifting to *insidior*, “to lie in wait, to lie in ambush, to watch,” in the next phrase.

Hengstenberg takes the first use of פָּנַח as signifying “crush” (supported by its occurrences in Job 9:7 and Ps 139:11, and in Rom 16:20), and in the second use, “destroy,” “annihilate” (comparable to Jonah 4:7 where an insect (*sic*, תִּרְקַעַת) bite is described with the word “strike” (פָּנַח)).⁵ For König, the root פָּנַח partly means “press

¹Dillman, 156-161.

²Driver, “Some Hebrew Verbs, Nouns and Pronouns,” 375-377. Hamilton refutes this by saying “more than grazing is implied” (*Genesis 1-17*, 198).

³For example, Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 364.

⁴Cf. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 260. Skinner objects that in most cases, the meaning “pant” or “long for” for פָּנַח is adequate (Ezek 36:3; Pss 56:2-3; 57:4), and that the substitution of פָּנַח for פָּנַח is highly unlikely (*Genesis*, 79-81).

⁵Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*, 1:26-27.

down, crush” and partly “destroy” in Gen 3:15d-e.¹

Wifall also subscribes to the denominative meaning of 𐤍𐤏𐤍 as being from the Akkadian *šēpu*, “foot,” and speculates that it had the same dual meaning that the English verb “foot” once had: “to tread upon” and “to seize.” He therefore translates: “he shall tread upon your head and you shall seize his heel.”²

The writer of Gen 3:15 intentionally used 𐤍𐤏𐤍 twice to make an important point about the message of the verse. It has been suggested that this verse has a *paronomasia*, with the verbs having a different meaning each time.³ This means that in these two verbal expressions, “two similarly sounding words are set in opposition to each other.”⁴ The purpose of this *paronomasia* in this particular context has been suggested to be that of giving the sentence “some kind of an antithetical force. The fight between the serpent and the woman will, ultimately, end up with the defeat of the serpent.”⁵ However, Holter is still convinced that Gen 3:15 contains “a perpetual aspect . . . expressed both by the

¹König where he sees this kind of usage as consistent with LXX Ps 139:11, and Aramaic and Syriac usages (*Die Genesis*, 248-9).

²Wifall, “Gen 3:15: A Protoevangelium?” 364, n. 22. However, he said that it means only “seize” when the foot of a bird of prey was doing the seizing. Cf. Ronning, 90-91. Contra, I see this reference to the English use of “foot” as evidently foreign to the biblical text of Gen 3:15. Moreover, Hamilton posits that the Akkadian *šāpu*, “to tread with the feet,” yielding the obvious translation of “crush” has a problem: “while ‘crush with the foot’ is an appropriate designation of what a man would do to a snake, it is an inappropriate description of what a snake would do to a person’s heel” (*Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 198).

³Gunkel, *Genesis*, 20. Haupt fully supports this too (155-162). Cf. Guillaume, “Paronomasia in the Old Testament,” 286-288.

⁴Holter, 109.

⁵Ibid.

word **זרע** ‘offspring’ and by the imperfect tense, which ought to be taken iteratively.”¹

Meanings from Text Emendation and Commentary

In Gen 3:15e, Lipinski reprints **תִּשְׁפֹּנֵנּוּ** as **תִּשְׁפֹּנֵנּוּ** from **שָׁפַךְ** with the meaning “spit at” for the snake’s injection of venom. “He finds support for this in Job 9:17-18, where he also reprints the verb **שָׁפַךְ**, in which God is compared to a venomous snake who spits at Job in the storm, and leaves him without breath.”²

Levene comments on this verse as follows: “If we desire the good, through mighty deeds we are able to smite him (**לִמְכִיּוֹתָהּ**), but then he can bite us (**דִּנְכֵנּוּ**) as he watches (**נֹטֵר**) our heel.”³ Likewise, Theodore’s interpretation also appears in the Diyarbakir MS, and in Isho‘dad’s commentary, as follows: “Men strike (**מַחֲרִי**) the serpent’s body as well as his head, but although they watch (**מַחֲרִי**) his head to crush (**לְמַרְיָ**) it, the serpent stings (**דִּבְרִי**) any limb he can. If we desire the good and great we can smite (**לִמְכִיּוֹתָהּ**) him, but he can bite (**נִכִּי**) us as he watches (**נֹטֵר**) our heel.”⁴

There is no justification for textual emendation in order to reconcile the meaning of the word **שָׁפַךְ**. I also reject the argument for two different roots for the same word in this context. However, I believe that the writer has wisely employed a word which

¹Ibid., 110. Holter insists that the first verb is from the root **שָׁפַךְ** I, meaning “to bruise, crush,” while the second comes from the root **שָׁפַךְ** II (= **שָׁפַח**), meaning “to snatch, strike” (ibid.). He notes: “Another paronomasia in the same context is the wordplay on **עָרַם** in 2:25 and 3:1; the first being derivated from **עָרַם** II, the second from **עָרַם** I” (ibid.).

²Ronning, 96; referring to Lipinski, 45-47.

³Levene, 77-78.

⁴Salvesen, 14.

comes from a single root with a semantic range that is broad enough to embrace the action of a snake in biting human beings on the heel and the crushing of the serpent's head in turn.

I subscribe to the translation “fatally bruise” for both uses. There is no reason in the Hebrew text to suspect the presence of more than one root for both verbs. Indeed, the reader understands the normal intensity of such action depending on the doer of each action. While both actions are fatal, the head is more fragile and bruising it is fatal. This seems to point to the serpent's total defeat.

An important observation is that the intention of the text is to show that the action described by the verb **רָשַׁע** affects the totality of the person of each actor in this struggle. The verb affects ultimately the “you” and the “him,” even though the points of the contact are the “head” and the “heel” respectively. The effects of the attack are by no means limited only to the points of contact, vis-a-vis, the head and the heel. The text can be literally rendered as “He will fatally bruise you, [through] the head, and you will fatally bruise him, [through] the heel.”

The only other biblical occurrences of the verb **רָשַׁע**, found in Job 9:17 and Ps 139:11, show that the actions have negative meanings and always affect the whole person. Recalling the Arabic cognate word which connotes an approaching cloud which skims over the earth, the verb **רָשַׁע** seems to connote the idea of erasing or disappearing. This points to the negative meaning of death and disappearance.

רֹאשׁ “Head”

The word **רֹאשׁ** “head” is a noun, a common semitic word, the earliest form is

ra's. It is used of human beings about 230 times (e.g., Gen 40:16-17). It is used of animals numerous times referring to: a serpent (Gen 3:15); dog (2 Sam 3:8); ass (2 Kgs 6:25); living creatures (Ezek 1:22, 26); sea-monsters (Job 40:31, Ps 74:14); and especially animals for sacrifice (Exod 12:9; 29:15, 19; Lev 1:4, 8, 12, 15; 3:2, 8).¹

The word is used figuratively, of noble and commoner (Isa 9:13, 14, 15); and of relative dignity, power, and influence (Deut 28:13, 44).² The head of a family is found in 1 Chr 5:7, 12; 7:3; 8:28; 23:8, 11, 19, 20; and combined with the word "house," as in Exod 6:14; Num 7:2; and Josh 22:14.³

The word **רִאשׁוֹן** signifies "front," or "leader's place" in Mic 2:13; 2 Chr 20:27; and Amos 6:7. In relation to time, **רִאשׁוֹן** means "beginning" as in Judg 7:19; Lam 2:19; Isa 40:21; 41:4, 26; 48:16; and Prov 8:23. It means "chief, choicest, best" in Ezek 27:22; Exod 30:23; Ps 137:6. It refers to "sum, in its sum, i.e., in full," as in Num 5:7; Ps 139:17. Finally, it is used in terms of the "division of army, company, band" as in Judg 7:16, 20; 9:34, 37, 43-44; 1 Sam 11:11; 13: 17-18; Job 1:17.⁴

However, in Gen 3:15, the context shows that what we have here is a real and natural snake whose head is the point of a fatal attack from man. This is the literal head that sits on top of the neck! It is the physical head of the serpent that is to be crushed in the duel with the woman's Seed. This indicates literal death for the serpent.

¹*BDB* (1996), s.v. "רִאשׁוֹן."

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

עָקַב “Heel”

The word עָקַב “heel” is a masculine noun meaning “heel, footprint, hoof, or hinder-part”; figuratively, it means “trace, mark, end, extremity.”¹ Several contexts of its use are found in its thirteen occurrences in the OT. The heel of man is said to be an object of attack from behind in Gen 3:15; 25:26; Job 18:9; while in Jer 13:22, heels are treated violently, i.e., are rudely exposed. The heel of an animal is mentioned in Gen 49:17; and Judg 5:22; while it means “hinder-part, rear” of a troop of men in Gen 49:19; and Josh 8:13.²

The verb form עָקַב in Qal means “seize the heel, hold by the heel, attack at the heel, supplant, overreach, deceive,” and in Piel means “arrest, rearguard, hinder, hold

¹Further enumerations are found in: N. Ararat, “Scripture’s Battle Against Cunning,” *Beth Miqra* 26 (1980): 67-78; Eugene Carpenter and Michael A. Grisanti, “עָקַב,” *NIDOTTE*, 3:504-506; Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1978); Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18-50*, WBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Alex T. Luc, “עָקַב,” *NIDOTTE*, 3:506-507; Heinz-Josef Zobel, “עָקַב,” *TWAT*, 6:338-343; J. Barton Payne, “עָקַב,” *TWOT*, 2:691-692; B. Margalit, “Lexicographical Notes on the Aqht Epic (Part I: *KTU*, 1.17-18),” *UF* 15 (1983): 95-96; T. McComiskey, “Hosea,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 1:1-237; Ross, *Creation and Blessing*; and Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, *Dictionary and Thesaurus of the Hebrew Language* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1959), 5:4665-4669.

²*BDB* (1996), s.v. “עָקַב.” Luc explains its uses in the following verses: In Josh 8:13, the word could have the meaning of “ambush”: “a deceitful ploy from behind (as the imagery would indicate) to trick Ai” (“עָקַב,” 506-507). In Job 18:9, Bildad uses the word for a wicked person “caught by the heel in a trap, i.e., he has been attacked from behind, deceitfully” (*ibid.*, 504). In Ps 41:9{10}, “to lift the heel against someone was a symbol and an act of rejection, like turning one’s back” (p. 505). In Jer 13:22 is literally, “your heels have been treated violently,” referring to Israel’s sin which resulted in “her body being violently accosted, again from the back” (*ibid.*).

Jacob עֵשָׂב was given his name at birth because he had grasped his brother Esau’s heel עָקַב during delivery (Gen 25:26). “Later events delineate the destiny of Jacob, anticipated by his activity and naming at birth” (*ibid.*). The name Jacob עֵשָׂב later received a negative connotation after his deception of Esau, his brother: “supplanter, deceiver.” In Gen 49:17 the tribe of Dan is depicted as “a serpent who strikes at a horse’s hooves, causing its rider to fall backward. In the same manner that a snake can strike at the legs of a horse and overthrow the stronger animal, Dan, one of the smaller tribes, has the potential of exerting authority beyond its size” (*ibid.*).

back.”¹ The verb עָקַף is used five times. “Three of the four passages allude directly or indirectly to Jacob’s grasping Esau’s heel at birth.”²

The related adjective is עָקָף, meaning “insidious, uneven (ground), showing footprints, deceitful, treacherous.” It seems to connote being “devious or difficult,” “rougher than anything, and incurable,” “crafty, deceitful,” and “hard” in Jer 17:9; “a demarcated region which is arduous and troublesome” in Isa 40:4. In Hos 6:8, this adjective is used to vividly condemn Gilead as a wicked city that is “stained/tracked with footprints of blood.” In Sir 6:20, it depicts being “tough” or “harsh.”³

The derived noun עֲקָפָה occurs only once (2 Kgs 10:19) meaning “trickery, deception, cunning, craftiness.” This depicts “Jehu’s treacherous actions necessary to destroy the prophets/ministers of Baal.”⁴

The cognates of the root עָקַף appear in verbs, nouns, and adjectives throughout the ancient Near East in Ugaritic, Akkadian, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, Tigre, Geez, Amharic, Jewish Aramaic with various meanings related to “heel.” For instance, the

¹Carpenter and Grisanti, 504-506.

²Ibid., 504-505. Esau laments that Jacob supplanted him twice (Gen 27:36) in taking his birthright and blessing. “The imagery of supplanting or superceding delineated by Jacob’s grabbing of Esau’s heel at birth here widens to include the deceptive means Jacob used to accomplish his scheme. The supplanting of Jacob becomes synonymous with the deception of Jacob” (p. 505). Jacob’s supplanting and deceptive behavior became used as a reference by Israel’s prophets to indict the people in their sins and social decay (see Hos 12:3[4]; Jer 9:4[3]).

³Ibid., 505; and Luc, 507. See W. Holladay, *Jeremiah: Spokesman Out of Time* (New York: Pilgrim, 1974), 100; and A. Schwarzenbach, *Die geographische Terminologie im Hebräischen des Alten Testaments* (Leiden: Brill, 1954), 5.

⁴Luc, 507. The figurative use of this word reveals a connotation of deception, falsehood, fraud, guile, iniquity, mischief, cheating, crime, betrayal, revolt, rebellion, mockery, and lie. However, its use in Gen 3:15 is not figurative but literal. Nevertheless, the methods of the deceiver who attacks the heel of humans may be indirectly included in the connotation of the text.

Ugaritic 'qb has a meaning including “held back, hinder, rough, hilly.”¹

The usage of עָקַב in Gen 3:15 describes “the archetypal seizing of the serpent at the heel of humankind. Here the heel serves as the point of impact for the manifestation of hostility between the seed of humankind and the serpent. The serpent strikes at the person’s heel while the person strikes at the serpent with his heel.”²

Head/Heel Dichotomy

A number of scholars posit that neither the serpent nor the woman has the upper hand in this enmity. Thus, the “head” and “heel” distinction is nothing more than the natural points of attack by the warring sides and does not suggest human superiority in the struggle.³ Others recognize a serious distinction whereby the woman’s Seed will crush the serpent’s head while the serpent can only wound the woman’s Seed in the heel.⁴

¹Ibid. The Ugaritic usage of 'qb focuses on the supplanting facet of the verb: “hindering, foiling” as noted by Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 18-50*, 227, n. 28; and Margalit, 95-96.

²Carpenter and Grisanti, 504. They makes the following comparison: “The term עָקַב is more picturesque than עָרַוּם ‘cunning’ in depicting a deceitful act because of its close tie to the noun עָקַב which means ‘heel’” (p. 506). “While עָרַוּם not only means ‘cunning’ but also positively ‘prudent/wise’ (mainly in Proverbs), עָקַב does not possess such strong positive meaning. In this respect, the narrow descriptive function of the root 'qb is similar to that of the negative term *nkl*, ‘be crafty/deceitful’ (Gen 37:18; Num 25:18; Ps 105:25; Mal 1:14)” (p. 507).

³See Driver, *Genesis*, 48; Fishbane, “Genesis 2.4b-11.32: The Primeval Cycle,” 21; Terence E. Fretheim, *Creation, Fall, and Flood: Studies in Genesis 1-11* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), 88; von Rad, *Genesis*, 93; John C. L. Gibson, *Genesis, The Daily Study Bible* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew, 1981), 1:135; Ogden, 134; Richardson, 74; and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 259. Walsh argues: “The identification of 3:15 as promising ultimate victory to the woman’s seed is without adequate foundation in the text. The same verb is used for the snake’s and the man’s attacks; whatever meaning is attached to it, it cannot be used to imply victory for one or for the other. The distinction between a deadly attack on the snake’s head and a merely injurious attack on the man’s heel loses force when we remember that ‘probably . . . all serpents were thought to be poisonous’” (117, 175, n. 35). See McCullough, 289.

⁴See Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:161; Keil and Delitzsch, 3:100-101; Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 45; among many others. Skinner also agrees, though he still

Keil and Delitzsch correctly explain the victory by the woman's Seed:

The verb is construed with a double accusative, the second giving greater precision to the first. The same word is used in connection with both head and heel, to show that on both sides the intention is to destroy the opponent; at the same time, the expressions head and heel denote a *majus* and *minus*, or as Calvin says, *superius et inferius*. This contrast arises from the nature of the foes. The serpent can only seize the heel of the man, who walks upright; whereas the man can crush the head of the serpent, that crawls in the dust. But this difference is itself the result of the curse pronounced upon the serpent, and its crawling in the dust is a sign that it will be defeated in its conflict with man. However pernicious may be the bite of a serpent in the heel when the poison circulates throughout the body (49:17), it is not immediately fatal and utterly incurable, like the crushing of a serpent's head. . . . That the human race should triumph over the serpent, was a necessary consequence of the original subjection of the animals to man. . . . When, therefore, God not merely confines the serpent within the limits assigned to the animals, but puts enmity between it and the woman, this in itself points to a higher, spiritual power, which may oppose and attack the human race through the serpent, but will eventually be overcome. Observe, too, that although in the first clause the seed of the serpent is opposed to the seed of the woman, in the second it is not over the seed of the serpent but over the serpent itself that the victory is said to be gained. . . . Thus the seed of the serpent is hidden behind the unity of the serpent, or rather of the foe who, through the serpent, has done such injury to man. This foe is Satan.¹

Calvin considers the use of the different body positions "head" and "heel" as the writer's way of making a "distinction between the superior and the inferior." He sees this as God's way of allowing "some remains of dominion to man; because he so places the mutual disposition to injure each other, that yet their condition should not be equal, but man should be superior in the conflict."²

Hengstenberg rightly agrees with Calvin about the intention of the text.

"Head" and "heel" are "a *majusi* and a *minus*" signifying victory for humankind;

insists that notwithstanding, neither side will experience outright victory (80).

¹Keil and Delitzsch, 3:100-101.

²Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis*, 167-8.

they “are a second accusative governed by the verb, whereby the place of the action is more distinctly marked out,” and form a contrast between a part of the body in which a wound is curable, and a part in which it is not (there is no allusion to poison in Gen 3:15). Further indications of a victory are: the curse is strictly on the serpent; if man’s ruin were in view, it would also be a curse on him, but curses affecting him do not begin until vs. 16; the inability to attack a man anywhere but the heel is part of the serpent’s cursed degradation (v.14)– if he could still destroy him, then the curse would be of no effect.¹

The “Seed” and Its Related Pronouns in Gen 3:15

The chiasmic structure of Gen 3 centers on the message of vss. 14 and 15.² This is the most important message of this chapter, and the focal point towards which the whole of Gen 1-3 advances. The crux of Gen 3:14-15 is the enmity divinely set between the serpent and the woman which passes on to their seed and reaches a climax in the fatal clash between the serpent and a specially chosen representative Seed of the woman.

Gen 3:14-15 remains the central message of Gen 3 because syntactical and literary structural analysis prove it as such. It becomes the watershed message which supercedes the punishments of the woman (vs. 16) and man (vss. 17-19) that emanate from it. Syntactically, Gen 3:16-19 seems to be a further expansions of the ramifications of the message of Gen 3:15.³

Of these two verses, vs. 15 is most crucial because it enumerates the progression of the enmity between the serpent and the woman. It is the programmatic plot for the

¹Hengstenberg, 26-27, as quoted in Ronning, 65.

²See the discussion of the chiasmic structure in the section on Literary Structural Analysis of Gen 3 above.

³See Niccacci, “Analysis of Biblical Narrative,” 194; idem, “Basic Facts and Theory of the Biblical Hebrew Verb System in Prose,” 177. More detailed discussion is provided above in the section on the Syntactical Analysis of Gen 3:14-15.

rest of what follows, not only in the book of Genesis, but the rest of the Bible.¹

Gen 3:15 contains an interesting Progression of Parallelism as follows:

Vs. 15a Serpent (“you”)	– SINGULAR	– Woman
Vs. 15b Seed of Serpent	– COLLECTIVE	– Seed of woman
Vs. 15c Serpent (“you”/“Your head”)	– SINGULAR	– “He”/“his heel”

Serpent Versus the Woman: Singular Individual (Vs. 15a, b)

The drama of the enmity prescribed in Gen 3:15 unfolds in stages. On the first level, the serpent is set against the woman, each being a singular individual. This level includes the following portion of the text:

15(a): וְאִיבָה אֲשֵׁית

15(b): בֵּינֶךָ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה

The woman was the first to be seduced and, by divine initiative, the first to be set at enmity against the seducer. She was not to be disparaged or discounted. Divine grace uplifts her role in child-bearing because she will bring forth the special Seed who will deliver the ultimate victory in this long-lasting conflict. The woman was Eve,² with

¹Sailhamer adds: “More is at stake in this brief passage than the reader is first aware. A program is set forth. A plot is established that will take the author far beyond this or that snake and his ‘seed.’ It is what the snake and his ‘seed’ represent that lies at the center of the author’s focus. With that ‘one’ lies the ‘enmity’ that must be crushed” (*Pentateuch as Narrative*, 107). Sailhamer continues: “In the light of the fact that such programmatic discourses are strategically important throughout the remainder of the book, it seems likely that the author intends these words to be read as programmatic and foundational for the establishment of the plot and characterization of the remainder of the book” (107-108).

²Eve is the first woman, the “mother of all living,” progenitress of mankind, and “Life bearer.” See among others: von Rad, *Genesis*, 96; Rosenberg, 14; Wallace, 147-151 passim; Williams, “Relationship of Gen 3:20,” 357-374; and Young, *Genesis 3*, 141-143. See more detailed semantical studies above.

whom the enmity commences immediately.¹

The serpent minimally refers to the natural physical snake that was visible in the temptation. In this respect, it is compared with other beasts of the field (Gen 3:1, 14). This applies mainly to Gen 3:14. However, it cannot be only the natural physical snake. The serpent is ultimately the evil one, Satan himself, the enemy of God and humanity.

The operative word in vs. 15 is “enmity.” Enmity is never used in Scripture to refer to a sub-human being. As noted earlier in this research, the word “enmity” elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible always includes premeditated hatred leading into murderous action. This means that this verse also most probably has a personal moral agent in view—Satan, the Deceiver. The scriptural usage of the root אָנָה is not applicable to non-morally culpable beasts but only between persons or morally culpable agents. Hence, this “rules out the idea of mere *hostility*, which is not enmity, between man and serpents. The personal tempter emerges ever more distinctly as the verse progresses.”²

I fully agree with Kaiser that the serpent is more than a mere reptile. This serpent seems to have more intelligence, knowledge, and divine or supernatural insight

¹See Robertson, 97. There is no justification from the text for excluding Eve from the identification of the woman to whom God’s direct speech was partly intended in Gen 3:9-19. It must be Eve, primarily. The only way that womankind in general is involved is by “the basic principle that womankind shall have a most significant role in this cosmic struggle” (ibid.). I think that part of their role is the producing of the successive offspring of humanity that will be included in the second part of this cosmic struggle.

The woman cannot be exclusively Mary, just because she became the final chosen one to bear the Messiah in the NT. Other women in the genealogy of Jesus are very important too. I do not subscribe to the Mariological interpretations of this text and all its attendant ramifications and implications.

²Leupold, 1:164-165.

than the human pair. The Hebrew text addresses the serpent as an individual and this name seems to be a title.¹ Moreover, “the serpent of the temptation is the serpent of the final conflict”² in the future. Consequently, “the identity of the tempter can be none other than Satan, that old dragon, the serpent.”³

Seed of the Serpent Versus Seed of the Woman: Plural Collective (Vs. 15c)

On the second level, the serpent’s seed is set in antagonism with the woman’s seed, each side being plural collective. “This enmity between the seeds grows out of the enmity between Satan and the woman.”⁴ This level includes this division of the text:

15(c): וּבֵין זְרָעֶךָ וּבֵין זְרָעָהּ.

One must expect that onwards in the address to the serpent, only a figurative and symbolic sense must be employed. The first clue to this exclusive application is the very word “seed,” which can be taken only figuratively. The literal use of זְרָע “seed” concerns only agricultural seed.⁵

Wherever “seed” is mentioned in reference to human beings, it must figuratively

¹Kaiser, *Messiah in the Old Testament*, 38-39.

²Ibid., 39.

³Ibid. See also Ronning, 73; referring to the views of Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, 72-77; Procksch, 34-35; and Willis, 127.

⁴Robertson, 98.

⁵“The primary meaning comes from the realm of agriculture” (Kaiser, “זְרָע,” 252). This includes seedtime or sowing; seed itself which is planted; the seeds of the harvest; and time of harvest. This “thereby accords well with the Akkadian *zēru* ‘cultivated land. . . . Thus the whole agricultural cycle is practically summed up in the word *zera*’; from the act of sowing to the seed planted, to the harvest taken” (ibid.). The Bible seldom mentions offsprings of animals or even broods of snakes (*BDB* [1996], s.v. “זְרָע”).

mean human offspring. Women are represented as possessing “seed” only in Gen 4:25; 16:10; 19:32, 34; 24:60; Lev 12:2; Num 5:28; and Rev 12:17. These all refer to human offspring or children.

At this point, we must also be dealing, exclusively, with a symbolic serpent, that is, Satan, the Devil.¹ This follows the established belief that an intelligent being lies behind the figure of the snake. The figurative meaning overshadows the literal significations of the text.² This necessitates a symbolic interpretation of both the serpent’s seed and the woman’s seed. Hence, we cannot literally wholly equate the totality of humanity as the woman’s seed. “The ‘seed’ of the woman cannot be identified simply with all physical descendants of womankind.”³ Likewise, the serpent’s seed “cannot be identified rather naively with ‘snakes.’ The conflict envisioned describes something much more crucial.”⁴

The key to identifying the “seed” of the woman in this conflict resides in the God-originating character of the enmity described. God himself sovereignly sets enmity within the heart of the natural descendants of the woman. By the process of natural birth, the fallen woman brings within the heart of particular descendants of the woman. These individuals may be designated as the woman’s “seed.”⁵

¹Intertextuality is my means of determining that the name of the “Evil one” behind the serpent’s temptation of Adam and Eve is “Satan” or the “Devil.” See Rev 12:7-9; Rom 16:20; 1 John 3:12; 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:14; Eph 6:12; etc.

²See *FG*, 123; Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies*, 27-29; Pareus, 102 passim; Briggs, 72 passim; Young, *Genesis* 3, 9-10, 118 passim; Feinberg, 314; Pratt, 42-43; von Rad, *Genesis*, 92; Driver, *Genesis*, 44; Fretheim, *Creation*, 80-81; to mention but a few. See more discussion above in the section on the classification of the interpretations of the seed.

³Robertson, 98.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

As we have discussed above in our semantic analysis, this means that, definitely, the collective woman's seed of Gen 3:15 comprises righteous human beings who have been set at enmity with Satan and all forms of unrighteousness. They are spiritually discerned, determined, and delineated. They stand in support of God and His divine purposes.

Likewise, the serpent's seed are spiritually determined. They are the followers of Satan and the opposers of God, His people, and His purposes. They perhaps include the fallen angels and demons. "Although not materially descended from the devil, they may be regarded figuratively as his 'seed.'"¹ Also, all children, physically descended from human beings, who oppose God, His followers, and His purposes, constitute Satan's seed, though not physically born of the serpent.

"The Bible nowhere suggests that demons can have offspring in the sense of progeny or posterity. When, nevertheless, the word *zera'* is used with respect to the serpent it must, when Satan is in view, have a non-literal meaning."² Such figurative or metaphorical usages of זָרָא have been earlier mentioned in terms of "seed" of righteousness (especially in the Psalms: Pss 25:13; 37:25-26; 69:37; 102:29; 112:2; cf. 22:31); and the "seed" of wicked (Pss 21:11; 37:28).

In these cases, "seed" is used as a mark of "Moral Quality" to refer to persons or community of a particular quality. It is used in a good sense (Prov 11:21; Jer 2:21; Mal

¹Ibid. Cf. Vos, 54.

²Woudtra, 198.

2:15) or in a bad sense for the “community of evil-doers” (Isa 1:4; 14:20; 57:3-4).¹

Other passages illustrating the use of “seed” as moral quality include Jer 2:21; Isa 61:9; 65:9 and 23. I concur with Woudstra’s understanding of זרע in Gen 3:15 as not just two offsprings but races or communities of human beings, each marked by a distinctly opposing moral quality as ordained by God.²

It must be noted that the fact that this enmity passes on from the immediate participants, the serpent and the woman, to their collective posterity anticipates that this struggle between both sides will be long, spanning the ages of the history of mankind. The perpetual aspect of this conflict, lasting for a long time, is strengthened by the word אִיְבָה “enmity.”³ This solidifies the understanding that this second stage of this verse encompasses numerous seeds or posterity of both the serpent and the woman. Meanwhile, “the serpent and woman are distinct from their offspring yet also one and the same with them. Here we have the common case where an individual represents many.”⁴

A collaborating evidence for the representative roles of the main characters, vis-a-vis, the snake, the woman, and the man, is the fact that this narrative avoids elaborating

¹BDB (1996), s.v. “זרע.”

²Woudtra, 198.

³Holter points out that two of the other four places this word is used in the Old Testament, in addition to Gen 3:15, namely Ezek 25:15 and 35:5, “both use the expression אִיְבָה עוֹלָם ‘ancient enmity,’ which indicates that the enmity is something old and never-ending” (110). See also Ogden, 134-136 passim.

⁴Mathews, 245. “In 1 Tim 2:15 Eve’s role as child-bearer is taken as an archetype in Paul’s reference to the Christian women at Ephesus” (ibid.).

their individual thoughts or “their plights as individuals.”¹ They are not merely “depicted as individuals involved in a personal crisis; rather, they are representatives.”² They are the “heads of their race.”³ The snake is on one side while Adam and Eve together head the other side. In line with this enmity, a parallel group of righteous seed advanced side-by-side with the evil seed through the ages in perpetuity.

Narrowing to the Singular Serpent and Singular Seed (Vs. 15d)

On the third level of this verse, the plural collective woman’s seed is now narrowed down to the singular, representative individual Seed. This narrowing movement is obviously signified by the masculine singular personal pronoun הוּא “He,”⁴ the imperfect verb יִשָּׂא with the third-person singular subject (Gen 3:15d), and the imperfect verb יִשָּׂא with a third-person singular pronominal suffix (Gen 3:15e); all clearly referring to the very same collective זֶרַע (Gen 3:15c).

This movement occurs in parallelism with the collective seed of the serpent which clearly narrows to the serpent (singular). This points to a singular unity of the collective seed mentioned in the second stage of this ensuing drama. This is extremely programmatic and prophetic.

“Within the circle of the broadest possible meaning of *zera* ‘ must be drawn a

¹Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 106.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴From the context of this verse, it cannot be translated with the neutral “it” because this is a personal pronoun which refers back to the posterity of the woman that has already been identified, first and foremost, as the Eve in the story.

circle quite a bit smaller. These represent the true seed of the woman.”¹ The collective seed of the woman “find their cause represented most sturdily by and embodied in an individual in whom the idea ‘seed of the woman’ finds most perfect expression. He is the very center of the circle.”² Thus, the term “seed of the woman” sees in it “perfectly natural concentric circles of meaning.”³ This is similar to the usage of the term “servant of Yahweh” in the book of Isaiah. “Israel as a whole bears that name; also the godly in Israel; Cyprus is honored by it; but in Isaiah 53 and elsewhere it is pre-eminently the designation of the Messiah.”⁴

The seed in Gen 3:15 is not exclusively collective⁵ or exclusively singular⁶ as advocated by various scholars. Also, the seed is not exclusively literal or figurative. There is a possible and minimal application to the literal snake, and then a fully figurative understanding proceeds.⁷ It is never exclusively literal in meaning and hence not

¹Leupold, 1:166.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 1:167.

⁴Ibid., 1:167-168.

⁵See FG 107. Cf. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*, 1:27-30; Schurb, 32 passim; etc.

⁶See Feinberg, 322-324 passim; Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*, 5, 24, 41, 58, 178-200, 319; Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis*, 42 passim; Schurb, 28, 38; etc.

⁷Keil and Delitzsch differentiated between the natural serpent (snake) and the spiritual serpent (Satan); and between the woman’s natural seed (“the natural development of the human race”) and the woman’s “spiritual seed.” They expatiate: “Against the natural serpent the conflict may be carried on by the whole human race, by all who are born of woman, but not against Satan. As he is a foe who can only be met with spiritual weapons, none can encounter him successfully but such as possess and make use of spiritual arms. Hence, the idea of the ‘seed’ is modified by the nature of the foe. . . . The ‘seed,’ to which the victory over Satan was promised, was spiritually or ethically determined, and ceased to be co-extensive

aetiological at all. Consequently, there is a movement from the collective figurative seed to the singular individual representative Christological Seed.

A major syntactical support for this position is found in a comparative study of all the instances where עֶרְוֹ seed uses singular or plural verb inflections, singular or plural adjectives, participles, and where either singular or plural independent or object pronouns and suffixes refer to עֶרְוֹ seed. A pattern of usage emerges which shows whether the עֶרְוֹ seed, meaning “offspring,” is collective or singular in these cases. This is very important and relevant because the noun עֶרְוֹ itself “does not have distinctive singular and plural forms; the singular form עֶרְוֹ also functions as a collective noun.”¹

My own analysis confirms Jack Collins’s conclusion, and furthermore shows that when עֶרְוֹ “seed” refers to the collective for “offsprings in general, posterity,” its related pronouns are always plural, whether they are independent pronouns, object pronouns, or pronominal suffixes. It also generally employs plural verb inflections, plural adjectives, and plural participle pronouns and suffixes.² Similarly, when עֶרְוֹ “seed” refers to a

with physical descent. This spiritual seed culminated in Christ” (3:100-101). See also Briggs, 72; Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses*, 170-171; Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies*, 27-29; Driver, *Genesis*, 44; Fretheim, *Creation*, 80-81; Pratt, 42-43; von Rad, *Genesis*, 92; Schurb, 33; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 237; Young, *Genesis 3*, 95-96; among others.

¹T. Desmond Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 (1997): 363.

²My analysis yielded the following examples: Gen 15:13b-14; 17:7, 8, 9, 10; Exod 30:21; 32:13; Lev 21:17; Deut 10:15b-19; Ezra 2:59; 9:2; Neh 7:61; 9:2; 2 Kgs 17:20; 1 Chr 16:13; 2 Chr 20:7; Pss 21:10-13; 22:23 (Heb 24); 69:36 (MT 37); 105:6; 106:27; Isa 44:3-4; 45:19, 25; 57:4; 61:9; 65:23; Jer 23:8; 30:10; 31:36, 37; 33:26; 46:27; Ezek 20:5; and Dan 2:43.

Jack Collins confirms: “When *zera* ‘denotes ‘posterity’ the pronouns (independent pronouns, object pronouns, and suffixes) are always plural” (“A Syntactical Note [Genesis 3:15]: Is the Woman’s Seed Singular or Plural?” *Tyndale Bulletin* 48 [1997]: 143). Collins cites the following as fitting examples: Gen 17:7-10; 15:13; 48:11-12; Exod 30:21; Lev 21:17; Deut 10:15; 2 Kgs 17:20; Isa 61:9b;

specific descendant, its referents are always singular verb inflections, singular adjectives, singular participles, singular independent pronouns, singular object pronouns, and singular pronominal suffixes.¹

Collins reports that the Greek translations of the passages he cites follow the same pattern as the Hebrew. “When the ‘seed’ is an individual, the pronoun will be masculine (or at least, not clearly neuter), even though the Greek word σπέρμα is neuter.”² He mentions 1 Sam 1:11 and 2 Sam 7:12-14 as some of the clearest examples here.³

I fully concur with Collins’s conclusion based on the “widely distributed, consistent, and sufficiently attested” data presented above which beg for “meaningful generalizations.”⁴ At this third level of movement in Gen 3:15, an individual Seed of the

65:23; Jer 23:8; 30:10 (= 46:27); 33:26; Ezek 20:5; Ps 106:27; Ezra 2:59 (= Neh 7:61) (ibid.).

The only possible exception that I discovered is Job 21:8 which appears to refer to collective seed but has a singular verb inflection in vs. 8, נִסְּךָ, Nifal participle masculine singular. This does not follow the observation above. A possible explanation may be because this is a poetic passage, or the singular participle may indeed have in view the seed of the wicked considered individually as are their houses and livestock in vss. 8-9.

¹My analysis yielded the following examples: Gen 3:15; 4:25; 13:15-16; 15:3-5, 13a; 16:10; 21:12, 13; 22:17; 24:60b; 28:14; 38:9; 48:19; Lev 21:17; Num 14:24; 1 Sam 1:11; 2 Sam 7:12-15; 1 Chr 17:11-13; Pss 22:30 (Heb 31); 25:13; 37:25; Prov 11:21; Isa 41:8; 48:19; 54:3. Collins provides the following categories as vivid examples: for adjectives, Gen 4:25; for pronoun(s), Gen 21:13; 1 Sam 1:11; Isa 41:8; for verb, Gen 38:9a; and for both pronouns and verbs, 2 Sam 7:12-15 (= 1 Chr 17:11-13) (144). Cf. Friedbert Ninow, “Indicators of Typology within the Old Testament: The Exodus Motif” (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1999), 119.

²Collins, 144.

³Ibid. However, he vouches especially for the Greek translations of the “Pentateuch and Former Prophets, where the translation is generally of higher quality, and to the extent it is possible to see a distinction” (119).

⁴Ibid., 145. “The clearest syntactical parallel to our verse is 2 Sam 7:13, which is a promise to David of an offspring” (“he will build a house for my name”) (ibid.).

woman is brought to the fore. To indicate this narrowing to an individual Seed, the passage employs the masculine singular third person pronoun **הוא**, the third person singular subject of the verb of action **ישׁפּוֹט**, and also the third person singular pronominal suffix of the identical verb of action **ישׁפּוֹטוֹ**.

On the syntactical level, the singular pronoun *hû'* in Gen 3:15 is quite consistent with the pattern where a single individual is in view. In fact, since the subject pronouns are not normally necessary for the meaning, we might wonder if the singular *hû'* in Genesis 3:15 is used precisely in order to make it plain that an individual is being promised. The evidence of the Greek translators makes it beyond question that the translator of Genesis 3:15 meant to convey that an individual was promised; . . . his interpretation is consistent with Hebrew syntax elsewhere in the Bible.¹

The movement from the collective plural seed to the singular individual representative Seed seems to be intentionally marked by the *athnach* under the last **וְהָיָה** in the later part of Gen 3:15 in the Hebrew text.² It is possible to regard the singular pronoun **הוא** to be in apposition to **וְהָיָה**. Here, also it is obvious that

¹ibid. I endeavored to address part of my study to the challenge that Collins threw down as follows: "It would be helpful to have a further study to relate this feature to the larger context of how nouns that can designate both individuals and collectives use pronouns" (ibid., n. 18). Below, I summarize the results of my investigation of how selected nouns that can designate both a single individual and the collective use verbs, pronouns, and participles. Examples include: Cattle, **בָּקָר**, Collective: 1 Chr 27:29 (plural verb); Num 7:6 (plural verb); 2 Sam 6:6 (plural verb [same as 1 Chr 13:9]); 1 Kgs 19:21 (plural pronoun); 1 Chr 27:29 (plural verb); 2 Chr 4:3 (plural masculine participle); Job 1:14 (plural verb/feminine/participle). The singular cattle is qualified as "son of cattle" or "one of cattle" (e.g., Gen 18:7), identified as a part of the cattle group.

Flying Creatures/Birds/Fowls/Insects/Winged Insects, **עוֹף**: Whenever the idea of plural is intended, a plural verb is used instead of singular: 1 Kgs 14:11 (plural verb); 1 Kgs 16:4 (plural verb); 1 Kgs 21:24 (plural verb); Ps 104:12 (plural verb); Jer 4:25 (plural verb, uses "all" in the sense of totality); Ezek 31:6 (plural verb); Ezek 31:13 (plural verb); and Ezek 32:4 (plural verb).

Tears, **דְּמָעָה**, is used as collective in Jer 14:17 (plural verb, may also refer to dual eyes). I conclude that at least some of the Hebrew nouns in the OT that may denote both individuals and collective follow the same pattern as **עוֹף**. Further study is needed to determine the extent of this pattern in the Hebrew Bible.

²Schurb, 35, n. 27, referring to Pareus's comment on Gen 3:15.

standing in opposition to the singular Seed of the woman is not another seed, as in the second part of the verse, but the serpent himself, an individual.¹

There is strong textual support for this narrowing down from the collective plural to the singular individual Seed. The Hebrew text itself has been mentioned above. While עֲרֵךְ may be singular or collective, it seems most likely collective in the context of the earlier part of the verse because numerous offspring are intended for both the woman and the serpent over time as the enmity between them grows into successive generations. The sudden shift into the masculine singular personal pronoun הוּא “he” and the subsequent following uses of singular suffixes and subjects for the verbs of action between both opposing groups determine that there is a shift into the singular on both sides.

Syntactically, it can be said that the MT signals this shift from a collective to a singular with an *athnach* under the last עֲרֵךְ here. Immediately following this is the abrupt and sudden use of the emphatic masculine independent third-person pronoun הוּא “he.” This also serves to demarcate the intended shift from the collective to the singular. Lastly, on this syntactical level, the *waw*-consecutive וְ which precedes the masculine independent second-person pronoun אַתָּה “you” helps to signal the fact that the syntactical arrangement calls for an understanding of the shift from the collective to the singular individual. This is a disjunctive syntax. This pronoun הוּא refers to the serpent, a singular individual. These three syntactical facts pinpoint and underscore the shift from

¹Ibid., 36. “The word *conterereor*, more generally, the idea of the fight and the mode of victory suggested a single entity” (ibid.).

collective to the singular, a *narrowing* phenomenon.

Perhaps the most powerful textual support is rendered by the LXX by slavishly following the Hebrew text in this verse. In the case of the translation of the masculine singular personal pronoun אֵינִי “he,” the LXX intentionally violates the Greek grammatical word order in its rendering of this pronoun, in order to make a point in favor of a messianic reading of this text.

In vs. 15, LXX uses a neuter singular or collective noun σπέρμα (*spérmatos*) in place of a masculine singular or collective noun אֵינִי. This further supports the view of a stereotypical rendering of the Hebrew text by the LXX translator. The pronoun which refers back to the אֵינִי and the σπέρμα (*spérmatos*) happens to be masculine singular in both cases.¹ This is grammatically correct in the Hebrew, but an obvious syntactical violation in the Greek. The Greek antecedent σπέρμα (*spérmatos*) is neuter and definitely requires the neuter pronoun αὐτό rather than a masculine pronoun αὐτός.²

“One might suggest the final sigma of αὐτός to be dittography of the initial sigma of the following σου, but the textual tradition is unanimous in reading the masculine form.”³ The suggestion that Christians corrupted the Greek manuscript somewhere along the line because of their use of the verse is weakened by the fact that

¹Martin hints: “Grammatically אֵינִי is masculine, but actually it is a collective noun of which the natural gender is neuter” (425).

²This has been observed by numerous scholars perusing this text. Among them is Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 36. Lewis wonders if this was a result of oversight on the part of the translator (“The Woman’s Seed,” 300).

³Martin, 427, n. 6. Cf. Alan E. Brooke and Norman McLean, eds., *The Old Testament in Greek*, vol. 1, *The Octateuch*, part 1, *Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), 7. There is no textual evidence to prove a case of dittography here.

one cannot refer to any authentic variant in the Hebrew manuscript.¹

Citing the grammatical problem of “anacoluthon,” some scholars posit that the translator slavishly violated the proper rule of Greek grammar to stereotype the Hebrew text more literally, as usual. This seems plausible, at first sight, as a literalistic rendering of the Hebrew masculine pronoun of the MT.² In the same vein, other scholars gave a “logical” or psychological” explanation whereby the offspring of the woman is spiritualized.³

Though the charge of literalism in this instance is tantalizing, it has been effectively disproved by Martin, who sees the translator as not simply literalistic but very intentional and deliberate in his choice of pronouns. Studying all the translator’s renderings of the masculine personal pronoun אָנֹכִי elsewhere in Genesis, he came up with 103 occurrences. Fifty-seven (i.e., 55%) of these yield LXX translations with the masculine pronoun αὐτός. “Since in all these instances the Hebrew and Greek idioms correspond as far as gender is concerned, the literal translation of the Hebrew text by the LXX resulted in a possible and correct Greek construction.”⁴

¹Andrews, 46.

²Ibid. See also Martin, 426; and Rüger, 107. Harl charges the translator with extreme literalism in this instance (109).

³Andrews, 47. Vawter stipulates: “The translation is justifiable for it seeks merely to enter into the spirit of the figure involved by personifying the offspring of the woman as the human race, mankind; and that is all that the Septuagint had intended by its rendering” (*On Genesis*, 83). See also Michl, 371-401, 476-505; Skinner, 80-81; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 1-11.

⁴Martin, 426. Cf. S. Mandelkern, ed., *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae: Hebraicae atque chaldaicae* (Lipsiae: Veit et Comp., 1925). Martin itemized as follows: אָנֹכִי was translated by αὐτός 34 times (3:16; 4:4; 13:1; 14:13, 15; 18:18; 19:30; 20:5; 24:7, 54, 62; 27:31; 31:21; 32:19, 22, 32; 33:3; 35:6; 36:18; 38:12; 39:6, 23; 41:11; 42:38; 44:5, 17, 20; 45:26; 49:13, 19 20; 50:14, 22); by οὗτος 18

The LXX translates the remaining forty-six (46) occurrences of אָנֹכִי in “a variety of renderings.”¹ The LXX translated freely twenty-five times, employing an indicative form of the Greek copula εἰμί as a substitute for the personal pronoun used in a nominal sentence in Hebrew.² Six times, the LXX lacks an equivalent for the Hebrew pronoun.³ In two instances, Gen 6:3 and 36:19, the LXX uses a plural masculine pronoun in place of the Hebrew pronoun. Similarly, four times (Gen 25:29; 37:2; 41:31; 44:14) a masculine singular participle is used in place of the Hebrew pronoun. In all these instances both Hebrew and Greek coincide in requiring the masculine gender.⁴

“It is especially significant, however, that eight (8) times the LXX has changed the gender in translating, due to the requirements of the Greek idiom.”⁵ The feminine pronoun is used five times (Gen 14:3; 18:10; 19:33; 30:16; 32: 23[22]), and neuter pronoun three times (Gen 2:19; 14:17; 42:14) to represent the Hebrew masculine pronoun due to the requirements of the Greek idiom.⁶ In none of these instances does

times (2:11, 13, 14; 4:20, 21; 10:8, 9; 15: 2, 4; 16:12; 19:37, 38; 36:24, 43; 38:11; 42:62; 48:19); by αὐτός ἦν once (34:19); by οὗτος ἦν once (48:14); by αὐτόν once (24:15); by αὐτοῦ once (18:1); ad by αὐτῷ once (10:21) (p. 426).

¹Martin, 426.

²Ibid. These include the following: Gen 9:3, 18; 14:12, 18; 17:12; 20:5, 7, 13, 16; 21:13; 24:65; 29:12; 30:33; 31:16, 43; 37:3, 27; 41:25, 26, 28; 42:6, 27; 43:12; 44:10; 45:20.

³Ibid. Five out of these omissions result in a better Greek style than literal translation would have produced (3:6; 4:26; 27:33; 31:20; 39:3); and for the sixth instance (39:22), the LXX lacks the entire phrase containing the pronoun in Hebrew.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid. This represents about 8 percent of the use of אָנֹכִי in Genesis.

the LXX violate the grammatical requirement of making the pronoun agree with its antecedent.

However, once, and so uniquely so, the LXX of Gen 3:15 “literalistically translates the Hebrew masculine pronoun with the masculine Greek pronoun αὐτός, although the Greek idiom would require the neuter pronoun αὐτό.”¹ This cannot be coincidental or a mere oversight. From the overwhelming evidence presented above, it is clear that the LXX translator will rather freely translate the Hebrew masculine pronoun אָנֹכִי, omit, use plural masculine pronoun, or singular participle, or even change to a required feminine or neuter pronoun, than violate the agreement in Greek between the pronoun and its referent in the desire for the literalness of the translation.²

The LXX translator never does violence to agreement in Greek between the pronoun and its referent except in Gen 3:15. This “certainly highlights the grammatical uniqueness of Genesis 3:15.”³ “The most likely explanation for the use of αὐτός in Gen 3:15 to refer back to σπέρμα is that the translator has in this way indicated his messianic understanding of this verse. . . . LXX becomes thereby the earliest evidence of an

¹Ibid., 427.

²The quality of the Greek translation of the Pentateuch is accepted as higher than other parts of the OT. Martin remarks: “In this connection, it may be noted that the translator of Genesis has never employed the crude Hebraism of using αὐτός as a copula, although this literalism occurs elsewhere in the LXX” (ibid.). Cf. Frederick C. Conybeare and St. George Stock, *Selections from the Septuagint According to the Text of Swete* (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1905), 139; also H. S. Gehman, “The Hebraic Character of Septuagint Greek,” *VT* 1 (1951): 83.

³Andrews, 48.

individual messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15.”¹

Andrews objects to Martin’s argument as non-conclusive and conjectural for want of “a true contextual parallel to Genesis 3:15” among the eight passages Martin noted where the LXX changed the gender in translating the Hebrew masculine pronoun אִיִּה.² He continues:

There is no reason why one should have expected the translator to render his Greek any differently than he did in these other instances because the subject of his translation was not as susceptible to different connotations as σπέρμα. What is needed as support of Martin’s thesis is an example where σπέρμα, or indeed any other ambiguous word, is rendered in a grammatically accurate sense when a grammatically different subject is clearly in view. Then Martin could say something like, “Elsewhere the translator is so concerned to be faithful to grammar that he employs αὐτό when, clearly, αὐτός is meant.”³

Andrews’s suggestion does not invalidate Martin’s claim. The issue is one of the LXX recognizing that an individual (male) is clearly in view rather than a “thing” requiring the pronoun “it.” In faithfulness to the Hebrew, which realizes that an individual “He” was in view, the LXX translator was correct in his choice of masculine pronoun referring back to the neuter σπέρμα where it refers to a human being.⁴ What

¹Martin, 427. Lewis adds: “*Sperma* is a neuter noun in Greek and would have taken a neuter pronoun had the translators not thought of an individual. . . . It is possible that the translator reveals a messianic understanding” (“The Woman’s Seed,” 300).

²Andrews, 48.

³Ibid.

⁴Wevers agrees as far as saying that: “What the translator has done is to personalize the seed, i.e. the αὐτός is an *ad sensum* reference to the seed, not as a collective but as individual offspring of the woman” (*Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*, 44). He, however, defers from LXX in suggesting that: “The sense of the Greek would be better conveyed by the plural: ‘they shall carefully watch your head’” (ibid.). Andrews himself verifies: “The use of αὐτός surely suggests an individual interpretation (whether messianic or not)” (Andrews, 49).

Woudstra suspects that the LXX translator apparently “felt the personal reference at this point to

might have been the translator's alternative was to find a masculine synonym of σπέρμα to indicate the "seed" (זרע).

Martin's statistical comparison is not minimized by the fact that the subject of the other eight instances is not ambiguous like σπέρμα as claimed by Andrews. The argument does not concern the nature of the subject in each case. To the contrary, the argument is that the translator was always consistent in making the pronoun and its antecedents agree grammatically except in Gen 3:15. This underscores the intention of the translator here to make an emphasis through deviation from an established pattern.¹

In the light of Emmanuel Tov's observation that the translation into the LXX included both linguistic and contextual exegesis to varying degrees, one may see how this operates in Gen 3:15.² From evidence for a narrowing to a masculine singular individual

be strong enough to choose αὐτός instead. And, indeed, something of the personal next to the collective does play a role in this passage" (199). Kaiser consents that the LXX may be showing that "the divine intention deliberately wished to designate the collective notion which included a personal unity in a single person who was to obtain victory for the whole group he represented" (*Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 36).

This is another proof of the fact that semantics and grammar alone are not enough to determine the true meaning of a word. The context, function, and the writer's intention are important also. Niccacci appeals: "The criterion should always be the function first, the tense of translation afterwards. . . . It is possible that an author may choose to change the order of events for his own reasons. . . . The author is free and sovereign over his information. We interpreters should try to understand and respect the author's choice, whatever the logic and strategy may be" ("Analysis of Biblical Narrative," 182).

¹Of interest is the subject of stereotyping in the Septuagint. See J. Heller, "Grenzen," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 15 (1969): 234-248; and Tov, "The Septuagint," 161-188; idem, "Three Dimensions," *RB* 83 (1976): 529-574.

²Tov points out that "every translation reflects linguistic exegesis, which is an integral part of the act of translation. Linguistic exegesis involves the grammatical identification of all words (especially forms of verbs and nouns) in the source language as well as their semantic interpretation" ("The Septuagint," 173).

"The translator's concept of 'context' was wider than ours. They referred to the relationship between the words not only in their immediate, but also in remote contexts. . . . The translation might

in Gen 3:15, and from the general context of the book of Genesis, and the Old Testament as a whole, the Greek translator must have been aware of the messianic importance of Gen 3:15 and of some other clearly messianic texts such as Gen 49:8-10, especially vs. 10. Similarly, 2 Sam 7:12 (also 1 Chr 17:11) evidences another use of the masculine pronoun to modify the neuter noun “seed,” while signaling a messianic interpretation.¹ It might be in order to label this intentional use of the masculine pronoun as referring to the neuter σπέρμα as “a special method of translation.”²

Furthermore, the Targum Onqelos to Genesis, regarded as a unique literal translation of the Hebrew into the Aramaic, translates Gen 3:15 faithfully. Targum Onqelos “uses defective plural forms of *bēn* for *zera*’ and singular masculine pronouns.”³ This singular pronoun איהו “he” and the prepositional phrase ליה “to him,” which appear in the Targum Onqelos, both agree with the singular renderings in the MT. My

contain any idea the source text called to mind” (ibid.). Tov describes that this encompasses “the immediate context and the conceptual world of the translators” (p. 174).

They sometimes employ “unusual equivalents, in the connection made between words, and in the adaptation of Hebrew to Greek diction” (ibid.). They may choose to add elements to “improve the readability from a linguistic and contextual point of view, clarifying Hebrew or Greek words and explaining their content” or omitting various elements “they considered superfluous” (ibid.). Furthermore, the translators felt free to make certain adjustments in small details which belong to the precise wording of the translation. . . . This applies to contextual adjustments between the plural and singular forms of the verbs and nouns, between different pronouns and nouns” (ibid.).

¹Both Gen 49:8-10 and 2 Sam 7:12 will be treated in detail below in chapters 2 and 3 respectively. It should be noted at this juncture, however, that Wevers sees in Gen 49:10 a reference to the Messiah: “The Greek interprets the passage in the sense of a messianic hope to be rooted in the tribe of Judah” (*Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*, 826). This is what 2 Sam 7 picks up on in the time of David. See also Eugen Hühn, *Die messianischen Weissagungen des israelitisch-jüdischen Volkes bis zu den Targumim* (Freiburg: Mohr, 1899), 1:139.

²Rüger, 107. He also agreed that this is what “helped to induce the christological interpretation which was to be given by some of the Church Fathers” (ibid.).

³Lewis, “The Woman’s Seed,” 301. Cf. Grossfeld, 47.

translation of the last part of Gen 3:15 is “. . . he will remember what you did to him in ancient times, and you will preserve (your hatred) for him to the end (of time).”¹ In spite of the paraphrasing done here by the Targum Onqelos, it still thought fit to maintain the narrowing from the collective plural seed to the singular individual Seed. This too is a messianic interpretation of the passage.

Likewise, the Targum Neofiti, the most literal of the Palestinian Targums, translated the first half of Gen 3:15 quite literally (*bnh* may be singular or plural), but, “the last six words have generated many lines of midrashic text.”² הַיְיָ, “him,” in vs. 15 is certainly third-person singular. “The Targumist may be here influenced by the underlying Hebrew text, or he may have taken ‘sons’ as a collectivity.”³ This abrupt and intentional shift to the third-person singular should also be taken as a messianic undertone

¹Aberbach and Grossfeld renders the English translation of the TO’s singular pronoun, הַיְיָ, “he” and prepositional phrase לְהַיְיָ, “to him,” by using the plural collective pronouns, intending “mankind” as follows: “They will remember what you did to them in ancient times, and you will preserve (your hatred) for them to the end of time” (36). I think Aberbach and Grossfeld grossly miss the point by so doing, and they mutilate the intended messianic understanding purportedly preserved by the TO.

²Levy, 1:96. Levy puts the Tg. Neo. side-by-side with the MT and demonstrated that: “Notwithstanding the departure from the literal translation in the second half of the verse, there are clear references in the midrashic passage to the original Hebrew” (95-97). He admits: “Since the curse applies to the descendants of the women, not just to her, the midrash in effect updates the text to apply to the listeners as current doctrine” (96).

³McNamara, *New Testament and the Palestinian Targum*, 219. His translation of Gen 3:15 is as follows: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your sons and her sons. And it shall come to pass that when her sons keep the Law and do the precept they shall aim at you and smite you on the head and kill you. And when they forsake the precepts of the Law you shall aim at and bite him in the heel and wound him. For her sons, however, there shall be a remedy, and for you, serpent, there shall be no remedy; for they are to make cure for the heel in the days of the King Messiah” (ibid.).

Some describe this shift as due to scribal error, or that it is a collective singular. “Son” also becomes “they” later on in this verse. See Fernández, 43. Levey declares that “Neophyti I has a confusion of person, reading ‘you will aim and wound him,’ etc.” (148). Rather than discounting this phenomenon, I believe that this Targumist obeys the narrowing of the plural collective seed into the singular individual Seed.

as it is with the Targum Onqelos.¹

In addition, the Syriac Peshitta, which appears to literally render the MT of Gen 3:14-15, also agrees with the LXX in retaining the masculine singular pronoun “he” in place of the plural collective antecedent “seed.” It translates Gen 3:15 as: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He shall trample your head, and you shall strike his heel.”² This supports a messianic reading, following the MT, LXX, Targum Onqelos, and the Targum Neofiti 1.³

Finally, the Old Latin manuscripts from the European text type (E) and the North African text type use a masculine intensive pronoun, *ipse*, following the MT, LXX, Targum Onqelos, Targum Neofiti, and the Syriac Peshitta. Jerome seems to have also followed the Hebrew masculine pronoun by retaining the masculine pronoun as *ipse*.⁴ This maintains the narrowing of the plural seed to the singular Seed. I perceive that even some of the OL manuscripts, like Fischer’s edition and the Vulgate, which use the feminine singular pronouns *ipsa* and *eius* with the woman as the antecedent, also inadvertently recognize the narrowing from the plural to the singular.⁵

¹I see a link with the LXX and TO, in support of the MT, in seeing a narrowing from the plural to the singular, signifying a messianic understanding.

²Andrews, 85. See Mulder, 52.

³Ephraem makes a Christological comment on the verse: “The blessed Infant crushed the head of the serpent that bruised [Eve].” See *De Nativitate* 13.2; 22.31.3; 26.8.5-8; *De Virginitate* 37.1.5-7. See further, Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1-11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephraem the Syrian*.

⁴See the discussions above on the LXX, Targums Onqelos, Neofiti 1, Peshitta. Jerome’s *Hebraicae Quaestiones in Genesim* has Gen 3:15c as “*melius habet in hebraeo ipse conteret caput tuum, et tu conteres eius calcaneum*” (emphasis mine).

⁵The clear intention is to make the “her Seed” refer exclusively to Christ, the son of Mary. Skinner suggests that the use of the feminine pronoun “may have been prompted by a feeling that the

All these textual evidences above confirm the idea of a narrowing from collective to the singular within Gen 3:15. It also seems to show that this passage may be a stylistic paradigm for other seed texts in the Hebrew Bible which evidence narrowing from plural collective seed to singular individual Seed and that these later passages are to be regarded as most likely Messianic in intention.¹

Joüon-Muraoka provides some syntactical support for the narrowing in Gen 3:15 with his comment on the Hebrew text of this verse. He comments: “Since a finite verbal form in itself indicates the person, it can be said that, whenever a verb occurs with a pronoun, some nuance is intended.”² Thus, the addition of the pronoun אִנִּי to the verbal form יִשְׁפֹּט and אֲנִי to the verbal form יִשְׁפֹּטֶנּוּ gives “some special prominence to the person or persons indicated by it, comparable to the close-up focus in photography. The person or persons may be perceived by the speaker or writer as prominent *per se* or in relation to some other person or persons.”³

This narrowing is well demonstrated on the side of the serpent. Those who

proper antithesis to the serpent is the woman herself” (80). However, it is possible that the Latin translators and their later re-editing and transmissions inched closer and closer to harmonizing the passage with early Christian christological understanding and teaching.

Robertson rightly objects to the Vulgate’s alteration of the Hebrew pronoun from “he” to “she.” He said: “While Mary the mother of Jesus may be regarded as playing a significant role in this struggle, she should not be regarded as the specific object of the pronoun under consideration” (100). He argues that consistency with the text would require further alterations of “he will bruise you” to “she will bruise you,” and of “you will bruise him” to “you will bruise her” (ibid., n. 9).

¹This will be traced below, in the exegesis of such texts as Gen 22:17-18; 24:60; and 2 Sam 7:12-13.

²Joüon and Muraoka, 2:539-540, § 146a, b.

³Ibid., 540.

constitute the collective seed of the serpent find “their cause represented most sturdily by and embodied” in the serpent, an individual.¹ The verse started with the individual serpent which broadened to the serpent’s collective plural seed. Then it suddenly narrows down, here, and returns, not to a singular “seed” of the serpent (as in the case of the woman), but instead, to the singular serpent with whom the verse began.

God addresses the serpent at this point as before as אַתָּה “you.” This is an emphatic and contrastive “you” because of the conjunction before it and also because it strengthens the second-person singular subject already included in the succeeding verb. By means of this pronominal subject, the serpent is intentionally underscored.

O. Palmer Robertson put this in perspective when he wrote:

To correspond to the narrowing from “seed” to “Satan” on one side of the enmity, it would appear quite appropriate to expect a similar narrowing from a multiple “seed” of woman to a singular “he” who would champion the cause of God’s enmity against Satan. A single representative hero shall descend from the woman to join the conflict. The pronoun “he” may involve the whole of the woman’s seed. But involvement shall be by the representative principle.²

While the woman’s collective seed narrows down to a particular singular representative Seed, the serpent’s collective seed narrows down back to the serpent itself, both in the future. That this narrowing down of both the concept of woman’s seed and the serpent’s seed happens in the distant future shows the prophetic nature of this verse. It is eschatological and predictive.

Moreover, the serpent of the garden of Eden, the tempter of Adam and Eve, is also the serpent of the distant future at the point of the narrowing down on both sides of

¹Leupold, 1:166-168.

²Robertson, 99-100.

this enmity. Since the same literal animal, the snake, could not be expected to be literally alive in such a distant future, what does this tell us of the identity of the serpent of the temptation and the future narrowing? Definitely, the serpent must have a symbolic meaning.¹ This makes the identification of the serpent as Satan very plausible as later inspiration and revelation in the canon further reveals.

Clash Between the Serpent and the Singular Seed of the Woman (Vs. 15d, e)

In the fourth level of movement within Gen 3:15, the enmity is decisively climaxed in a clash between the **הוּא** (singular representative individual Seed) and the serpent **אֲתָהּ** (singular representative individual). The text of Gen 3:15 is arranged to suggest a parallelism of antagonism and opposition as follows:

15(d): **הוּא יִשְׁפֹּךְ רֹאשׁ**

15(e): **וְאֲתָהּ תִּשְׁפֹּנֵנּוּ עֵקֶב**

Each of the three corresponding Hebrew words in 15(d) and 15(e) is set in a parallelism of antagonism and opposition to each other. **הוּא** parallels and opposes **אֲתָהּ**; **יִשְׁפֹּךְ** parallels and opposes **תִּשְׁפֹּנֵנּוּ**; while **רֹאשׁ** parallels and opposes **עֵקֶב**.

Since the serpent is definitely a singular individual, he can be expected only to be matched with another singular individual. The suffixes and subjects for the verbs of the actions performed by both figures in this climax battle are each definitely masculine

¹Sailhamer elaborates: "It appears as if the author is intent on treating the snake and his 'seed' together, as one. What happens to his 'seed' in the distant future can be said to happen to the snake as well. This identification suggests that the author views that snake in terms that extend beyond this particular snake of the Garden. The snake, for the author, is representative of someone or something else, and is represented by his 'seed.' When that 'seed' is crushed, the head of the snake is crushed" (*Pentateuch as Narrative*, 107).

singular, thus pointing to a singular unity of the collective seed on either side. These singular suffixes and subjects provide persuasive evidence for the position that there is a narrowing from the plural to the singular at this point, for both sides of the duel.¹

Andersen observed the syntactical functions within this last portion of Gen 3:15. He noted that although these two phrases “He (*on the one hand*) will crush you head; and You (*on the other hand*) will crush him heel” are set in contrast to each other, with “head” and “heel” being contrastive, “neither of these pairs is brought into prominence. The contrast is between ‘he’ and ‘you.’” The participants in this contrast have been “brought into prominence by realizing them as grammatically similar items in preverbal positions. The use of explicit pronominal subjects here is the common way of achieving this.”² Thus, the conflict between the narrowed down “he” and “you” is the climax of the text, and the key message being conveyed.

The representative seed of the serpent equals Satan within the serpent. In order to parallel and match this supernatural evil figure, the representative Seed of the woman must also equal the divine God/Christ working in place of the woman. This seems to hint at the divine-human qualification of the Redeemer of the human race.

The “Seed” of the woman (“He”) will crush the head of the serpent (“your head”). “As representatives, the snake and the woman embody the fate of their seed, and that fate is their fate as well. The author has brought about this ‘headship’ of the snake

¹Cf. Delitzsch, *OT History of Redemption*, 26; idem, *Messianic Prophecies*, 27-29; Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 82-89; Keil and Delitzsch, 3:100-101; Pareus; Robertson, 99-100; Schurb, 35; and Young, *Genesis 3*, 118-120.

²Andersen, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 151.

and the woman by means of a careful but consistent identification of the snake and his ‘seed.’”¹

This last stage of the conflict is distinguished from the previous one pitching “seed” against “seed.” “Satan himself as an individual has been reintroduced into the conflict. As the prince of his people, he stands as representative of their cause.”² The corresponding narrowing of the woman’s seed to a singular “He” also features One who will “champion the cause of God’s enmity against Satan.”³ He is a single representative Hero, more than a match for the antagonizing Satan.⁴

It needs to be underscored that each of these singular representative figures of either side cannot be “*one* solitary person, one individual only.”⁵ Each is not isolated from and unrelated to the remaining seed group which he represents. The representative Seed of the woman is the center of the collective “He,” the individualization of the human race.⁶ The idea of solidarity ensues, as aptly depicted by Young:

There is a certain solidarity in the kingdom of evil, and that solidarity appears in that the kingdom of evil is here hidden, as it were, behind its head. In the ensuing enmity and conflict, it is not merely the seed of the serpent which will be wounded, nor is it merely from that kingdom that a bruise will be inflicted upon the seed of the woman. Rather, it is the head of that kingdom himself who is

¹Sailhamer, “Genesis,” 55.

²Robertson, 99.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Delitzsch, *Old Testament History of Redemption*, 26.

⁶Ibid.; and idem, *Messianic Prophecies*, 27-9. Robertson verifies: “The pronoun ‘he’ may involve the whole of the woman’s seed. But involvement shall be by the representative principle” (Robertson, 100).

brought to the fore and the kingdom is as it were hidden behind him. Here is to be a decisive victory. Not merely will the kingdom over which the evil one rules be defeated, but the very head of that kingdom will receive the capital blow.¹

The collective woman's "seed" "lies the same temporal distance from the woman as the 'seed' of the snake itself."² Evidently, "the goal of the final crushing blow is not the 'seed' of the snake but rather the snake itself; *his* head will be crushed."³

The serpent and his "seed" are treated together as one. "What happens to the snake's 'seed' in the distant future can be said to happen to the snake as well. This suggests that the passage views the snake in terms that extend beyond this particular snake of the garden."⁴ This strongly suggests that the snake "is representative of someone or something else."⁵ There is more at stake here, and "a program is set forth. A plot is established that will take the passage far beyond this or that snake and his 'seed.'"⁶

The narrative implications of Gen 3:15 suggest the involvement of a higher power than the snake prompting it to action. As argued above, this makes very plausible the later biblical reference to the Satan as the serpent of Eden. Even though the verse records only God's words to a snake, it is "unlikely that at such a pivotal point in the

¹Young, *Genesis 3*, 118-119.

²Sailhamer, "Genesis," 55.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

narrative the author would intend no more than a mere reference to snakes and their offspring and the fear of them among humanity.”¹

Sailhamer’s view about Gen 3:15 is that it “contains a puzzling yet important ambiguity” about the identity of the “seed” of the woman. He wonders: “It seems obvious that the purpose of this verse has not been to answer that question but rather to raise it. The remainder of the book is the author’s answer.”² While I partially agree with Sailhamer, on the basis of the analysis above, I believe that more is already revealed in this verse than generally acknowledged by most scholars.

The answer to the question of the identity of the seed of the woman is encapsulated in Gen 3:15. First and foremost, the collective seed of the woman is more symbolic than literal because rather than encompassing all humanity, it is delineated by the spiritual condition of each individual human being. The righteous who follow God’s instruction and engage in enmity against Satan are the true seed of woman in the collective sense. Similarly, the collective seed of the serpent are the followers of Satan amongst humanity who frustrate God’s purposes and God’s people and entertain enmity against them.

The collective seed of Satan and Satan himself are identical and represented in each other, with Satan himself being singular, and standing in opposition to the representative Seed of the woman, He also being definitely singular. Since Satan is the

¹Ibid., 56. “Much more seems to lie in these words. In the light of the fact that such programmatic discourses are strategically important throughout the remainder of the book, it seems likely that the author intended these words to be read as programmatic and foundational for the establishment of the plot and characterization of the remainder of the book” (ibid.).

²Ibid.

supernatural power behind the physical snake, to whom the text applies in verity, so also, the Special Seed of the woman is supernatural.

The last portion of Gen 3:15 vividly shows that this Special Seed of the woman is victorious over Satan, representing the seed of the serpent. The Special Seed of the woman is a Victor, Conquerer, Overcomer, and Leader. He is gracious, sacrificial, and vicarious because He stands on behalf of the many to oppose a deadening and maddening rage of the representative Satan against himself and the collective seed of the woman. It is in this regard that the Special Seed of the woman is also a servant-like Redeemer and Savior. This is Messianic. It is the Gospel indeed, containing the good news that sinful, disobedient humanity will be forgiven and saved from Satanic enmity.

This Special Seed of the woman is the specially Chosen One to bear the sins and sufferings of many. This is eschatological because it occurs later on in the human history as the prediction of future posterity shows in this verse. He is also the High Priest because he was offering his life as a sacrifice and not someone else's. Satan's attack on the Special Seed of the woman was lethal.

Doukhan rightly observes that both attacks were simultaneous and intended to cause the deaths of both sides. As the Seed of the woman fatally wounds the serpent, he also is at risk of being himself wounded to death. He explains further:

The fatal wounding of the serpent results in the salvation of man. But this act of redemption could not take place without a risk. The passage also tells us that in the course of this conflict the posterity of the woman likewise would be wounded to death. . . . The two deaths were to be simultaneous, as is evident from the Genesis text. The heel would be struck by the venomous bite of the serpent simply because it is the foot of the woman's posterity that would crush the head of the serpent. Moreover, the play on words in using the same verb *shuf* to characterize both attacks tends to substantiate this explanation. It is suggested,

then, that these two actions, though one was a “bite” and the other was a “bruise” or “crushing,” would come as the result of one act. In killing the serpent the posterity of the woman would run the risk of death. The act would be a sacrifice. . . . The Messiah and the serpent locked in conflict finally merge in a simultaneous death. Thus, man’s first despair was met with God’s first promise—a promise of the Messiah’s intervention, whose redemptive mission was set against a background of suffering and death wrapped in sacrifice.¹

The baring of his heel and then using it to step on the snake’s head points to the voluntary, vicarious, and sacrificial action of the representative Seed of the woman. This is uniquely substitutionary!

The representative Seed was, of course, royal because the first human pair were royal and he was their seed. The seed always resembles its progenitor. He is therefore a King.² This whole prophetic episode is centered on Him.

The future victory of the representative Seed of the woman over the forces of evil is ascertained, subsequent to a long-drawn battle.³ Alexander is right on course when

¹Jacques Doukhan, *Drinking at the Sources: An Appeal to the Jew and the Christian to Note Their Common Beginnings*, trans. Walter R. Beach and Robert M. Johnston (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1981), 47-48. Rabbi Rashi translates: “Thou shalt bite the woman’s heel, and by that shall she die” (*Pentateuch with Targum Onkelos, Haphtaroth and Prayers for Sabbath and Rashi’s Commentary*, trans. into English and annotated by Rev. M. Rosenbaum and Dr. A. M. Silbermann in Collaboration with A. Blashki and L. Joseph [London: Shapiro, Vallentine, 1946], 15). Robertson adds: “The context would suggest that a fatal wound seems clearly intended. Each antagonist attacks with the same determination of purpose. One strikes at the head, the other strikes at the heel, but each has the settled purpose to destroy” (Robertson, 100).

²T. D. Alexander explains: “Whereas the writer of Genesis portrays the serpent and his unrighteous seed as bringing God’s curse upon humanity, this righteous line of seed is presented as mediating God’s blessing to those who favour and support it. Thus, 3:15 anticipates the creation of a royal line through which the terrible consequences of the disobedience of the man and the woman in the Garden of Eden will be reversed” (“Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. P. E. Satterthwaite, R. S. Hess, and G. J. Wenham [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995], 31).

³Alexander enumerates three factors which suggest the longevity of this conflict as follows:
 (a) “The term אִי־בִיטָה ‘enmity’ in 3:15 denotes a lengthy hostility (cf. Num 35:21-22; Ezek 25:15; 35:5);
 (b) the reference to the ‘seed’ of both the serpent and the woman suggests that the conflict will continue

he wrote:

The divine speech to the serpent records God's pronouncement of judgment upon the serpent for having enticed the woman to disobey him. If the "seed of the woman" does not have the ultimate victory over the serpent, as some writers think, then the divine curse upon the serpent is also a punishment inflicted by God upon humanity. Consequently, the man and the woman are punished twice over. Yet, given the serpent's role as the instigator of the rebellion against God, it is surely unlikely that it received a lesser punishment than imposed upon the human couple.¹

Robertson regarded the heel as the "object of subversive attack and partial wound (despite a fatal intention),"² while the head signifies the "object of open attack and mortal wound."³ With the Seed of the woman crushing the serpent's head, "Satan shall be bruised mortally, defeated totally."⁴

The principle that emanates from this verse is that God's enemies must be vanquished in order for His people and His righteous purposes to triumph. The deliverance and salvation of God's people come from God "through the destruction of God's enemies."⁵ This verse envelopes the serpent "under the condemning curse of God,"⁶ without any word of blessing for him and his followers. "Yet blessing is inherent

for generations; (c) the verb פָּגַע 'strike at' is used in the imperfect form with an iterative sense indicating repeated actions. Thus, the forces of evil, as symbolized by the serpent, will only be defeated after a lengthy conflict between the 'seed of the woman' and the 'seed of the serpent'" (ibid., 30-31). Cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 79-80; and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 259.

¹Alexander, "Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis," 30.

²Robertson, 101. See Ps 56:6(7) where the enemy watches for the "heels" of the psalmist.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 102. See Josh 10:22-25; Pss 91:11-13; 110:6; Rom 9:22; and Col 2:14-15.

⁶Ibid., 103.

in these words for the seed of the woman. An ultimate victory over the Wicked One shall be achieved.”¹

Summary

I have treated Gen 3:15 in its final form within its context, using the MT as the primary source. The textual evidence supports a relatively problem-free Hebrew text. The Hebrew text tradition underlying the MT seems to have influenced all the other comparative biblical textual versions, including the LXX, Peshitta, Latin, Vulgate, Jerome, and Targums of Palestinian origin. The Qumran agrees considerably with our text also.

The narrative genre of the book is in a manner like a record of literal events of history. The genealogical or historical records are called תולדות for both the stories of the origin of the cosmos (Gen 1-11) and the patriarchal stories (Gen 12-50). This makes our passage within the garden of Eden narrative (Gen 2-3) to be as much history as the rest of the book of Genesis. Moreover, the word זרע “seed” is programmatic in the book of Genesis, combining with the key word תולדות in order to yield the central organizing fabric for the book.

The literary, structural, thematic, and terminological analysis of the context of Gen 3:15 moved from the macro to the micro. This analysis confirms the unity of the text of Genesis. Gen 3:15 was located within this framework as central to the message of the book of Genesis. From the syntactical analysis, Gen 3:15 emerges as the peak of the

¹Ibid.

message of the passage.

The morphological and semantic studies clarified that Gen 3:15 is about a real natural snake with a literal belly and head. This text gives enough hints about the figurative application of some of the expressions used. This points to the fact that a supernatural power lies behind the serpent, sharing in the punishment it received. The same serpent is referenced as engaging the posterity of the woman in the future, a signal that this portion refers only to this power behind the literal snake of the story.

The seed of the serpent is not a brood of snakes, but a moral group of disobedient humans following after the evil power which inspired this literal snake. This collective seed of the serpent engages the collective seed of the woman, perpetuating the divinely instigated hostility already instituted between the serpent and the woman.

The woman is definitely Eve, the mother of all humans. She embodied womanhood down the ages. What is addressed to her actually involves both Adam and Eve and all humanity. Her collective seed is figurative, representing a moral group of righteous human beings. The Seed of the woman is victorious over the serpent.

The collective seed of the serpent parallels the collective seed of the woman down the ages, as two opposing moral groups constituting humanity. This began with Cain opposing Abel (Gen 4:1-9); continued in the genealogy of rebellious Cain, all of whom set God aside (Gen 4:16-24), versus the genealogy of believing Seth, all of whom “call on the name of the Lord” (Gen 4:25-5:32); and the “daughters of men” (Gen 6:1-4), versus the “sons of God” (Gen 5:1-3; 6:1-4).

Several movements are evident within Gen 3:14-15. God addressed a literal

snake and Eve, together with Adam, using both literal and figurative language in vs. 14 and employing mostly figurative expressions in vs. 15. God’s attention quickly shifts from the literal snake to the symbolic serpent, the evil force called Satan, who used the physical snake as a medium. Moreover, the word “seed” has figurative nuances in Gen 3:15, since its literal meaning mainly concerns agriculture.

The most significant movement in Gen 3:15 is from the collective figurative seed (vs. 15c) to the singular representative Seed (vs. 15d, e). Overall, a progression of parallelism emerges as this verse shifts focus from the *singular* (vs. 15b–serpent [“you” versus woman]); to the *collective* (vs. 15c–seed of the serpent versus the seed of the woman); and back to the *singular* (vs. 15d, e–serpent [“you”/ “your head”] versus special Seed [“He”/ “his heel”]). This narrowing is signified by the use of the singular masculine personal pronoun אָנֹכִי to refer back to the immediately preceding זָרְעֶךָ “seed” of the woman.

I observed the constant pattern and rule throughout the Hebrew Bible that whenever זָרְעֶךָ “seed” refers to the collective for “offsprings in general, posterity,” its related pronouns are always plural, whether they are independent pronouns, object pronouns, or pronominal suffixes. Similarly, whenever זָרְעֶךָ “seed” refers to a specific singular descendant, its related pronouns are always singular independent pronouns, singular object pronouns, or singular pronominal suffixes.¹ Several ancient manuscripts vividly and intentionally agree with the MT to show that the singular pronoun אָנֹכִי is the intended referent to זָרְעֶךָ.

¹See also Collins, 144.

A narrowing movement is signaled in the text of Gen 3:15. Syntactically, the MT signals this shift from a collective to a singular with an *athnach* under the last **וְרֵעָה**. This is followed by the abrupt and sudden use of the emphatic masculine independent third-person pronoun **הוא** “he” intended to demarcate the intended shift from the collective to the singular. Moreover, the *vav*-consecutive **וְ** which precedes the masculine independent second-person pronoun **אתָּה** “you,” referring to the singular individual serpent, also signals the fact that the syntactical arrangement calls for an understanding of the shift from the collective to the singular individual.

This narrowing movement is collaborated by use of the masculine singular personal pronoun **הוא** “He,”¹ the imperfect verb **יִשְׁפֹּט** with the third-person singular subject (Gen 3:15d), and the imperfect verb **יִשְׁפָּטָנָהּ** with a third-person singular pronominal suffix (Gen 3:15e); all clearly referring to the very same collective **רֵעָה** (Gen 3:15c).

The most powerful textual support is rendered by the LXX which slavishly follows the Hebrew text in Gen 3:15. LXX intentionally violates the Greek grammatical word order in its rendering of the masculine singular personal pronoun **הוא** “he” in order to make a point in favor of a messianic reading of this text. Here, LXX uses a neuter singular or collective noun **σπέρμα** (*spérmatos*) in place of a masculine singular or collective noun **רֵעָה**. The pronoun which refers back to the **רֵעָה** and the **σπέρμα** (*spérmatos*) happens to be masculine singular in both cases. This is grammatically

¹From the context of this verse, it cannot be translated with the neutral “it” because this is a personal pronoun which refers back to the posterity of the woman that has already been identified, first and foremost, as the Eve in the story.

correct in the Hebrew, but an obvious syntactical violation in the Greek. The Greek antecedent σπέρμα (*spérmatos*) is neuter and definitely requires the neuter pronoun αὐτό rather than a masculine pronoun αὐτός. Such a grammatical violation with the translation of נִרְיָא is not rivaled thus underscoring this fact that this rendering cannot be coincidental or a mere oversight but intentionally messianic.

Furthermore, the Targum Onqelos to Genesis, regarded as a unique literal translation of the Hebrew into the Aramaic, recognizes the narrowing in the Hebrew text of Gen 3:15 by using the singular pronoun הוּא "he" and the prepositional phrase לְיָדוֹ "to him." This sustained narrowing from the collective plural seed to the singular individual Seed is messianic also.

Likewise, the Targum Neofiti, the most literal of the Palestinian Targums, translated the first half of Gen 3:15 quite literally (*bnh* may be singular or plural), and retains הוּא "him" which is certainly a third-person singular pronoun. This abrupt and intentional shift to the third-person singular reflects its messianic undertone. In addition, the Syriac Peshitta, which appears to literally render the MT of Gen 3:14-15, follows this Messianic narrowing phenomenon.

Finally, the Old Latin manuscripts from the European text type (E) and the North African one use the masculine intensive pronoun, *ipse*. Jerome seems to have also followed the Hebrew masculine pronoun by retaining the masculine pronoun as *ipse*. These also maintains the Messianic narrowing of the plural seed to the singular Seed. Seemingly, even some of the OL manuscripts, like Fischer's edition, and the Vulgate which use the feminine singular pronouns *ipsa* and *eius* with the woman as the

antecedent, also inadvertently recognize the narrowing from the plural to the singular.

All these lines of textual evidence within the Hebrew of Gen 3:15 and the early translations of this Hebrew text confirm the idea of a narrowing from the collective to the singular. It also suggests that this may be stylistic for other seed texts which evidence narrowing from plural collective seed to singular individual Seed to be most likely Messianic in intention.

This narrowing down of both the concept of woman's seed and the serpent's seed happens in the distant future shows the prophetic, predictive, and eschatological nature of Gen 3:15. Hence, in the fourth level of the text (Gen 3:15[d] and [e]), containing two expressions each having three words which are parallel and antagonist to each other, the enmity is climaxed in a clash between the serpent אָנֹכִי "you" (singular representative individual) and the אִישׁ "He" (singular representative individual Seed).

The narrowing on the side of the woman's seed matches the evident narrowing on the side of the serpent. The enmity, which originates with the serpent, transfers to his collective seed, and narrows back to the singular serpent himself again. This is the crux of the Messianic interpretation of Gen 3:15! Satan is the power masquerading as the serpent. On the other hand, Christ is the special singular representative Seed of the woman. This long-drawn enmity culminates in the fatal clash between Satan and Christ. Christ is victorious, Satan is vanquished.

Intratextuality of the "seed" of Gen 3:15 within the context of Gen 1-4 and the rest of the book of Genesis is important for demonstrating how the "seed" of Gen 3:15 has been consistently understood and applied in Genesis. This is the task of chapter 2.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INTRATEXTUAL USE AND REFERENT OF “SEED” AND RELATED PRONOUNS IN GEN 3:15 AND THE REST OF GENESIS

Chapter 2 examines the immediate context of Gen 3:15 to observe the use of the word “seed” and its related pronouns. Beginning with Gen 1-3, I explore various matters relating to the understanding of the seed of Gen 3:15. The kind of movement within the characters and events of Gen 3:15 will be observed in other surrounding “seed” passages in order to illuminate our understanding of the seed of Gen 3:15.

The remaining part of this chapter examines key “seed” passages in the book of Genesis that evidence the same understanding of and build on the meaning of “seed” Gen 3:15. This demonstration of similar usages is what I have called “Intratextuality” here, involving the exegesis of each major “seed” passage chosen.

This treatment does not pretend to be exhaustive and treat all fifty-nine (59) occurrences of זרע within the book of Genesis. This study will be representative, focusing on the allusions to the “seed” in each chosen text, rather than all other ramifications of these passages.

The “Seed” of Gen 3:15 in the Context of Gen 1-3: Creation, Fall, and Future Linkages

The first stories of the Bible constitute the first window into the Canon. One sees several vivid connections as mentioned above in the section on literary and terminological links. Here, focus will be given to the use of and relation to “seed” in these earlier chapters.

A very clear distinction is made between the seed of the woman versus those of the serpent in Gen 3:15. This conforms with the trend of separation already evident in the creation story. There is the separation between night and day, land and water, light and darkness, evening and morning, separate kinds of plants and animals, sun and moon, and so forth.

In Gen 2, the seventh-day Sabbath is delineated from the rest of the days of the week as a special day of rest. The Garden of Eden is specially created as an abode or sanctuary for the human pair as their meeting place with God. In the midst of the Garden, two particular trees are separated from the rest as ones forbidden. Finally, the woman is singled out for the man as the partner for him from among the host of God’s creation.

Specific mention is made of “seeds” of plants and vegetation in Gen 1:11-12. God had made water and land creatures “after their kinds” (Gen 1:20-22, 24-25). He later commanded all the living creatures to reproduce and produce seed in vss. 29-30. The first hint of producing seed comes in Gen 1:20-22 where water creatures and fowls, “after their kind,” were “blessed” to be “fruitful and multiply,” and to “fill” the waters and the earth. “The fecundity of the fish, which is so great as to have become proverbial, is

indicative of the special blessing that was bestowed on them at the time of their creation. The blessing mentioned in this verse is purely one of fertility and increase.”¹

The use of such expressions as “bring forth,” “after their kind,” “multiply,” “fill,” and “be fruitful” all echo the same idea as the word “seed.” Another phrase with such connotation is “in our image” or “after our likeness.” In these creation chapters, God’s sole work is that of creating and multiplying, in effect, “seeding.”

The making of human beings in the “image of God” is mentioned four times, namely, Gen 1:26, 27 (twice); and 9:6. Related to these passages is Gen 5:3 where Adam is said to father a son “after His image.”²

In the ancient Near East, it is only royal figures and high-ranking officials who receive the designation of “image of God.” However, with a dramatically different twist, the biblical creation narrative uses royal language to describe humanity in general. “In God’s eyes all of mankind is royal. All of humanity is related to God, not just the king. Specifically, the Bible democratizes the royalistic and exclusivistic concepts of the nations that surrounded Israel.”³

This is the first clue that Adam and Eve are royal beings. Hence, the Seed that proceeds from them must be royal too. This gives the basis for the expectation that the

¹Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:51-52. “Also the blessing bestowed upon man on the sixth day (vs. 28) is couched in similar terms, as though to say: Be fruitful and multiply like the fish. Many more expressions of benison, linked with the idea of fecundity, occur in the book of Genesis” (ibid., 52). See Gen 9:1; 17:16, 20; 22:17; 24: 60; 26:3-4, 24; 28:3; 35:9-11; 48:3-4; 49:25; compare 48:15-16.

²Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 134.

³Ibid., 135. In ANE, common man was never regarded as “image of God.”

Seed of the woman, pitched against the Serpent, in the great controversy, must be a special royal figure. This also gives a hint of the possibility of divine involvement of in the formation of such a redeemer-figure.

Similar to and yet more fully than the water creatures and fowls of Gen 1:20-22, human beings were blessed and commanded to “be fruitful and multiply” in vss. 26-28. These verses have been called “the divine plan for humankind– the divinely-appointed goal of its history”¹ and “the condition and framework of all prophecy.”²

The fullest form of God’s pronouncements of blessing and the creation mandate to humanity is the one expressed in Gen 1:28. The significance of Gen 1:28 for the subsequent plot of Gen 1-11 has been seen by several scholars.³

Norbert Lohfink declares that Gen 1:28 functions as a blessing rather than a command.⁴ However, Turner’s rejoinder is that “the ‘blessing’ God delivers contains five

¹Briggs, 717.

²Ibid.

³Walter Brueggemann states unequivocally: “We suggest that the formidable blessing declaration of Gen 1:28 provides a focus for understanding the kerygma of the entire tradition. . . . These five verbs, I suggest, are the central thrust of the faith of the priestly circle” (“The Kerygma of the Priestly Writers.” *ZAW* 84 [1972]: 397-414, esp. 400). Gary V. Smith says that Gen 1:28 “has an overpowering theological emphasis. . . . It is the key theological focal point in the two parallel sections of Genesis 1-11” (“Structure and Purpose in Genesis 1-11,” *JETS* 20 [1977]: 311). Labuschagne describes the significance of Gen 1:28 in terms of its composition of exactly 22 (= 2 x 11) words and 88 (= 3 x 11) letters in the Hebrew text (70). See also David J. A. Clines, *What Does Eve Do to Help? And Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament*, *JSOT* 94 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 49-66; Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 21-49; idem, “Lot as Jekyll and Hyde,” in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield*, ed. David J. A. Clines, Stephen E. Fowl, and Stanley E. Porter, *JSOTSup*, 87 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 85-98; and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 143.

⁴Norbert Lohfink, “Seid fruchtbar und füllt die Erde an,” *Bibel und Kirche* 30 (1975): 80. See also Maurice Gilbert, “Soyez féconds et multipliez (Gen 1, 28),” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 96 (1974): 741.

imperatives. The announcement is both blessing and command: the capacity to be able to perform these functions is indeed a blessing, but the imperative form underlines the *necessity* of so doing.”¹

Brueggemann puts it succinctly:

The “blessing” is a bold and over-powering affirmation in which the sovereign’s intent is clear. While the verbs are expressed as imperatives, they are not so much commands as authorizations by which the people are empowered to believe and act toward the future. Thus the five verbs are a statement about the radical claim of God to establish his will for well-being and prosperity. . . . These five assertions complete the creation of humankind, affirming their primacy and ordaining them as the agent of order in his world for which he now wills and asserts a fertile, productive order. . . . Perhaps the five terms are best understood if each is taken as a refutation of the opposite: be fruitful . . . no more barrenness; multiply . . . no more lack of heirs; fill the earth . . . no more being crowded out; subdue . . . no more subservience; have dominion . . . no more being dominated.²

Gen 1:28 is a “coherent entity.”³ The structure of this verse is such that the word “subdue” belongs to the first half of the verse. Hence, the syntax of the verse “militates against a neat division between the instructions to procreate and those to rule.”⁴ However, the “weight of the verse does fall on its opening imperatives, highlighting the call for human reproduction more than the call for mastery over other creatures, and affording some justification to the prevalent tendency to consider them

¹Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 23. Cf. *GKC*, 324.

²Brueggemann, “Kerygma of the Priestly Writers,” 400-1.

³Jeremy Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It: The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 13.

⁴*Ibid.*

seriatim.”¹

The full form of the blessing is found in Gen 1:28, but is found in part in 8:17; 9:1 and 7 (Noah). Being “fruitful and multiply” is also found in Gen 17:2, 20 (Abraham, and in anticipation to Isaac); 28:1-4; and 35:11 (Jacob); 47:27; and 48:3-4 (Joseph) and probably in Exodus 1 (the generation of Moses). Multiplying in the land is found in Deut 6:3; 7:13; 8:1, 13; 11:21; 28:63; and 30:16.²

The command to “subdue” in Gen 1:28 already anticipates the potential of a fall and its consequences on the created order of things. God foresaw and even herein pre-empted the likely rebellion or insubordination of the earth as an aftermath of sin on earth. The promise of Gen 1:28 was preventive, prophetic, and proleptic. In the light of this, the Seed of the woman in Gen 3:15 is the one to fully and finally subdue to Serpent, and ultimately the whole earth!

Meanwhile, the divine curses of Gen 3:14-19 complicate the entire announcement of 1:28, modifying the blessing and each of the injunctions. Turner has summarized it well:

The dominion which humans should have exercised over the whole animal creation is now qualified by the ongoing struggle between the seed of the serpent and the Woman (3.14-15). The command to humans to subdue the earth is made

¹Ibid., 14. Cohen continues: “Although many modern-day readers harp on its conferral of dominion, which they construe as a wantonly anti-ecological statement, the verse comprises a coherent entity, not readily susceptible to dissection based upon ideas external to it” (ibid.).

²Brueggemann, “Kerygma of the Priestly Writers,” 402-407. Brueggemann adds: “The formula is clearly related to land theology. This is indicated in a) the fact that the formula is characteristically combined with the land promise, and b) the vocabulary of the formula speaks about blessing in and control of the land: ‘fruitful and multiply’: refers to fertility and reproduction not only of man, but also of land and animals; ‘subdue, have dominion’: refers to having control over the land, of power to impose one’s will on the territory; ‘fill’: again refers to prosperity” (p. 408).

much more difficult to fulfil through the cursing of the ground, its producing thorns and thistles, which will result in toil and sweat for humans engaged in agriculture (3:17-19). . . . Childbirth is the means by which the imperative to multiply will be fulfilled, but here it is made into a painful and troublesome affair. . . . The future of the imperative to multiply is guaranteed although it will become a painful experience for the women who carry it out (3:16).¹

This means that upon the entry of sin, each of them most painfully continues their primary tasks inevitably: man's labor on the farm and woman's labor of childbearing. God's address to each of them touches on their inescapable tasks (Gen 3:16-19). This makes the name that Adam gave to Eve most fitting "because she was the mother of all living" (Gen 3:20). This is what she will do to help even though she has had no child up till now.² This further explains her own exuberant exclamation upon the birth of Cain, "I have a man child, the Lord!" (Gen 4:1).³

The blessings and imperatives of Gen 1:28 can be classified as follows:

1. Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth;
2. Subdue the earth; and
3. Have dominion over the animals.

These statements are made within the context of creation which already demonstrate God's "dominion" over the earth He has "filled" with "fruitful" creatures. "The human

¹Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 23-24.

²Clines, *What Does Eve Do*, 36. Turner points out the irony in the punishment for the woman (3:16): "In 1:28 humans had been commanded to 'multiply' (*r²bû*); in 3:16 what actually multiplies (*harbâ 'arbeh*) is 'your pain in childbirth.' In other words, 'In multiplying, your pain will be multiplied by me'" (*Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 24). Turner also suspects an hendiadys in 3:16a: "I will greatly multiply your pain *and* your childbearing" (*Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 24, n. 1). See Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 262; and Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 81.

³Kaiser, *Towards an Old Testament Theology*, 37, 79.

task must be seen as somewhat analogous to God's actions in the days of creation, especially when we remember that humans were created in the image of God (1:26-27)."¹

Be Fruitful and Multiply and Fill the Earth

In the expression "Be fruitful and multiply" in Gen 1:22, 28, it may be better to take the two verbs as illustrative of hendiadys in conjunctive sentences. Thus "be fruitful, multiply" may mean "be abundantly fruitful."²

This portion of the injunction is not unique to humanity, having been earlier given to sea creatures (Gen 1:22b) and the creatures of the air (Gen 1:22c) and implied for land animals (Gen 1:24-25); all of which were also blessed with fertility and multiplication. Both animals and humans were given the gift of reproduction by God. "Yet their importance for humans in particular is underlined by the *tôlêdôt* formulas which punctuate the book as a whole and give it a 'reproductive' framework." Adam's aloneness or singleness has the implication that he could not reproduce. Accordingly, Gen 2:18 rectifies this in lieu of the multiplication motif of Gen 1:28.³

Adam could never procreate by himself without the help of Eve. This is the true

¹Clines, *What Does Eve Do*, 22. Andersen points out that Gen 1:28 uses five conjoined imperative clauses: "a definite succession of acts, where you would expect *waw*-consecutive with suffixed (perfect) verb clauses to be used" (*Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 108).

²Andersen, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 117. Andersen also refers to Gen 9:7; 35:11, etc. (ibid.).

³Clines, *What Does Eve Do*, 22-23. Hamilton verifies: "In view of the fact that, at least in Mesopotamia and maybe Canaan, creation motifs were often employed in fertility rites, Gen 1 may be saying that reproduction is a blessing and gift from God, and is in no way dependent upon subsequent rites or activities" (*Genesis 1-17*, 139). See also Phyllis Bird, "Male and Female He Created Them," *HTR* 74 (1981): 147.

sense in which she is his “partner.”¹ This was why God said that “it is not good for the man to be alone” not for loneliness, but for procreation (Gen 2:18, 20). When Adam saw his soul mate in Eve, his way became clear “to filling the earth with progeny.”² He exclaims poetically with exuberance and unmistakable relief in Gen 2:23. “This view of Eve’s helpfulness also explains the narrative’s emphasis on nakedness, on the man cleaving to the woman, and on their being one flesh (2:23-25).”³

It should be reiterated that the expansion of the human race was first mandated and promised in Gen 1:28 (“be fruitful and multiply”), renewed in 3:15 at the Fall and also after the deluge in Gen 9:1, 7. “The divine view of multiplication in these passages is at least neutral, and generally positive (1:28; 9:1, 7). The process of beginning earthly and human life belonged to God, but the task of continuing and expanding earthly life was shared by God and humanity.”⁴

Childbirth was at the center of the Creator’s blessings to humanity (Gen 1:28). After the Fall, childbirth was still at the center of the Redeemer’s blessing to humanity

¹I prefer the word “partner” over and above the more commonly used “helper” to describe the role of the woman. Both man and woman were equal “partners” in carrying out the procreation mandate of Yahweh.

²Clines, *What Does Eve Do*, 34.

³Ibid., 34-35. However, I disagree with Clines’s position that Eve’s primary role is that of child-bearing, because this seems to over-extend the point of Scripture. The command to procreate was given equally to both male and female (Gen 1:27-28).

Bird argues that the sexual distinction in 1:28 relates entirely to procreation: “sexual constitution is the presupposition of the blessing of increase” (129-159, esp. 147).

⁴Harold Shank, “The Sin Theology of the Cain and Abel Story: An Analysis of Narrative Themes Within the Context of Genesis 1-11” (Ph.D. thesis, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1988), 138-139.

(Gen 3:15). Now, childbirth became the “means through which the snake would be defeated and the blessing restored.”¹

In Gen 3:15, God promises that both the woman and the beast (serpent) will perpetually produce seed (offspring/followers). Even though enmity was established between them, this, however, ensures the continuation of the imperative to multiply in 1:28. The “dark side” of this is that death, through murder or old age, will occur alongside with human and animal procreation in the task of filling the earth.²

The fulfillment of the multiplication or seeding promises of Gen 1:28 and 3:15, 20 was carried out first in 4:1 when Eve bears Cain and Abel, and later Seth (4:25). “Two genealogies prior to the flood (4:17-24 and 5:1-32) and the Table of Nations (Gen 10) and Shemite genealogy after the flood (11:10-26) testify to the expansion of the race”³ in the Primeval history. Thus, “human reproduction becomes a trend”⁴ as generations march on relentlessly. The “monotonous repetition”⁵ of genealogies “stands as a witness to the success with which humans are fulfilling the command.”⁶

¹Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 108. He continues: “The pain of the birth of every child was to be a reminder of the hope that lay in God’s promise. Birth pangs are not merely a reminder of the futility of the Fall; they are as well a sign of an impending joy” (ibid.). See Rom 8:22-24; Matt 24:8.

²See Jack P. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 124; Robert B. Robinson, “Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis,” *CBQ* 48 (1986): 600, n. 8; and Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 26.

³Shank, 138-139.

⁴Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 25.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid. See Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:275; Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 153; Coats, *Genesis*, 71; Driver, *Genesis*, 75; Fishbane, “Genesis 2.4b-11.32: The Primeval Cycle,” 17-39; Fretheim, *Creation*, 103; von Rad, *Genesis*, 69; Smith, “Structure and Purpose in Genesis

Notably, the imperative to be “fruitful, multiply and fill” is fulfilled throughout Gen 1-11 in spite of the significant threats such as the pain of childbirth (3:16); murder (chap. 4); death (Gen 5, 10); human desire to settle in one place (11:1-9); and infertility (11:30).¹

The divine commands of Gen 1:28; 3:15 and 9:1-2, 7 are formalized through covenants ratified by God separately with Noah, Abraham, and David. Gen 12:1-3 advances the expectation of a “Seed who would subdue the earth by ruling over the nations cursing Abraham and prospering those blessing him.”² Likewise, 2 Sam 7:8-17 “anticipates a Davidic Seed who should rule the earth (cf. Pss 72:8-11; 89:25-27) and subdue his enemies (cf. Pss 89:23; 110:1-2, 5-6; 132:18).”³

Subdue the Earth

The verb “subdue” **שָׁבַד** occurs here only in the book of Genesis; while being used in other places with the connotation of sexual degradation (Neh 5:5?), or rape (Esth 7:8) or enslavement of people (Jer 34:11, 16). The context of Gen 1-11 yields a

1-11,” 311-312; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 126; Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 6, 17; and Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*, Yale Near Eastern Researches, 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 164.

¹Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 48.

²Gage, 29.

³Ibid., 30. He adds: “Each of these covenants, though administratively and typically diverse, is nevertheless an expression of the same promise that a Seed would come who should subdue the earth. Each is progressively more particularistic in defining the Seed: the Noahic identifying the Semitic race, the Abrahamic identifying the Israelite nation, and the Davidic identifying the Israelite nation, and the Davidic identifying the family of Jesse. Yet each is equally universalistic in scope, encompassing every creature (Noah), all nations (Abraham), and all the realms (David). . . . These covenants are republications of the divine command” (ibid.).

particular nuance of meaning of this term in 1:28. However, “its general meaning seems to be that of subjecting or making subservient.”¹ This mandate in 1:28 is carried on in part with Adam “tilling” and “keeping” the Garden of Eden (2:5, 15).²

Unfortunately, the pronouncements of 3:14-19 altered, “modified, if not reversed,”³ man’s ability to “subdue the earth.” First, the ground was cursed because of humanity’s disobedience (3:17). Even though subduing of the earth through “tilling” it and “keeping” it was not necessarily effortless before sin, now the presence of “thorns and thistles” has caused considerable “toil” and “sweat.” “From now on, the task of subduing the earth will be a *struggle*, because the earth itself has been cursed into becoming a less tameable environment in which the Man may exercise his sovereignty.”⁴ The eventual return of man to the dust suggests that, “in the final analysis, it is the earth which subdues the Man.”⁵

¹Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 34.

²Ibid., 35. Cf. Bernhard W. Anderson, “Creation and Ecology,” in *Creation in the Old Testament*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 154; Gibson, *Genesis*, 1.112; Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1953), 423; Rolf Rendtorff, “‘Subdue the Earth’: Man and Nature in the Old Testament,” *Theology Digest* 27 (1979): 215; and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 161; Hamilton suggests: “Probably what is designated here is settlement and agriculture: ‘subdue the land’ in ch. 1 is a semantic parallel to ‘till and keep the land’ in 2:5, 15” (*Genesis 1-17*, 139-140). He submits, however, that later uses of ‘subdue’ suggest violence or a display of force, dictatorship, physical abuse, assault, slavery, devouring etc. as in 2 Chr 28:10; Neh 5:5; Jer 34:11, 16; Esth 7:8; Num 32:22, 29; Josh 18:1.

³Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 36.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid. Turner says emphatically: “Yahweh’s curse has rendered it an impossible task” (p. 41). Kidner also says that “man in his own disorder would never now ‘subdue’ the earth” (*Genesis*, 72). Daniel Patte and Judson F. Parker explain that the curses of 3:16-19 entail the woman being dominated by man and man by the ground, each from what/who they were initially created (74). Cf. Bruce P. Naidoff, “A Man to Work the Soil: A New Interpretation of Genesis 2-3,” *JSOT* 5 (1978):10.

Human Dominion Over Animals

The word “dominion” is used only two times in Genesis and both occur in 1:26 (imperfect/plural/masc.) and 1:28 (plural/imperative). The verb **רָדָה** means “to rule, have dominion, dominate, tread down, subjugate, scrape, or scrape out.”¹ Its usual connotation of rule/govern describes master-servant, king-subject, superior-inferior, or officer-laborer relationship which seems to give unlimited power to the one who has the upper hand.²

Nonetheless, at this stage in human history, before sin entered the world, the connotation of the word “dominion” is very different from its later, post-Fall meaning in the Old Testament. Here, it is more restricted and limited. Notably, both humans and animals were strictly vegetarians (Gen 1:29-30).³

Human dominion over animals is demonstrated pre-Fall by the “sovereign act” of

¹Cf. *BDB* (1996), s.v. “רָדָה.”

²Koehler and Baumgartner, 874-875; *BDB* (1996), s.v. “רָדָה.” Cf. Lev 25:43, 46, 53; 26:17; Num 24:19; 1 Kgs 5:4, 30; 9:23; Isa 14:2, 6; Ezek 29:15; 34:4; Pss 49:15; 68:28; 110:2; Lam 1:13; Neh 9:28; 2 Chr 8:10. Further discussions: George W. Coats, “The God of Death: Power and Obedience in the Primeval History,” *Interpretation* 29 (1975): 229; James Limburg, “What Does It Mean to Have Dominion Over the Earth?” *Dialog* 10 (1971): 222; and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 158-9. Lynn White sees Gen 1 as God’s permission for the current raping of our environment which led to man’s arrogance and exploitation towards nature (“The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” *Science* 155 [March 1967]: 1203-1207).

³Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 42. See Bernhard W. Anderson, “Human Dominion over Nature,” in *Biblical Studies in Contemporary Thought*, ed. M. Ward (Somerville, MA: Greeno. Hadden & Co., 1975), 27-45; idem, “Creation and Ecology,” 154; Roger Duncan, “Adam and the Ark,” *Encounter* 37 (1976): 191; Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 139; Walter Houston, “‘And Let Them Have Dominion . . .’: Biblical Views of Man in Relation to the Environmental Crisis,” in *Studia Biblica, I. Papers on Old Testament and Related Themes*, ed. E. A. Livingstone, JSOTS 11 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1979), 161-184; Limburg, 223; and Westermann, *Creation*, 50-54. However, adamant that Gen 1 did not forbid human consumption of meat and that Gen 9:2-3 merely ratifies it are L. Dequeker, “‘Green Herbage and Trees Bearing Fruit’ (Gen 1:28-30; 9:1-3),” *Bijdragen* 38 (1977): 120 passim; and Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 34.

naming the animals (Gen 2:19-20), presumably confirming their “hierarchical relationship.”¹ That the power of the one who names is definitely not unlimited is made obvious by the “restraints of vegetarianism”² and the case of the Man naming the Woman (3:20).³

The exercise of dominion reflects royal language just like “image.” Evidently, “Man is created to rule.”⁴ Adam and Eve are royal in nature. Hence, the Seed of the woman must be royal too (Gen 3:15).

The serpent, among the animals Adam named (3:1), showing human superiority

¹Assigning names in the Bible often signifies authority over the one who is named as seen in Num 32:38; 2 Kgs 23:34; 24:17; 2 Chr 36:4; and Dan 1:7. Cf. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:130.

²Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 42.

³*Ibid.*, 42-43. See David Tobin Asselin, “The Notion of Dominion in Genesis 1-3,” *CBQ* 16 (1954): 289; Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:92, 130; Coats, *Genesis*, 53; Duncan, 192; Fretheim, 78; Gibson, *Genesis* 1.117; Kidner, *Genesis*, 65; Naidoff, 5; Richardson, 67; Rosenberg, 7; and Walter Vogels, “L’être humain appartient au sol: Gn 2,4b-3,24,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 105 (1983): 527. Contra, man’s naming of the woman is taken as a demonstration of his dominion over her by: Clines, *What Does Eve Do*, 37-40; Phyllis Trible, “Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread,” in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), 81 (concerning 3:20); and Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 50, 68, 70. This view is rejected by: Boomershine, 119; George W. Ramsey, “Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?” *CBQ* 50 (1988): 34-35; and Trible, “Eve and Adam,” 77 (concerning 2:23).

Richard M. Davidson argues that, in Gen 2:23, the name given to the female “is not a personal name, but only a generic identification” (“Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture,” in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vhymeister [Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998], 263). Moreover, Doukhan concurs that Gen 2:23 contains a pair of passives (*niphal*, *pual*) “which conveys the idea of an intervention from outside, hence God” (*Genesis Creation Story*, 46-47). This indicates that the designation of “woman” was actually given by God while Adam only recognized this designation just as he recognized that it was God who took her “out of man.” See further, Hasel, “Equality from the Start,” 23-24; and Trible, “A Love Story Gone Awry,” 99-100.

⁴Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 138. von Rad cautions: “This commission to rule is not considered as belonging to the definition of God’s image; but it is its consequence, i.e., that for which man is capable because of it” (*Genesis*, 59).

and dominion over the animal kingdom, through a surprising unexpected twist, uses its “subtlety.” Hence, the serpent “outwits the human pair and thus exercises some form of ‘dominion’ over them— the very reverse of what the reader was led to expect.”¹ The Woman’s confession in 3:13, that the serpent deceived her, stands in “stark contrast” to the command in 1:28 for humanity to dominate animals, including of course, this same serpent who is identified as one of the animal creation (3:1) named by the Man in 2:19-20. The serpent successfully attempts to “overturn the divinely ordained relationship to humans.”²

However, the curse of 3:14-15 introduces and establishes a God-appointed enmity or hostility which is tantamount to a decisively negative and worsening relationship between humans and animals. Hitherto, human domination over animals was completely devoid of hostility between both parties even with animals being subservient to humans (Gen 1-2). Gen 3:14-15 indicates that the serpent’s “outwitting of humans will not continue for ever.”³ Furthermore, this new element of hostility is intended to re-introduce, reinforce, and intensify the original human domination (1:28).⁴

I believe that Turner’s argument is very potent when he writes:

A statement that in their struggles with humans serpents will be their *equal* (which is how most scholars read 3:15b), is promotion rather than demotion and

¹Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 44.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. Contra Anderson, who maintains that Gen 1-9 indicates that a “paradisaical peace” continues between humans and beasts with no indication of conflict between both parties (“Creation and Ecology,” 154).

can hardly be seen as a curse. However, an acknowledgment that human dominion will now entail superior death-dealing physical authority over the serpent is an intensification of human dominion over it and this amounts to a “curse” upon the serpent, and a punishment for its attempt to reverse the divine order. Thus, 3.14-15 announces a decisive shift in human-animal relations. Conflict has replaced simple dominion, with the guarantee of victory going to the human side.¹

The human-animal relation began to deteriorate after the Fall.² First, animal skin is used for the dress God clothed the human pair with (3:21). “Animals are now seen to serve humans’ needs, even when this means the death of animals.”³ Second, humans made a profession from tending animals (4:2, 20) including killing animals for cultic use (4:4; 8:20).⁴ Third, the divine statement of 9:2: “the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth . . .” includes divine permission for killing animals for food (9:3; 10:9). The dominion has now deteriorated.⁵

By the end of the primeval history and beyond, “humans increasingly dominate the animal creation and eventually rule despotically (an *intensification* of the original command).”⁶ Notwithstanding this, “there is an ironic sense in which animals, through the serpent, exercise an ongoing dominion over the humans (a *reversal* of the original

¹Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 45. Cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 80, 89.

²Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 46. See Rosenberg, 8.

³Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 46.

⁴Ibid., 47.

⁵Ibid. Cf. David J. A. Clines, “Theology of the Flood Narrative,” *Faith and Thought* 100 (1972-73): 138; Driver, *Genesis*, 95-6; Fretheim, 113; Richardson, 107; Skinner, 169-170; and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 462. The suggestion has been made that the permission to eat meat might not be an innovation here (Calvin, *Genesis*, 1.291; Dequeker, 127; and Kidner, *Genesis*, 101).

⁶Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*, 48.

command); i.e., the serpent's tempting of the first humans to commit the offense affects the rest of their lives and, indeed, human history."¹

Also, the mandate to dominate the earth becomes increasingly difficult, in the light of the flood and imminent death of humans. Over all, "God seems more willing to modify these second and third elements of the Announcement than he is the first—'be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth'. . . . This strong focus on multiplication is maintained in the ancestral history."²

In the Patriarchal narratives, "the posterity promise provides much of its connective tissue. The ebb and flow of tension and resolution is almost constantly centered on this one issue."³ Promises of multiplication of seeds are renewed with Abraham from Gen 12:1-3 onwards. Isaac's blessings include: (1) the power to multiply—2:2; 13:16; 26:24; 28:14; cf. vs. 3; 35:11; 48:4; (2) numerous progeny; (3) wealth and prosperity—24:35; 26:12-14; 27:27-28; and (4) power over enemies.⁴

The "multiplication" motif of the primaeval history ("Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth") was modified into the progeny/nationhood promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) and continued in the prediction of fertility/prosperity to Isaac/Jacob (see 26:3-4; 28:13-

¹Ibid., 48-49.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 94.

⁴Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1926), 1.204-205. "To be blessed and to have a large progeny amounts to the same thing" (ibid., 205). See Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, vol. 2, *From Noah to Abraham* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961), 291. Furthermore, Cassuto itemized the seven expressions of blessings that God gave to Abraham in Gen 12:2-3; seven similar blessings reiterated to Isaac (Gen 26:3-4) and Jacob (Gen 27:28-29) (*Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2:312-313).

15; 28:3-4; 35:11-12; and later on, 46:3, 8-27; and 47:27).¹ This is the only ‘recurring element which seems to attract Yahweh’s solicitous attention more than any of the others. . . . Other aspects can be abandoned or modified but Yahweh must keep faith with this aspect or the Genesis story would end in utter nihilism.’²

Genealogy and Creation

Genealogies of Genesis organize the succession of the seed or offspring of human beings from generation to generation. They report the continuity of the multiplication of the human seed as promised in Gen 1:28 and reinforced in Gen 3:15. Interestingly, genealogies also maintain the order of creation established in Gen 1. “The elemental orderliness of the genealogy continues the order begun at creation. . . . It imparts movement to creation. . . . The very nature of genealogical succession . . . rests on the command to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis 1:28.”³

The Identification of the Special Seed of the Woman within the Succession of Generations in the Book of Genesis

The promise of multiplication of seed for humans, given in Gen 1:26-28, was

¹Pedersen, 177.

²Ibid., 181.

³Robinson, “Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis,” 599-600. He adds: “The genealogies document the fruitfulness of humanity and thus become the expression of the fulfillment of God’s mandate, providing movement away from the steady state of creation but at the same time preserving its orderliness. Creation’s order advances through the genealogy. . . . On the broadest plain, the level of Genesis as a literary whole, all the characters in Genesis are related as members of one extended family. It should also be borne in mind that the narratives of Genesis are preeminently stories of family relations and even intrigues” (600-601).

renewed in Gen 3:15 after human disobedience, in the context of enmity with evil forces. It is however crystalized in a special representative Seed who will deliver humanity after a fatal struggle with the Devil, culminating in the future. This fact set in motion a program of events, twists and turns, and an overarching plot, all played out in the rest of Genesis, and indeed, in the rest of the Bible.

The identification of this Special Seed of the woman pre-occupies the writer's attention as he traces the chosen family line onward from Adam and Eve. A series of narrowings from many seeds/offsprings/siblings to a particular chosen one recurs over and over. The narratives show "how human and divine actions figure in the process of discrimination and determine the named successor."¹ Similarly, the genealogies demonstrate the "process of discrimination and hierarchical ordering,"² and "differentiation" which "elevates one heir," the "single named bearer of genealogical prominence."³

The various genealogies seem to form the pillars around which the narratives of Genesis weave their fundamental fabric. The genealogies and narratives of Genesis exhibit a "dynamic of rhythm."⁴ Not surprising, the book is named "Genesis," reflecting

¹Hopkins, 28.

²Ibid., 40.

³Ibid. Robinson admits that narrowness and fixity are observable in the genealogical line as the promised heir(s) is determined from generation to generation ("Literary Functions," 604).

⁴Hopkins, 25. He exemplifies this rhythm: "The genealogies create inheritance ambiguities that the narratives resolve. As soon as Eve gives birth to two sons, ambiguity and the potential for rivalry arise: who will inherit a place on the genealogical tree? The story of Cain and *Adonai* takes both contenders out of the picture. The question of Adam's successor waits for a resolution in the announcement of Seth's birth. Next, the genealogy of Adam through Noah breaks off the moment the

its preoccupation with genealogies or generations. “Genesis is a book whose plot is genealogy.”¹ Genealogies are the driving force within Genesis. The genealogies are demarcated as תולדות headings.²

As seen in the previous section on the structures of Genesis above,³ genealogies

birth of Noah’s three, named children is made public. The genealogical ambiguity provides the occasion for the flood narrative, which, in concluding with the story of Ham’s ‘incest,’ ratifies Shem’s place in the succession. For ten generations from Shem to Terah, the genealogy of Genesis 11 spills effortlessly until the report of Terah’s three offspring, and the story begins once more. The entire account of Abraham and Sarah holds in suspense the genealogical place following Terah until a voice from heaven halts Abraham’s sacrifice of his designated heir, and the succession is finally secured” (ibid., 27).

¹Naomi Steinberg, “The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis,” *Semeia* 46 (1989): 40. Robert Wilson defines genealogy as “a written or oral expression of the descent of a person or persons from an ancestor or ancestors” (*Genealogy and History*, 9).

²T. Desmond Alexander offers various translations of תולדות as “descendant(s); account; generations; history; list; record; roll; story” (“Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 [1993]: 258). It is associated with “‘giving birth’ and when linked to a person or object refers to that which a person or object produces” (ibid.). Cf. Everett Fox (*Genesis and Exodus: A New English Rendition* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991).

Alexander discusses the functions of תולדות (“Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” 258-259). First, תולדות headings serve like modern-day chapter headings introducing major narratives (2:4; 6:9; 11:27; 25:19) or linear (5:1; 11:10) and segmented genealogies (10:1; 25:12; 36:1, 9). “To ensure that the main line of descent in Genesis is clearly established, segmented genealogies are never used in relation to it; only linear genealogies are employed (5:1-32; 11:10-26)” (ibid.). He explains: “A linear genealogy takes the form: A gave birth to B, B gave birth to C, C gave birth to D. A segmented genealogy takes the form: A gave birth to B, C and D; B gave birth to E, F and G; C gave birth to H, I and J; D gave birth to K, L and M” (ibid., n. 9). See Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 9.

Second, תולדות headings function like a “zoom-lens on a camera. They focus attention on a particular individual and his immediate children” (Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” 259).

³T. David Andersen argues: “The genealogical framework provides the overall structure of the book. Moreover, Genesis is what drives the whole primary history from Genesis to Kings. The remaining section of the Hebrew Bible, the Writings, is commonly thought to begin with Psalms. However, in the Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex, the Writings begin with Chronicles. Chronicles, of course, begins with a long genealogical section. The New Testament also begins with a genealogy. Hence, it may be concluded that genealogies are what gives the initializing, organizing principle for the entire Bible” (“Genealogical Prominence and the Structure of Genesis,” in *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, ed. Robert D. Bergen [Dallas, TX: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1994], 263).

serve significant purposes. They exhibit “family succession” and “generational continuity” from the universal scale to the delimited attention of the chosen race of the world to bear the chosen Special Representative Seed of Humanity, vis-a-vis the Israelites.¹

As this process of selection narrows down to the final elect, it produces a “tremendous vulnerability” yielding “tension,” “suspense,” “jeopardy,” and every “imaginable threat” to the succession.² These include stories of barrenness, sibling rivalry, famine, jealousy, faithlessness, snatching of patriarch’s wife, and so forth.³

The seed of Gen 3:15 introduces the interest of the book of Genesis with childbearing. This is further developed as the book progresses, and even beyond Genesis, throughout the Pentateuch. First of all, it shows that it is God who controls the

¹See Steinberg, “The Genealogical Framework of the Family Stories in Genesis,” 47. Robinson agrees that Genesis is a “family history” (“Literary Functions,” 601). “On the broadest plain, the level of Genesis as a literary whole, all the characters in Genesis are related as members of one extended family. It should also be borne in mind that the narratives of Genesis are preeminently stories of family relations and even intrigues” (Robinson, “Literary Functions,” 601).

Furthermore, Alexander observed that although Genesis begins with a “broad picture of mankind’s history, the focus of attention is gradually and constantly narrowed as we pursue the fortunes of one particular family. Structurally this is achieved through the use of: (a) *lōlēḡōt* formulae (‘these are the generations of . . .’) which focus in upon a particular individual and his descendants (e.g., 6:9; 11:27; 25:19; 37:2), and (b) genealogical lists which pass over quickly a number of generations (e.g., 5:1-32, from Adam to Noah; 11:10-26, from Shem to Terah)” (“From Adam to Judah,” 6-8).

²Robinson, “Literary Functions,” 604-605.

³Ibid., 605-606. Philip E. Satterthwaite points out that “sometimes divergent genealogical lines seem to be traced in detail to mark a contrast with the line of promise. The lines of both Ishmael, Abraham’s son by Hagar, and Esau, Jacob’s twin brother, give the appearance of ‘shadow lines of promise. . . . The narrator deliberately traces parallels between the rejected brother and the one who carries the line of promise, as though to emphasize the theme of God’s sovereign choice by suggesting the thought ‘so near and yet so far’” (“Genealogy in the Old Testament,” *NIDOTTE*, 4:657).

Satterthwaite elaborates further that the genealogies show the progress of the family line generation by generation while the narratives portrays the problems and threats facing the family such as barrenness, famine, and rivalry from generation to generation (ibid., 660).

childbearing process by giving or withholding the ability to bear children. “The central family line exists due to the gracious activity of God”¹ who is actively responsible for its continuation. Gen 3:15 identifies “seed” as an “issue of ongoing tension.”² “It seems that the fulfillment of the curse on the serpent is contingent upon God’s continued provision of ‘seed’ for mankind.”³

“Seed” is a *Leitwort* or “key-word in the book of Genesis. Approximately one-quarter of all its occurrences in the Hebrew Bible are in Genesis.”⁴ The word “seed” occurs as noun fifty-nine (59) times in Genesis; 118 times in the Pentateuch; and 226 in the whole of the Hebrew Bible.⁵ The concept of זרע “seed” is frequently used in close

¹Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” 263. This is evident in Eve’s gratitude at Seth’s birth (4:25), and in the overcoming of barrenness in the cases of Abraham and Sarah (11:30; 21:1), Isaac and Rebekah (25:21), and Jacob and Rachel (29:31; 30:22-24).

²Bolger, 278.

³Ibid., 279. Bolger continues: “Childbearing is related elsewhere in the Pentateuch to obedience. There are stipulations regarding how a childbearing woman can consecrate herself. . . . The relationship of childbearing to obedience mirrors the Edenic association of pain in childbearing with judgment. That is, as Eve’s ability to bear children was hindered by her transgression, so Israel’s ability to multiply will be put in jeopardy if disobedient” (ibid.).

⁴Alexander, “From Adam to Judah,” 8-9, n. 6.

⁵The word “Seed” is used as a noun as follows: OT= 202 verses; 226 times.

Pentateuch = 94 verses i.e., 46.5 % of OT seed verses; 108 times i.e., 47.8 % of OT times.

OT, Outside Pentateuch = 108 verses i.e., 53.5 % of OT seed verses; 118 times i.e., 52.2 % of OT times.

Genesis = 48 verses i.e., 51.1 % of Pentateuch seed verses; 23.8 % of OT seed verses.

= 59 times i.e., 54.6 % of Pentateuch times; 26.1 % of OT times.

Pentateuch, after Genesis = 46 verses i.e., 48.9 % of Pentateuch seed verses; 21.7 % of OT seed verses.

= 49 times i.e., 45.4% of Pentateuch verses with seed; 21.7 % of OT seed verses.

In the OT, the noun is used in the following number of times: Genesis (59); Exodus (6); Leviticus

link with the תולדות genealogical structure of Genesis “in order to highlight a single, distinctive, family lineage.”¹

תולדות headings and linear genealogies combine with and are complemented by the use of the term “seed” in Genesis. “Taken together these features focus attention on a unique lineage which begins with Adam and concludes with sons of Israel. This family line forms the backbone of the book.”² Moreover, “a thorough investigation reveals that there is hardly a passage in Genesis which does not relate in one way or another to the family line which lies at the heart of the book. This unique family line, therefore, is a crucial aspect of the interpretation of the book of Genesis.”³

The failure to consider Gen 3:15 beyond the immediate context of Gen 3 alone, rather than in the light of the whole book of Genesis, has resulted in missing the significant link that the word זרע “seed” provides throughout the book. The connection between 3:15 and 4:25 is very significant. “It is through the seed of Seth, and not Abel,

(21); Numbers (8); Deuteronomy (14); Joshua (1); Ruth (1); 1 Samuel (6); 2 Samuel (3); 1 Kings (5); 2 Kings (4); 1 Chronicles (2); 2 Chronicles (2); Ezra (2); Nehemiah (3); Esther (5); Job (3); Psalm (18); Proverbs (1); Ecclesiastes (1); Isaiah (26); Jeremiah (21); Ezekiel (6); Daniel (3, one of which is in Aramaic [2:43]); Amos (1); Haggai (1); Zechariah (1); and Malachi (2).

The 59 nouns used in the book of Genesis are as follows: 1:11 (2 times), 12 (2 times), 29 (2 times); 3:15 (2 times); 4:25; 7:3; 8:22; 9:9; 12:7; 13:15, 16 (2 times); 15:3, 5, 13, 18; 16:10; 17:7 (2 times), 9, 10, 12, 19; 19:32, 34; 21:12, 13; 22:17 (2 times), 18; 24:7, 60; 26:3, 4 (3 times), 24; 28:4, 13, 14 (2 times); 32:12 (Heb 13); 35: 12; 38:8, 9 (2 times); 46:6, 7; 47:19, 23, 24; 48:4, 11, 19. Of these uses, only four refer literally to agricultural seeds. This confirms that the characteristic use of “seed” in Genesis is figurative or metaphorical.

¹Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” 260.

²Alexander, “Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis,” 22-23.

³Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” 270.

that the divine pronouncement against the serpent will be fulfilled.”¹ The confusion over whether the “seed” of Gen 3:15 is to be taken in its plural or singular connotation is clarified when one considers Eve’s use of the term in 4:25 to refer to a singular seed. Though the first part of Gen 3:15 clearly has a collective seed in view, a singular seed later emerges in focus.

Moreover, “the fact that one specific line of descent is carefully traced throughout the entire book of Genesis suggests that the seed of 3:15 does not refer to all mankind, but rather to a specific individual or group.”² This is further proof that Gen 3:15 “should not be interpreted as merely a general statement about the hostility which exists between men and snakes.”³

The book of Genesis takes great care to establish the accurate line of descent because of the promised Seed of Gen 3:15. God is actively orchestrating this process. Each descendant must be “of his father’s seed”⁴ and is always “clearly named.”⁵ Beginning from Adam, the promised line of descent is traced through Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, to Noah. From Noah it is passed on to Shem. There are seven more generations before Terah. Abraham inherits the promise from Terah and it passes on through Isaac.

¹Alexander, “From Adam to Judah,” 16.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” 261.

⁵Ibid.

In each generation, up till this point, the chosen seed/child to be the designated promised line of descent was clearly named as one male child.¹ They were clearly marked as the nation who “would be blessed and grow strong and have Messiah among them.”² Jacob’s case was different. “All his sons would be part of the Israelite nation. Each son would represent one tribe. The Abrahamic blessing would, in general, be for all of them, although certain aspects of the blessings would fall only on selected tribes.”³

Thus, a “new genealogical pattern”⁴ evolves with Jacob’s family history. “He does not designate only one of his two wives as the mother of the son who will serve as his heir.”⁵ Both Leah and Rachel were accepted as mothers of Jacob’s children and all their twelve sons were accepted as his heirs.⁶ However, as Genesis comes to an end, Judah was given the blessing that was tantamount to that belonging to the chosen Seed designated to bear the promised line of descent of the Messiah (Gen 49:8-12). Thus, Judah became the ancestor of King David who was the later progenitor of Jesus Christ,

¹Alexander continues: “The lineage is always traced through male descendants, and all are clearly named” (ibid., 262).

²Jan Åge Sigvartsen, “Messiah Son of Joseph: Genesis 49:22-26” (M.A. thesis, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 1998), 74.

³Ibid., 75. For instance, priesthood came through the tribe of Levi, blessing and suffering were typified in Joseph, while kingship came through the line of Judah. The blessings pronounced on Joseph’s line also points to the coming of a glorious Messiah.

⁴Naomi Steinberg, “Gender Roles in the Rebekah Cycle,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 39 (1984): 187, n. 13.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid. I disagree with her conclusion that this meant that “the prior interest in finding a single heir is lost” (p. 187). This is not the case as Jacob’s blessing of his 12 sons and Joseph’s two sons shows in Gen 48-49. He discriminates among them for the purpose of selecting who will bear the Messianic torch of rulership.

the Son of David. There are “close links between the traditions associated with these early ancestors and those associated with David himself.”¹

There exists a “close resemblance between the ‘seed’ and that which has produced it.”² On the whole, there is always a “special relationship between God and individual members of the main family line.”³ Despite their enjoyment of “God’s favour and blessing, their faults and failures are never disguised.”⁴

The divine promises and special blessings given to the main family lineage were mentioned in connection to “seed” and often particularly tagged to the delineated and designated “seed.” This began with the special singular “Seed” of the woman who overcomes the serpent in Gen 3:15. This is further developed as the main family lineage proceeds from Seth onwards (4:25; 5:1-32 and so on). First, God promises the land of Canaan to the “seed” of Abraham (12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:8; 22:17) and repeats it to Isaac (26:3) and Jacob (28:13; 35:12).⁵

¹Alexander, “From Adam to Judah,” 14, 18. He reveals that in this developing family tree, sometimes “the younger son often displaces the older as regards the birthright and paternal blessing” (p. 14). Jacob displaces Esau (25:29-34; 27:1-40); Seth chosen over Cain after Abel was murdered by Cain (4:1-16, 25-5:3); Isaac over Ishmael (17:18-21; 21:1-21); and Judah over his older brothers Reuben, Simeon, and Levi (49:8-12). See *ibid.*, 15.

²Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” 260, 265-266. “This is highlighted at the outset in the comment that plants and trees were to produce seeds ‘according to their various kinds’ (1:11-12)” (*ibid.*, 266). Isaac in 26:1-11 follows Abraham, 12:10-20; 20:1-18. Also compare 26:17-25 with 21:22-34; and 26:26-31 with 21:22-34. Jacob’s deceitfulness is mirrored in his children in 27:1-29; 37:12-35. Cain’s murderous acts were repeated and exceeded by Lamech in 4:19-24.

³*Ibid.*, 263-265. Examples include Enoch (5:24), Noah (6:9), and of course Abraham, Isaac and Jacob whose intimacy with God is revealed in detailed accounts.

⁴*Ibid.* Noah was drunk (9:20-21), Abraham lied (12:10-13), and Jacob was deceptive (27:1-40).

⁵*Ibid.*, 266-267.

Second, God promised that the “seed” of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be numerous as the “dust of the earth” (13:16; 28:14), “stars of the heavens” (15:5; 22:17; 26:4), and the “sand of the seashore” (22:17; 32:12). “The fulfilment of the promise of numerous descendants, like that of the land, clearly lies beyond the book of Genesis.”¹ This shows the connectedness of the rest of the canon in completing what was begun in Genesis. Third, all nations of the earth are to be blessed through Abraham and his “seed” (12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).²

The Seed promise, when individual singular, is always both immediate and future. All these promises lead to the pen-ultimate representative Seed who will fatally bruise the serpent’s head. Each and every particular reference to and prophecy about each of the chosen seed traced from Adam’s Seth are all to be fulfilled in the ultimate representative Seed.

The Royal-Kingship Figure of the Chosen Seed

The kingship and royalty of this family lineage is seen first and foremost in the mandate given by God to Adam and Eve to “subdue” and have “dominion” over all creation that God has “given” to their care (Gen 1:26-30; see also Gen 9:1-2). They were made in the “image of God” (Gen 1:26), thus making them special. “Adam is to be viewed as the first member of this royal line.”³ Other kingship factors have been

¹Ibid., 266.

²Ibid., 266-267.

³T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch* [Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 1995], 17-18, n. 9.

observed at the beginning of Genesis.

Abraham was promised by God saying, “Kings will come from you” (Gen 17:6). Abraham attains the status of a king without royal title in Gen 14. Abimelech, the king of Gerar, enters a treaty with Abraham out of fear in Gen 21:22-24, and subsequently with Isaac also (Gen 26:26-33). The Hittite inhabitants of Hebron called Abraham “a mighty prince” (literally, “a prince of God”) according to Gen 23:6.¹ Later on, Jacob also received the divine promise saying, “Kings will come from your body” (Gen 35:22). “Finally, the brief comment in 36:31, ‘These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned,’ indicates that whoever wrote this either anticipated or already knew of a royal dynasty within Israel.”²

At the end of this family lineage in Genesis, Judah emerges as the “special heir”³ with “superior blessing,”⁴ which definitely alludes to kingship. “Judah’s brothers will now bow down to him (49:8) and he will hold the sceptre and ruler’s staff (49:10).”⁵ While blessing him, “Jacob anticipates that eventually there will come in the royal line of Judah one to whom the nations will submit in obedience (49:10) and whose reign will be

¹Alexander, “From Adam to Judah,” 17.

²Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” 267-268. Alexander reiterates: “There are strong indications that the main line of descent in Genesis is viewed as anticipating a royal lineage” (“Messianic Ideology in Genesis,” 26-27). See Gen 17:6 (Abraham); Gen 17:16 (Sarah); and Gen 35:11 (Jacob). The patriarchs sometimes enjoyed royal status though not directly called kings: Gen 14:1-24; 21:22-34 and 23:6 (Abraham); 26:26-31 (Isaac); 37:8-11 and 41:39-43 (Joseph).

³Alexander, “From Adam to Judah,” 17.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid. See Gen 49:8-12 and also 1 Chr 5:1-2.

marked by posterity and abundance (49:11).”¹

Furthermore, Wifall finds various expressions which bear a close resemblance to Gen 3:15 in the “royal” Psalms:

David is addressed as God’s “anointed” or “messiah” (Ps 89:21, 39; 2 Sam 22:51) whose “Seed” will endure forever under God’s favor (Ps 89:5, 30, 37). As Yahweh has crushed the ancient serpent “Rahab” (Ps 89:11), so now David and his sons will crush their enemies in the dust beneath their feet (Ps 89:24; 2 Sam 22:37-43). . . . In Ps 72:9, the foes of the Davidic king are described as “bowing down before him” and “licking the dust.” In the familiar “messianic” Psalms, God is described as having placed “all things under his feet” (Ps 8:6) and will make “your enemies your footstool” (Ps 110:1).²

The above analysis helps us to make sense of the NT references and allusions to Genesis in the mention of “Seed of Abraham” (Gal 3:16) and “Seed of David” (Rom 1:3; 2 Rom 2:8).³

The Priesthood of the Chosen Seed

Not only was Adam a king, he was also a priest. First, both Adam and Eve were dressed by God in Gen 3:21. This divine act confers a special status on them.⁴ It is rare for God to dress people in the OT. Such act is connected only with the ritual dressing of the priest, either directly by God Himself (Ps 132:16; 2 Chr 6:41) or through Moses (Exod 28:41; 29:8; 40; Lev 8:13). Moreover, the technical term for the act of dressing

¹Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” 269.

²Wifall, “Gen 3:15— A Protoevangelium?” 363.

³Alexander, “From Adam to Judah,” 19.

⁴Robert A. Oden, Jr., “Grace or Status? Yahweh’s Clothing of the First Humans,” Chap. 3 of *The Bible Without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to It* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 92-105. Oden explained the key verbs in Gen 3:21 in the context of the Bible and the ancient Near Eastern literature, confirming that these terms occur in the contexts of status marking.

the priest, the Hiphil form of the verb, is the very same used in Gen 3:21 so that this connection cannot be mistaken.¹

The two verbs used by God in Gen 2:15 to describe the work of Adam and Eve in the garden are עָבַד “to work or serve,” and שָׁמַר “to keep or guard.” These verbs are technical terms also used for the work of the priests or Levites at the sanctuary (Num 3:7-8, etc.).² This qualifies Adam and Eve as the first human priests.

Furthermore, Adam and Eve were clothed with animal skin from the animal used for the first ever burnt offering. In literature biblical cultic practice, it was stipulated that the skin of the animal used for the burnt offering should be reserved exclusively for the priest (Lev 7:8). Thus, Adam and Eve qualify to be referred to as the first human priests.³

“In the light of this, the concept of priest-king takes on a special significance. In Genesis we encounter this unusual status in the figure of Melchizedek.”⁴ Such particular status is reminiscent only of Adam and Eve before the Fall. “Later, the Israelites are called by the Lord to be a royal priesthood (Exod. 19:6).”⁵

This point is amplified by the understanding of Eden as a Sanctuary where God met perpetually with Adam and Eve. Various positive identifications such as “God

¹Doukhan, “Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence,” 29-43.

²Davidson, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” 110.

³Doukhan, “Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence,” 29-43.

⁴Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 17.

⁵*Ibid.*, 18, n. 9.

walking,” eastward orientation, Cherubims, precious metals like gold, bdellium, and onyx, the duty of “work” and “taking care,” the river flowing, and the tree of life, the three concentric spheres of space, literary structure, and several verbal parallels make the garden of Eden (Gen 1-3) a “prototype” of the Tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple.¹ Later, direct access to God was limited to once a year by the high priest alone, while Adam, the prototype high priest, saw God daily.

Exegesis of Other Major “Seed” Passages and “Seed” Echoes in Genesis

In order to demonstrate that the book of Genesis was consistent in its understanding of and treatment of the seed passages and seed echoes proceeding from the key text of Gen 3:15, it is important to examine several such verses. It is not my intention to present a detailed exegesis of all the other remaining fifty-eight (58) occurrences of the noun seed in Genesis in this dissertation. The crucial passages are the ones that exhibit the peculiar features of my key text, Gen 3:15. The criteria for their choice include among others, the use of feminine seed, the attachment of the promises of land and prosperity to that of posterity, and the movement from the collective plural to the individual singular. The selected passages exhibit at least one of the above features.

¹See the detailed descriptions in Davidson, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” 108-111. Cf. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 21; Bolger, 205-266; William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament* (Homebush West, New South Wales: Lancer, 1985), 35-76; Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, 12-13; Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston, 1985), 142-145; Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, “Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus,” *AUSS* 24 [1986]: 131-137; and Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism,” 19-25.

Gen 4:1-3, 25

The premier human fulfillment of the mandate to multiply and be fruitful (1:28) and of the promise of seed to the woman (3:15) is in Gen 4:1, which reads:

וְהָאָדָם יָדַע אֶת-חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד
אֶת-קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת-יְהוָה

Some seven words/phrases are of interest in this verse alone, as possible echoes to the idea of “seed” which has been the focal point of the evolving narratives of Genesis. The word יָדַע “know” refers to Adam knowing his wife carnally. This connotes sexual intercourse, the means of procreation as known in those days. This was the way of producing “seed” after one’s kind.¹

Eve חַוָּה, the “mother of the living,” is the progenitress of all the seed of humanity. Such a faith had been expressed in Gen 3:20, prior to the conception or birth of her first seed or child. Its use here, in its first most proper place, definitely recalls the promised Seed of the woman in Gen 3:15 and the multiplying of conception of seed through the woman as promised in 3:16.

The double verbal expressions וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד “conceived and bore” reflect identical verbal roots of the two expressions from Gen 3:16: וְהָרָגְךָ . . . תֵּלְדֶיךָ “conception . . . you will bear . . .” This evidently echoes “seed” of Gen 3:15 which was assured the woman and her kind for as long as life persists. It is worthy of note here in Gen 4:1 that the seed that is born is a single person.

¹BDB (1996), s.v. “יָדַע.” Man is the subject of יָדַע here as in Gen 4:17, 25; 24:16; 38:26; 1 Sam 1:19; Judg 19:25; and 1 Kgs 1:4. Woman is the subject in Gen 19:8; Num 31:17, 18, 35; and Judg 11:39. Man is the subject and object in the sodomy described in Gen 19:5 and Judg 19:22.

The verb used by Eve in describing her activity or part in the coming to being of Cain is greatly debated. The verb **יָבַדְתִּי** is “polysemic.”¹ Different renditions include: “I have gotten” (KJV), “I have acquired” (Old JPS), “I have gained” (New JPSV), and “I have created.”² This verb generally means “to acquire,” “to possess,” but could also mean “to produce” or “to create” (e.g., Gen 4:1; 14:19, 22; Deut 32:6). It could also mean “to fashion, to shape, to give form to something.”³

Wolde comments as follows:

The word definitely refers to creation as the activity of God, and in particular to the coherence between the creation of God and the procreation of woman. The connection between Eve’s giving birth and YHWH is rightly expressed . . . the contribution of woman, Eve, and the contribution of YHWH to the bringing forth of life by human beings. . . . YHWH gives life to Cain, together with the mother Eve.⁴

Sarna speculates that the “usage here is influenced by Adam’s jubilant cry in 2:23 at the creation of woman. Eve now says, in effect: ‘I, woman (*’ish(sh)ah*), was produced

¹Ilana Pardes, “Beyond Genesis 3: The Politics of Maternal Naming,” in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1997), 178-179.

²Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:198-199. He links this verb with ancient Canaanite tongue to connote “I have formed (created), gave birth to.” From the light of the Ugaritic inscriptions, this signification comes from the Semitic stem **qny-qmw**, meaning “form, create, bear, beget.” He related this usage to Deut 32:6; Gen 14:19, 22; Pss 115:15; 139:13; Prov 8:22. See *ibid.*, 199-201. Following this archaic usage of the root meaning of the verb, Cassuto postulates that “the first woman, in her joy at giving birth to her first son, boasts of her generative power, which approximates in her estimation to the Divine creative power. The Lord formed the first *man* (ii 7), and I have formed the second *man*” (*ibid.*, 200). Literally, “I have created a man with the Lord” i.e., “I stand together (equally) with Him in the rank of creators” (*ibid.*).

³See *ibid.*, 198-200; and Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 395.

⁴Ellen van Wolde, *Words Become Worlds: Semantic Studies of Genesis 1-11, Biblical Interpretations 6* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 50.

for man (*'ish*); now I, woman, have in turn produced a man.”¹

Eve calls Cain a “man” (Gen 4:1) instead of a “son.” The newly born is called **אִישׁ** “a man.” This word for a newborn boy is “odd.”² The word “never otherwise refers to a newborn babe.”³ Eve must have had something greater in mind about her newly born child, Cain, as though he would be the man who will crush the head of the serpent. For this reason she does not simply call him a man, but “the man of the Lord.”⁴

Luther further points out that when **אִישׁ** is “used alone and without the accompanying word for woman, does not simply designate a male, . . . but an ideal and outstanding man.”⁵ Eve’s exclamation could thus be construed as: “I have borne a son, who will develop into a real man, yes, he is *the* Man, God Himself, who will do it, crush the serpent, as God assured us.”⁶

The whole phrase **אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה** “I have created/acquired/gotten/ a man (a male child) from (?) the Lord” is very problematic. The prepositional phrase **אֶת־יְהוָה** “with (help of) the Lord” is the most perplexing part of Gen 4:1. “God, of course, is always present in procreation—opening wombs, giving seed. . . . But in Gen 4:1 he is scandalously treated as a partner, not quite as the hub around whom everything

¹Ibid.

²Pardes, 178-179.

³Sarna mentions in n. 2: “Job 3:3 and 1 Sam 1:11 are not really analogous” (*Genesis*, 32).

⁴Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*, 237, 241-243. Cassuto accepts “a husband” as another possibility of the interpretation of the word **אִישׁ** (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:199).

⁵Luther, “Treatise on the Last Words of David,” 319-321.

⁶Ibid.

turns.”¹

Various renditions include: “I have gotten a man from the Lord” (KJV); “I have acquired a man with the help of God” (Old JPS); “I have gained a male child with the help of the Lord” (New JPSV); “I have created a man [equally/together] with the Lord”²; and “I have the Man, the Lord.”³ This takes the preposition מִן as the direct object marker. Thus “the Lord” is the co-object of the verb, and explains “a man,” both words being in apposition to each other.⁴

¹Pardes confirms: “He is often an implied addressee in naming-speeches, as is evident in Genesis 29-30” (178-179).

²Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:198-199. Sarna supports: “The sign of the accusative often has the sense of ‘together with’ The role of God in human procreation is frequently acknowledged in the Bible. As Niddah 31a expresses it, ‘There are three copartners in the production of a human being: God, father, and mother’” (*Genesis*, 32). Cf. Gen 17:16; 1 Sam 1:11, 20. Also, Wolde agrees that the particle מִן in Gen 4:1 “indicates the sociative, to be translated as ‘together with’” (*Words Become Worlds*, 50).

³Luther, “Treatise on the Last Words of David,” 315-319. See also NASB, margin, which also recognizes the strong possibility of this construction.

⁴Westerman offers various suggestions on the way to take the particle *et* (*Genesis 1-11*, 291 passim). Luther takes it as the sign of the accusative as mentioned above. Johann Müller argued extensively that it could not mean “with” in Gen 4:1 because it was used with an active verb, and always marks the accusative when it stands between two nouns, and since it marks the accusative eight other times in the context; not to mention the fact that *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* took it as accusative. Additionally, “with the help of” would be expressed with the preposition בְּ . See Gallus, *Alllutheranischen Schriftauslegung*, 2:135-136.

Allan Harman observes: “The particle *’et* is often employed to mark the accusative but only to a limited extent. . . . Its use is further limited in that it is rarely employed in poetry. . . . The presence of *’et*—in Gen 4:1 is a crux. It can be taken as marking the object, so that Eve expresses a confidence that the child she has borne is indeed the Lord, so fulfilling the promise of Gen 3:15. However, most translations and exegetes assume that the word is a preposition connected with the Akkadian preposition *itti*, meaning ‘from.’ Hence, many English translations accept this derivation and paraphrase ‘from’ to mean ‘with the help of’” (“Particles,” *NIDOTTE*, 4:1033). See also Joshua Blau, “Zum angeblichen Gebrauch von מִן vor dem Nominativ,” *VT* 4 (1954): 7-19; John MacDonald, “The Particle מִן in Classical Hebrew: Some New Data on Its Use with the Nominative,” *VT* 14 (1964): 264-275; Paul P. Saydon, “Meanings and Uses of the Particle מִן ,” *VT* 14 (1964): 192-210.

Other versions have “Through God” (LXX, Vulgate); “From before the Lord” (Targum Onkelos); “I have gotten for a husband THE ANGEL OF THE LORD (that is, according to the haggadic view, Samma’el – Targum Pseudo-Jonathan); and “I have gotten a man UNTO THE LORD”(Peshitta); and “Unto the Lord,” that is, “for the service of the Lord” (Nahmanides).¹

Kaiser supports Luther’s appositional translation of the preposition **מִן**.² I believe that the appositional translation which utilizing **מִן** as the direct object marker fits best with the context of this passage, in the light of the programmatic promise of the special “Seed” of the woman in Gen 3:15. The most probable translation of Gen 4:1 is “I have got a Man, the Lord.”³

This appositional transition means that “Eve understood that the promised male descendant of human descent would be, in some way, divine, ‘the Lord.’ If so, then

¹Cassuto referred to some erroneous textual emendations which some scholars have suggested: **מִן־אֱלֹהִים** “from (with) the Lord” or **אֶת־יְהוָה** “sign of the Lord” or **אֶת־אֱלֹהִים** “I yearn for” (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:199). “Others delete the phrase entirely as a gloss written in the margin, which was afterwards interpolated by mistake in the wrong place; others think that it is no longer possible to determine the original version and leave the nature of the correction unresolved” (ibid.). Cf. Gunkel, *Genesis*, in the third edition; his first and second editions translate this expression as “I yearn for.”

²Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 37. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) also uses a similar appositional translation for Gen 4:1.

³The support for this appositional translation is found in Gen 26:34:

וַיְהִי עֵשָׂו בֶן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה
 וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה
 אֶת־יְהוּדִית בַּת־בְּאֵרִי הַחִתִּי
 וְאֶת־בְּשֵׁמֶת בַּת־אֵילָן הַחִתִּי:

In this verse, **אִשָּׁה** is a singular feminine noun translated as “a wife” rather than “the wife.” It is in apposition with the proper name **יְהוּדִית** “Judith” which is definite. Each of the next two expressions are also in apposition to **אִשָּׁה**. Gen 26:34b-c is translated as “When he took a wife, Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite.” The use of **מִן** here is similar to Gen 4:1.

Eve's instincts about the coming Messiah were correct, but her timing was way off!"¹
 Though Eve was somehow mistaken, time-wise, this enigmatic phrase, "records her longings and perhaps hints at the clear understanding she had of Genesis 3:15."²

At the birth of Cain, Eve seemed to have believed that, being "the first man born on earth he would be the foremost, and she assumed that he was to be the Seed of the woman and that she was to be that woman, or mother."³ Hence, her exclamation: "I have gotten the Man, the Lord" (Gen 4:1). Evidently, Gen 4:1 is the first "biblical commentary" on Gen 3:15! Eve understood the Messianic significance of God's promise of the special divine-human "Seed of the woman" coming to crush the head of Satan.

The divine name used in Gen 4:1 is YHWH, even though some scholars have charged that that name was never known prior to vs. 26. Hence, some ancient versions read "Elohim" instead of YHWH. Cassuto denies this because the "numerical symmetry of the Divine names occurring in this chapter confirms the traditional text."⁴ Moreover, Eve's feeling of the personal nearness of the "Divine Presence to herself"⁵ and "her

¹Kaiser, *Messiah in the Old Testament*, 42. Gunkel referred to older exegesis which "interpreted this passage as though Eve, in her first experience of maternal happiness, believed that she already had the promised redeemer concerning whose dual natures she had pronounced the correct doctrine (he is אֱלֹהִים and אָדָם at the same time)" (*Genesis*, 3rd ed., 42). William John Hinke reports that Zwingli referred to Gen 3:15 as a promise of salvation. He interpreted Gen 4:1 and Gen 5:28-9 as evidence of faith in that promise, and the erroneous expectation of its imminent fulfillment (*Zwingli: On Providence and Other Essays* [Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1983; originally 1526], 17-8).

²Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 79.

³Luther, "Treatise on the Last Words of David," 315-319.

⁴Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:202.

⁵Ibid.

partnership with the Lord (Yahweh)”¹ in this procreation makes the preferred choice of the divine name to be YHWH.²

Another verse of great importance to the “seed” idea is Gen 4:25.

וַיֵּדַע אָדָם עוֹד אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ
וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שֵׁת
כִּי שָׁת־לִי אֱלֹהִים זָרַע אַחֵר
תַּחַת הַבַּל כִּי הָרְגוּ קַיִן

There are strong terminological links between Gen 4:1 and Gen 4:25. First of all, וַיֵּדַע אָדָם עוֹד אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ “and Adam knew his wife again” (Gen 4:25) is intended to remind the reader of the similar occurrence in Gen 4:1: וַהֲאָדָם יָדַע אֶת־חַוָּה אִשְׁתּוֹ “and Adam knew his wife, Eve.”

The expression בֶּן וַתֵּלֶד “bring forth a son” (Gen 4:25) is another concrete link with the seed theme in Gen 3. The woman was designated as the bearer of children זָרַע in Gen 3:15. In addition, the verb יָלַד is used with Eve as the subject in both Gen 3:16 and 4:25.

Furthermore, the strong linkage between Gen 3:15 and Gen 4:25 is established in that the verb אָשִׁית “I will put” (Gen 3:15) reappears twice in Gen 4:25 in the name שֵׁת “Seth” and in the verb, from which the name is derived, שָׁת “appointed.” Both passages associate this common root שִׁית to the important word זָרַע “seed.”

The fact that the word עוֹד “again” is used in this verse has been a matter of

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

discussion. Some scholars delete the explicit expressions and phrases which link this paragraph with the preceding narratives. The words “again” and “another,” along with the phrase “instead of Abel, for Cain slew him” are thus deleted as “additions made by the last redactor.”¹ Cassuto opposes this first because he considers it “a golden rule of the torah that the conclusion of a narrative should reflect the opening, and therefore it was to be expected that our passage should contain something corresponding to the birth of Cain and Abel,”² which began the story of Gen 4.

The name Seth שֵׁט may signify “foundation” (see Isa 19:10; Ps 11:3). “God has appointed”: The verb שָׁט simply means “to appoint, give” and possibly “set foundation.”³ Hence, Seth can be understood to mean that “this son was to be the foundation of new life for the family and for humanity.”⁴

Several other positions are taken by scholars on the root meaning of the name

¹Ibid., 190.

²Ibid., 191. “Furthermore, another rule requires that the stories should have *happy endings*; it was fitting, therefore, that we should be told how Adam and Eve found solace after losing their first two sons in one day, and how they saw . . . the realization of the Divine promise concerning procreation” (ibid.).

Albertus Frederik J. Klijn notes: “In the LXX the word ‘again’ is omitted in 4,25, which seems to imply that Adam had no intercourse with Eve before he begot Seth. This seems, however, to be questionable since nothing was changed in the text of 4,1, which speaks about Adam begetting Cain” (*Seth in Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Literature* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977], 4). Philo *De Cherub* 53 also omits the word “again.”

³Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:245. See 1 Sam 2:8.

⁴Ibid. Ps. Jonathan represents that Seth and his children are Adam’s only legitimate descendants. See Bowker, 132.

Seth.¹ Among these positions, there is the meaning which comes from the related verb **שׂוּת** “to appoint,” both of which have an identical root. This echoes the putting of “enmity” in Gen 3:15. The God who divinely appointed the enmity between the Serpent and the Woman also divinely appointed the Seed to carry the enmity to a decisive victory for humanity.

In the phrase **שָׂתִילִי אֱלֹהִים זָרַע אֲחֵר תַּחַת** “God appointed for me another seed in place of,” the expression “another seed” conveys the “key idea” of vs. 25. This clearly indicates that Seth “serves as a substitute or replacement for the line which Abel might have engendered had he lived.”² This is one of the most powerful evidences of the idea of substitution. Moreover, the Sethite line is intended to “contrast with the

¹Some of these views on the meaning of “Seth” include:

1. In later synagogal literature, according to Klijn, because the name Seth was derived from the verb **שׂוּת**, “it was assumed that the name was chosen because it was on Seth that ‘was founded the world’” (33). The name later became known as “foundation” (ibid.). Cf. *Numbers Rabbah* II, XIV 12, p. 618; and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:149.

2. A very late Jewish explanation traced the name to **שְׂתִיל**, “plant,” “offshoot,” or “branch.” Klijn explains that, initially, this pointed to the fact that “a new beginning was ‘planted’ with Seth” (*Seth*, 34). Second, a connection might have been made with “the idea that Seth possessed a branch or rod which was taken from paradise by Adam” (ibid.). “In the Syriac Book of the Bee, this branch is said to be a branch of the tree of knowledge. The idea of a branch taken from the trees in paradise and given to Seth is found especially in Armenian texts” (ibid.). See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5:148.

3. Klijn mentions how Philo linked the name with the root verb **שָׂתַת**, translated as **πιστομοῦς** (34). Philo portrays the name “Seth” to mean both “he who gives to drink” and “the one who is given to drink” (ibid.). On a deeper level, “Seth was thought to drink from ‘the streaming fluid of wisdom,’ which had the effect of fertilizing” (ibid.). See Philo *De Post Caini* 10, 124, 125 and his *Questions* I 78, p. 49.

4. Other names for Seth found in the *Onomastica* included “foundation,” “cup,” “plant,” “seed,” and “resurrection” (Klijn, 35). See Jerome, *Lib. Interpret. Hebraic. Nom.*, ed. P. de Lagarde, 10, 12-13; 20, 17; 65, 28-30. Klijn highlights that the LXX’s use of the words **ἐξανέστησεν γὰρ μοι** in Gen 4:25 made many Christian authors to read into those words the idea of “resurrection,” linking it with the resurrection of Christ (34-35). Klijn had categorically said: “In Seth’s name the word resurrection (**ἀνάστασις**) seemed to be present” (ibid., 5).

²Hess, 132.

line of Cain.”¹

The thematic linkages of Gen 2-3 with Gen 4 in relation to the subject of the “seed” are as follows:

1. Intimacy and Alienation.

The intimate relationships between man and woman, and both of them with God and with nature, broke down in Gen 3. Likewise in Gen 4, Cain’s intimate relationship with Abel, his brother, deteriorates so completely that he kills Abel.² The climax of Adam and Eve’s alienation, which was Adam’s response in Gen 3:12, parallels the climax of Cain and Abel’s alienation which was Cain’s heartless disclaimer in Gen 4:9.³ Consequently, Cain hides from the face of God.

Cain who was the first “tiller of the ground” was now totally alienated or driven away from the ground, which will no longer yield its strength to him. The ground which opened its mouth untimely to receive Abel’s blood that was shed by Cain (4:11) could no

¹Ibid. Hess continues: “Seth becomes a replacement for Abel. On the other hand, his line, . . . provides a greater thematic focus in comparison with that of Cain. . . . The culmination of the line in Noah, the divinely favored one, suggests we may find here the ‘placing’ or setting forth of a line which contrasts with Genesis 4:17-24” (ibid.). Hess elaborates: “The עוֹד ‘again’ at the beginning of the verse also serves to emphasize the replacement for Abel which this text describes. Abel (not Cain) is the last son born to Adam and Eve before the birth of Seth” (ibid., n. 317).

Cassuto supports: “Seth, who continues the line of promise, was indeed a gift of the God of promise. But the fact that Eve here calls God אֱלֹהֵי אֵל, shows that the idea preponderant in her consciousness was that of the creative power, which had renewed the hope that had blossomed in Abel and been destroyed by Cain: Abel had died childless, but in Seth the line of promise, from which Cain had wilfully broken off, is actually continued” (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:202).

²Hauser emphasizes how the writer very well underscored the violent and heinous nature of Cain’s act by stressing that Abel was Cain’s brother, not a foe, stranger, or friend, but his own flesh and blood. In vss. 1-16, “brother” is used seven times (Hauser, 300).

³Ibid., 301.

longer return its strength to this murderer (4:12). Cain's deed was associated with the ground (vss. 10-12).

The writer deliberately reminds the reader of the previous pattern of alienation in Gen 2-3, "thereby showing that the alienation of Cain from his brother is a continuation and consequence of what has gone before. . . . Just as in Gen 2-3, the effect of alienation is not limited but spreads rapidly and unavoidably."¹

2. Temptation and the Fall.

Cain was disobedient in bringing a fruit sacrifice instead of a bloody sacrifice brought by Abel, his brother.² This is reminiscent of the "fruit" that symbolizes both the temptation and sin committed by Adam and Eve.³

Before Cain's sin of disobedience was aggravated towards murder, God graciously forewarned and counseled him to watch his way. "Sin-offering lies down at the door" (Gen 4:6-7).⁴ Cain's unbridled wrath expressed his inability to deal with God's warning and eventually led to the act of murder (Gen 4:8). Adam and Eve also committed the offense against God (Gen 3:6) despite the warning not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17; 3:3).

¹Ibid., 301-302.

²Hauser observes that "the text offers no explicit reason why God looked with favor on the offering of Abel but did not look with favor on the offering of Cain. This is because the writer is not concerned with Yahweh's action but rather with Cain's response, as vv 5-6 clearly show" (ibid., 300). Cain was unable to deal with God's rebuff.

³Ibid.

⁴For an explanation of Gen 4:7, see Joaquim Azevedo, "At the Door of Paradise: A Contextual Interpretation of Gen 4:7," *BN* 100 (1999): 45-59.

The word for “sin” or “punishment for sin” was specifically used to describe Cain’s action by God Himself (Gen 4:7). The death and the curse are realities of the fall of humanity into a sinful state (Gen 4:8, 11). This clearly explains that “sin” actually began in the garden of Eden contrary to what some critics claim.¹

3. Covenant.

The ordinances of marriage and labor, and supposedly that of the Sabbath, which were established along with God’s covenant with humanity all continue in this chapter.² The blessings of procreation last as the primal couple begin to be “fruitful and multiply” (Gen 4:1-2, 17-26). The sacrifices and offerings unto God are part of man’s part in the covenant relationship.

4. God’s Grace, Forgiveness, and Blessings.

God fulfilled His promise of blessings to Adam and Eve by giving them children, blessing their animals and farm produce. The acceptance of man’s offering is also God’s favor upon His children. God graciously came down to warn Cain in his temptation.

God proves Himself as the defender of the weak and oppressed by speaking on

¹These scholars argue that the absence of the words “sin,” “guilt,” “punishment,” “shame,” “disobedience,” or “transgression” in Gen 1-3 means that these chapters have nothing to do with the origin of sin. The Eden Fall is called a biological metaphor by Carl Sagan, *The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence* (New York: Random, 1977), 95-96. Gen 2-3 is called a story of the liberation of mankind from the cage of their creator by Sam Dragga, “Genesis 2-3: A Story of Liberation,” *JSOT* 55 (1992): 3. The story portrays an “awakening” and “freedom” necessary for man’s full development according to John Baker, “The Myth of Man’s ‘Fall’—A Reappraisal,” *The Expository Times* 92 (1981): 235-237. It is seen as a political allegory in Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 35-37.

²See Robertson, 67-87. Cf. Roy Gane, Syllabus for GSEM 538: Covenant-Law-Sabbath, Andrews University Theological Seminary, 1997.

behalf of the slain brother. God confronted Cain with his sin, giving him a last chance to confess and repent. Even after God pronounced His judgment upon Cain, He still gave him a certain divine mark of protection. No one was to kill Cain and anyone who would take vengeance on him was threatened by God with sevenfold vengeance on himself (Gen 4:15). Cain and his descendants build cities, a civilization, and technological, agricultural, and cultural innovations (Gen 4:17, 20-22).¹

5. The Gospel of Salvation and Redemption.

The understanding and expectations generated by the gospel promise in Gen 3:15 in the mind of Adam and Eve become evident in their expression “I have gotten the Man, the Lord” (Gen 4:1).² This shows that they were anxiously expecting the coming of the promised “representative-redeemer Seed” of Gen 3:15.

More specifically, they must have felt that Abel was the special Savior Seed. When another was born in place of Abel who was murdered by his brother, they named him “Seth.” Seth means the “appointed seed”³ and they referred to him as “another seed” (Gen 4:25). They most likely understood the promise of Gen 3:15 as the gospel of

¹Hauser explains: “Just as Yahweh tolerates Adam and Eve, allowing them to continue living rather than destroying them immediately as a punishment for their offense, so Yahweh tolerates Cain. Not that Cain goes unpunished: His punishment is severe. . . . Yahweh’s placing the mark on Cain symbolizes his realization that the murder of Abel will not be unique but will be only the first instance of a deed all too common to fallen man. Just as Yahweh provides clothes for Adam and Eve, thereby helping them cover up and thus cope with the alienation they have caused, so he provides a mark for Cain to help him survive the violence he himself has unleashed” (Hauser, 303-304).

²This is how KJV puts it. The Old JPS: “I have acquired a man with the help of the Lord.” The New JPSV: I have gained a male child with the help of the Lord.” The various reactions and suggestions will be discussed below in chapter 2.

³See discussion in Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:245.

salvation and redemption.

6. God's Character of Love, Righteousness, and Holiness.

God's character of love shines through this whole story. God's law and plan could not be changed to suit man's thwarted actions and disobedience. God's righteousness and holiness could not permit Him to shun man's sin and disobedience without dealing with it. His holiness cannot be compromised. His divine plan of saving man could not be killed. He found another channel through Seth.

7. Creation.

The birth of children through the first human couple is part of the sharing of creative power with humanity by the Creator God. Hence, Gen 3:15-16 and 4:1-2, 17-18, 20-22, 25-26 all show man participating with God in creation and procreation. The creation mandate of Gen 1:28 was fulfilled in the woman's seed of Gen 3:15 and in the birth of children in Gen 4.

The separation of the two seeds alludes to the separation theme of Gen 1 where light was distinguished from darkness, and the dry land from the seas. Therefore, both Gen 3:15 and Gen 4 show implications of creation.

8. Cosmic Moral Conflict.

The first display of the enmity between the "seed of the serpent" and the "seed of the woman" predicted in Gen 3:15 was vividly demonstrated in the lives of Cain and Abel. God "set" this enmity. Abel and Seth are both identified as the seed of the woman in Gen 4:25. Cain is the seed of the serpent because he followed Satan's step in lying,

killing, and being cursed.¹

The character and law of God are also central to this conflict as seen in Gen 2-3. The people of God are set at war with the followers of Satan. The battle of life rages on: Truth versus lie, and light versus darkness.

9. Eschatology.

The figurative implication of Abel's blood crying unto God from the ground (Gen 4:10) could foreshadow the hope of future resurrection and vindication of Abel and all the martyred. Moreover, we see that Abel, the righteous seed, was cut off abruptly and in an untimely way, while Cain, the wicked, and his descendants seem to prosper on earth. This does not follow the expectation engendered by the promised victory of the woman's seed over the seed of the serpent. This suggests the eschatological nature of the promised victory of God's people.

The ultimate and later victory is the best and final one. The battle still rages on. The final resurrection of the just and utter destruction of the wicked is envisioned. The full fulfillment of the enmity between seeds is eschatological.²

¹Ronning, 143-144. "Identifying the enmity which occurs in Genesis 4 as the enmity predicted in Gen 3:15 is the key to identifying the two seeds which are at enmity. . . . The two seeds therefore are not snakes and humans, but two kinds of humans. . . . One kind is approved by God, righteous; the other disapproved, wicked" (p. 134). This eliminates the proposition that Gen 3:15 only has a naturalistic or only an individualistic interpretation. Its interpretation is surely spiritual and symbolic, not allegorical. It has both collective and individual application of the "seed." Rosenbaum insists that "by robbing Adam and Eve of immortality the snake and its descendants are the murderers of our ancestors, and, by extension, of ourselves as well. Any human death, whatever the apparent cause, is another crime to be laid at the den of the serpent" ("Israelite Homicide Law and the Term 'Enmity' in Genesis 3:15," 150).

²More discussion can be found in Ronning, 156-157.

Gen 12:7

God both appeared and spoke the words of Gen 3:15 which turned out to be a promise of deliverance for Adam and Eve and their descendants, but a word of punishment and future annihilation of Satan and his followers. When God renewed this promise to Abraham through his call in Gen 12:1-3, it was by audition alone, “Yahweh said to Abraham.”

However, in Gen 12:7, “the mode of revelation shifts to a theophany, *Yahweh appeared to Abram*. The shift is not incidental.”¹ This shows that both incidences are connected.² This mode of appearance reminds one of when God appeared in the garden of Eden to make the pronouncements of which Gen 3:15 was central. The Lord’s appearance to Abraham in 12:7 is the first recorded appearance of the Lord to a patriarch (cf. 17:1; 18:1; 26:2, 24; 35:9; 48:3), “which in turn foreshadows his appearances at Sinai and in the tabernacle (cf. Exod 3:2, 16; 16:10; Lev 9:4).”³

¹Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 377. Dale Patrick explains: “A theophany is a way of augmenting an audition to heighten its dramatic force, and reinforce the claim that a divine intervention has occurred” (*The Rendering of God in the Old Testament, Overtures of Biblical Theology* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981], 92).

²Gen 12:1-9 has been charged with disunity for several reasons by scholars. Some scholars relegate Gen 12:4b-5 as intrusive or extraneous to Gen 12:1-9 (Von Rad, *Genesis*, 156; and Speiser, *Genesis*, 88). Gunkel takes vs. 9 as the work of a redactor and allots it to the following episode (*Genesis*, 168-9). von Rad places vss. 1-3 as the conclusion of the primaeval history (*Genesis*, 151-156). However, a “coherent integral relationship” has been demonstrated by means of rhetorical criticism by Isaac Kikawada (“The Unity of Genesis 12:1-9,” in *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, ed. Avigdor Shinan [Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1977], 1:229-235). Claus Westermann joins the verse together: “The two episodes in vss. 7, 8c indicate that Abraham’s relationship with God is intimately linked with this journey and cannot be detached from it” (*Genesis 12-36: A Commentary*, trans. John Scullion [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985], 145).

³Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 279.

God made the promise of land to Abram's *descendants*, rather than to Abram himself. This is the first "explicit promise of land and descendants, promises certainly implied in 12:1-2, but not spelled out."¹ "This promise clearly eliminates Lot as the presumptive heir. The heir will be Abram's own seed. . . . Promise of land to Abram's descendants (12:7) precedes the promise of land to Abram himself (13:17)."²

"The promise that Yahweh made to Abraham in 12:7 is one of the most frequently repeated formulas in the Old Testament."³ The phrases used in 12:7 and 24:7 are identical, and are the "simplest and the only phrase to be repeated exactly."⁴

Conclusively, Gen 12:7 adds more information to the scanty information of the "Seed" promised to humanity in Gen 3:15. This seed will possess land which also connotes prosperity and authority. More pieces of the puzzle are beginning to fit into the full description of the Promised Seed and His people.

Gen 15:13

This passage reiterates the divine promise of land for Abraham's descendants.

¹Ibid.

²Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 377. He observes in n. 23, that the land promises given in Genesis "takes four forms: (1) 'I will give it to your seed; (12:7; 15:8; 24:7); (2) 'I will give it to you' (13:7); (3) 'to you I will give it and to your seed' (13:15); (4) 'I will give it to you and to your seed' (26:3)" (ibid.). Meanwhile, Rolf Rendtorff gives these phrases a historical sequence, whereby Abram first receives the promise before his "seed" was added, then his "seed" replaced him ("The 'Yahwist' as Theologian? The Dilemma of Pentateuchal Criticism," *JSOT* 3 [1977]: 8). Cf. S. Loewenstamm, "The Divine Grants of Land to the Patriarchs," *JAOS* 91 (1971): 509-510.

³David Lloyd Mattson, "The Blessing Themes in the Abraham Story and Their Implications for the Date and Purpose of the Story" (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Michigan, 1983), 202.

⁴Ibid., 203.

Vss. 13-16 prophesy their Egyptian bondage and their subsequent exodus leading to their possession of the promised land. This builds on similar promises in Gen 12:1-3, 7.

The connection with Gen 3:15 is not only in terms of the enmity that also involves the suffering here intimated in the hands of the enemies of the collective seed of the woman. These enemies must be understood as belonging to the seed of Satan by reason of moral quality as argued in chapter 1.

Another connection of this text with Gen 3:15 is the movement in the number of the “seed” promised to Abraham from the singular individual to the collective plural. Just like the seed of Adam and Eve began with one chosen child, Seth, and multiplied into many, so will Abraham produce one chosen child, Isaac, who will be the father of the chosen nation of multitudes. This reflects only the second stage in the development of the seed encapsulated in Gen 3:15, to the exclusion of the narrowing from the collective plural seed back to the singular individual Seed.

The movement from the singular seed to the collective plural is seen in the verbs and pronouns used along with the noun זרע in Gen 15:13-16. Vs. 13 is as follows:

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם יְדַע תְּדַע כִּי־גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ
בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וַעֲבָדוּם וְעַנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה:

The prepositional phrase זרעך יהיה גר shows an emphasis on the masculine singular noun object, “stranger” גר which describes “your seed” זרעך. So also, the verb יהיה contains the third-person masculine singular. This proves that the seed promised to Abraham is initially stated as singular individual.

The movement from the singular to the plural collective begins in the second part

of vs. 13. There are two plural masculine pronouns and a masculine plural verb in the expression: **אֲתָם . . . לָהֶם יַעֲבֹדוּם**. It remains plural collective throughout the related unit of vss. 13b-16. Vs. 14 has two plural verbs: **יֵצְאוּ** “they shall serve” **יֵצְאוּ** “they shall come out.” Finally, vs. 16 has one plural verb: **יָשׁוּבוּ** “they shall return.”

It is notable that Gen 15:13 exemplifies both singular and collective “seed” in similar ways with Gen 3:15. This further illuminates our understanding and interpretation of the seed of Gen 3:15.

Gen 16:10

This verse expresses a divine promise of seed in lieu of a divine command for Hagar to return and be submissive to Sarah, her mistress. It is in this way connected to the promise of Gen 12:7 which was a sequel to Abraham’s obedience of the divine command to leave Haran in Gen 12:1-3. As mentioned above, obedience came to be attached to the promise of posterity.

Hagar was pregnant with only one child at this instance. The child came to be called Ishmael. He was the singular individual child referred to as her seed in Gen 16:10. This is supported by the use of a singular third-person masculine Nifal imperfect verb **יִסְפָּר** “he shall not be numbered.” “This promise is very dramatic, for the angel announces to Hagar that she will have many offspring even before she has one child!”¹

This is the second time, following only Gen 3:15, that a woman is promised seed instead of the man. Since Hagar was definitely not a virgin even after impregnation, it

¹Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 452.

confirms my position that a woman possessing seed does not indicate virgin birth in Gen 3:15. See also Gen 4:25, where Eve exclaims that seed had “another seed.” She was definitely not still a virgin when she bore Seth, her third-born son!

“There are many instances in the patriarchal stories where the man is promised a child(ren)/descendants (Abraham in Gen 12:2; 13:13-16; 15:5 17:8; 18:14; 22:17; Isaac in 26:4; Jacob in 28:3, 4).”¹ Women are rarely given this promise by divine revelation as it was for Eve (Gen 3:15) and Hagar (Gen 16:10). “This sets her apart from the matriarchs of Israel. . . . The promise of God guarantees a future beyond the present.”²

Evidently, Gen 16:10 also puts another piece of the puzzle of our understanding of the seed of Gen 3:15 in place. It evidences the only other divine revelation of a feminine seed. It also follows the established convention that singular individual seed generally attracts singular verb inflections.

Gen 22:15-18

The content of the second address of the angel of YHWH in Gen 22:15-18

“seems to be a summary of the blessings promised to Abraham.”³ These verses should

¹Ibid., 453.

²Ibid. However, I strongly disagree with Hamilton’s statement that “Hagar is the only woman in Genesis who is honored with such a revelation” (ibid.). Eve was the first woman to receive such a divine revelation, and that, visibly from Yahweh Himself in the garden of Eden (Gen 3:9-19).

³Mattson, 289. Forfeiting to understand the promises in their immediate or wider context, some scholars suffice in merely attempting to contextualize them within their supposed historical setting. Van Seters considers them as assurances to the Israelite nation in the 6th century exile (*Abraham in History and Tradition*, 310-311). John A. Emerton links them with the confidence generated by Josiah’s reform (“The Origin of the Promises to the Patriarchs in the Older Sources of the Book of Genesis,” *VT* 32 [1982]: 31). Erhard Blum traces them to a Deuteronomic reworking of patriarchal traditions (*Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984], 363-365). von Rad links them to the

be understood as “the earliest and canonically recognized commentary”¹ on the preceding story from vss. 1-14. Vss. 15-18 relate to Abraham’s obedience which is the central theme of vss. 1-19.

Many scholars generally ignore vss. 15-18 in their interpretations of Gen 22. They wrongly reason that since “the climax has been reached and the main issues of the story resolved by 22:14,”² it would not matter to end the story at 22:14. They posit that “simply being rounded off by 22:19, many might not notice the loss of 22:15-18.”³ Many major works on Gen 22 completely omit, briefly gloss over, or argue for vss. 15-18 as being a late secondary editorial addition.⁴ This is quite unfortunate because they miss a

supposed Solomonic enlightenment (“The Beginnings of Historical Writing in Ancient Israel,” 166-204).

¹R. W. L. Moberly, “The Earliest Commentary on the Akedah,” *VT* 38 (1988): 313-314. H. G. Reventlow explicitly recognized Gen 22:15-18 as a commentary, “eine Art kommentar,” but did not fully develop this point (*Opfere deinen Sohn* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1968], 73-74). Fishbane, on a general basis, demonstrates the inner-biblical commentary within the Old Testament (*Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*).

Moberly, however, gives room for other further applications of this multi-functional story beyond the initial commentary the OT itself offers within the passage. See, for example, the Jewish interpretation represented by Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: The Akedah*, trans. from the Hebrew, with an Introduction, by Judah Goldin (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967).

²R. W. L. Moberly, “Christ as the Key to Scripture: Genesis 22 Reconsidered,” in *He Swore an Oath: Biblical Themes from Genesis 12-50*, ed. Richard S. Hess, G. J. Wenham, and P. E. Satterthwaite, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 161.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Westermann, *Genesis 12-36*, 363. See James L. Crenshaw, *A Whirlpool of Torment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984); Dillmann, 2:141; Driver, *Genesis*, 220; Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985); John McKenzie, “The Sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22),” *Scripture* 9 (1957): 79-80; Morgenstern, 152; Noth, 35, n. 132; von Rad, *Genesis*, 242-243; Skinner, 331; Speiser, *Genesis*, 165-166; and Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1963), 18. Robert Davidson notes the distinctiveness of vss. 15-18 and comments: “Why they should be expressed in this particular form is unclear” (*Genesis 12-50* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979], 97). He continues: “These verses are an appendix to

great gem from it.

The source-critical analysis of Gen 22:15-18 is largely responsible for the modern practice of expunging these verses from the rest of the chapter as “a later editorial addition” to the original story comprising of vss. 1-14, 19. Some reasons are usually tendered for detaching vss. 15-18. First, the structure and content of vss. 1-14 showing that the story is complete in vs. 14.¹ Second, the style of vss. 15-18 differs from that of vss. 1-14.² Third, the vocabulary of vss. 15-18 is in some ways distinctive.³

These reasons are fail to recognize for the connections in the whole passage.

the main narrative, somewhat artificially joined to it by claiming that the angel of the LORD spoke to Abraham *a second time* (vs. 15)” (ibid.). Emerton calls vss. 15-18 a “clumsy addition . . . after the climax of what is otherwise a beautifully written story” (18). Also, Gunkel states: “Vss. 15-18 clearly betray itself as a supplement . . . Abraham’s reward was the fact that he could keep Isaac” (*Genesis*, 236).

¹Moberly explains: (1). The overarching concern of the story is God’s test of Abraham (vs. 1) which is completely resolved by his obedience in vs. 12; (2). God’s sovereign right to the first and best of human life, which remains at the background of the story, is met with the mercy of God by which God forfeits this right; (3). The story’s concern of God “seeing” and “providing” (vs. 8) is resolved in vs. 13 (“Commentary on Akedah,” 304-307).

²Ibid., 307-308. “The story is noted for its taut and economic style of telling, heavy with suggestion of background context and meaning which is passed over in silence. By contrast, the style of vss. 15-18 is repetitive and cumulative, with use of synonyms and similes. It is a long address with no reference to any response by Abraham, unlike the short addresses to which Abraham responds in the preceding narrative” (ibid., 308).

³Ibid., 308. “While for the most part it is composed of phrases which are common elsewhere in the patriarchal narratives, it also contains two phrases which are otherwise unparalleled in Genesis but are common in prophetic literature” (ibid.). These phrases are in 22:16a: **וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱבְרָהָם** and **וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה בְּקוֹל אֱבְרָהָם**

Moberly rebuffs: “The criterion of usage of divine names, which has often been appealed to in this context, is problematic. Gen xxii 1-14 does not in general use *elohim*, while vss. 15, 16 both contain *yhwh*. But xxii 1-14 is not in fact consistent, as *yhwh* is used twice in vs. 14, and the angel in vs. 11 is the angel of *yhwh*. . . . The usage of divine names in Gen xxii 1-19 is not therefore of such a nature as to allow source-critical inferences to be drawn” (ibid., n. 26).

In contrast, Cornelius Houk rightly reports after a “Syllable-Word structure”¹ analysis that Gen 22 is a “continuous narrative” from vss. 1-19. “A comparison of 22:1-14/15-18 indicates no difference. The narrative is homogeneous.”² Moberly also rightly rejects as unjustified and “implicitly pejorative” the value judgment many scholars have placed on these verses with such tags as “secondary,” “addition,” “supplement,” and “appendix.”³ He maintains:

These extra verses add an important dimension to the story. The angel renews God’s promise of descendants to Abraham, formulating the promise with unique emphasis and relating it specifically to Abraham’s obedience in a way that is otherwise unprecedented. Hitherto, the promise has been a wholly gratuitous offer by God; now it is given to Abraham because he has been obedient (22:16b, 18b).⁴

More proof for vss. 15-18 being “an integral part of the narration developing from the test”⁵ is found in the structure of the chapter. With Abraham’s obedience being

¹Cornelius B. Houk, “A Syllable-Word Structure Analysis of Genesis 12-23,” in *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth: Essays in Honor of David Noel Freedman in Celebration of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Carol L. Meyers and M. O’Connor, ASOR 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 191-201.

²*Ibid.*, 196. Houk also admits that vss. 20-24 show “a significant difference” from vss. 1-19 (*ibid.*).

³Moberly, “Commentary on Akedah,” 313.

⁴Moberly, “Christ as the Key to Scripture: Genesis 22 Reconsidered,” 160-161. Moberly elaborates: “Although the divine promise in Gen xxii 16-18 uses the language of promise familiar from elsewhere in Genesis, it does more than simply reaffirm the promise. The phrases that are familiar elsewhere are used here in a uniquely emphatic way, and formulae of emphasis which are otherwise unparalleled in Genesis are also used” (“Commentary on Akedah,” 318).

⁵George W. Coats, “Abraham’s Sacrifice of Faith: A Form-Critical Study of Genesis 22,” *Interpretation* 27 (1973): 395. The chiasmic structure of Gen 22:1-19, denoting its coherence, was observed by Yehuda T. Radday, “On the Chiasm in the Biblical Story” (in Hebrew), *Beth Mikra* 20-21 (1964): 66. Radday justified this based on the overlapping echoes of words and sentences. He saw the parallel between vss. 1-2 and 11-19; vss. 3-6 and 9-10; with vss. 7-8 as the center. This was further developed by Jacques Doukhan, using the “synchronic analysis” focusing on the “stylistic features of the text, such as the regularity of movement and repetition of thought,” and subsequently, the “diachronic’

the main focus of the story, the references to this in vss. 1a and 18b form a framework for the story. Moreover, the recurring motif of the “only son” is found in vss. 2, 12, and 16.¹ This is “intended as a poignant way of unifying the story. The same son who was the object of the command was the object of the deliverance and the object of the promise.”² Other supports have been advanced for accepting vss. 15-18 a bonafide part of Gen 22.³

mechanism of its deep structure” (“The Center of the Aqedah: A Study of the Literary Structure of Genesis 22:1-19,” *AUSS* 31 [1993]: 17-28).

Cassuto recognized a basic chiasmic structure for the Abraham cycle 12:1-22:24 (*A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2:294-297). Rendsburg subsequently developed the ten levels of the Abraham cycle as duplicates of one another (*The Redaction of Genesis*, 27-52). Several scholars see at least the obvious connection between Abraham’s call (Gen 12:1-9) and the sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22:1-19). See Davidson, *Genesis 12-50*, 94; Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 5:218; Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora*, 493; and Morgenstern, *The Book of Genesis*, 188. Similarly, Nahum M. Sarna used the term “spiritual odyssey” (*Understanding Genesis*, The Heritage of Biblical Israel [New York: Schocken Books, 1970], 160-161). This idea was fully developed in Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis*, 31-35.

¹Coats, “Abraham’s Sacrifice of Faith: A Form-Critical Study of Genesis 22,” 395.

²Mattson, 291.

³T. Desmond Alexander postulates that the divine oath of vss. 15-18 is God’s reward for Abraham’s obedience intended to ratify the covenant of circumcision promised without ratification in chapter 17. He sees a similarity in this pattern of divine promise and human response in God’s covenant with Noah in Gen 6-9 (“Genesis 22 and the Covenant of Circumcision,” *JSOT* 25 [1983]: 17-21). See also idem, *Abraham in the Negev: A Source-Critical Investigation of Genesis 20:1-22:19* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 1997), 83-9, 109-110.

Van Seters also finds it an integral part of the narrative, without which the story comes to no real consequence. The ultimate goal of Abraham’s test is to reward his obedience with the promise of his children being blessed (*Abraham in History and Tradition* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975], 239).

Wenham posits: “Vss. 15-18 cohere well with the literary structures that undergird the narrative. They complete the palistrophe and constitute the fourth and final panel of dialogues. What is more, they are the last and most emphatic statement of the promises given to Abraham. Without these verses, the last time in the Abraham cycle that God affirms his promise is to Hagar in 21:18 and that concerns Ishmael rather than Isaac. For all these reasons, vss. 15-18 should be regarded as integral and indeed central to his narrative in particular and to the Abraham cycle in general” (*Genesis 16-50*, Word Biblical Commentary, 2 [Dallas, TX: Word, 1994], 111).

However, Moberly rates all the defenses offered by others as insufficient.¹ Also unconvincing are the traditional Jewish interpretations of Gen 22 which were interested in one element of vss. 15-18, that is, merit, without any concern for establishing these verses “as a significant unit in itself” within Gen 22.² His position is that vss. 15-18 serve as an interpretation or commentary on the story which precedes it.³

In vs. 15, it is said that the “Angel of the Lord” spoke to Abraham. Hitherto, it is God who has spoken all the similar promises to the patriarchs. “It may be that this is simply a matter of dramatic necessity.”⁴ Furthermore, vss. 15-18 constitute a divine soliloquy, excluding Abraham’s response, “reminiscent of the divine soliloquies in Gen i-xi, some of which are major theological statements about the purposes of God.”⁵

In vs. 16, reference is made to God swearing an oath to Abraham. Reference is

¹Moberly, “Commentary on Akedah,” 304, 311.

²One such Jewish interpretation is R. J. Daly, “The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac,” *CBQ* 39 (1977): 47. Daly states: “Of the several texts which mention the blessings promised to Abraham and his descendants, this is the *only* one in which these blessings are explicitly presented as a reward of a *particular* virtuous act on the part of Abraham. No great imagination is needed to see how important such a text would be for a theology whose basic soteriological theory centered around the idea of justification by works of obedience to the Law” (ibid.).

³Moberly, “Commentary on Akedah,” 313-314. Moberly defends that Gen 22:15-18 is the “last of the divine promises to Abraham within Gen xii-xxv, and as such makes a fitting conclusion. Indeed xxii 15-18 are the final words of any sort exchanged between God and Abraham in the Abrahamic cycle. . . . Whether or not Gen. xxii 15-18 was deliberately intended to be the final communication between God and Abraham is difficult to judge. But the recognition that it is so cannot but enhance the reader’s appreciation of its significance. . . . It becomes peculiarly appropriate that this earliest, and canonically recognized, commentary should be given a position of climactic significance within the Abraham cycle as a whole” (ibid., 322-323).

⁴Ibid., 314.

⁵Ibid., 314-315. Moberly further discusses the significance of the divine soliloquies of Gen 6:5-8 and 8:21 (*At the Mountain of God* [Sheffield: Sheffield, 1983], 91-93).

made to God swearing an oath three times in Genesis (24:7; 26:3; 50:24), each one referring to the promise of land for Abraham's descendants. "Swearing to give land" is a regular Pentateuchal formula as seen in Exod 13: 5, 11; 33:1; Num 11:12; 14:16, 23; 32:11; Deut 1:8, 35ff. God's swearing an oath in Gen 22:16 is unique, and therefore weighty, because it promises descendants for Abraham rather than land.¹

The idiom, "by myself . . ." is "unique in the Pentateuch, with the exception of Exod xxxii 13 which is a generalized reference back to Gen xxii and other promises in Genesis."² It gives "unusual emphasis"³ and lays "as great emphasis as possible upon the divine saying in question."⁴ Hence, the use of this unique idiom in Gen 22:16, along with the unusual usage of an oath for promise of descendants, must indicate a special emphasis in this text!

The dependability and emphasis of God's seed promise is here underscored with the accumulation of several words and phrases. The phrase "declares the Lord"

נִאֶמַר יְהוָה "occurs three hundred and sixty-four (364) times in the OT, mostly in the

¹Moberly, "Commentary on Akedah," 315. The word *neum*, "declaration, oracle," is used in the poetry of Num 24: 3, 4, 15, 16 (all referring to human oracle); and Ps 110:1. Jacob adds: "The oath summarizes all former promises in the most emphatic form" (*The First Book of the Bible: Genesis*, trans. E. I. and W. Jacob, abridged ed. [New York: Ktav, 1974], 147).

²Moberly, "Commentary on Akedah," 315.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. Appearing sometimes as slightly formulaic, it is found in identical form in Isa 45:23; Jer 22:5; 49:13; and in related form in Jer 51:14; Amos 6:8; 4:2; Pss 89:36 (Eng. 35); and 89:50 (Eng. 49). A strong connection is thus made in Heb 6:13-18. See also Isa 44:26. Wenham accepts that "by myself" gives the oath a "special solemnity and weight" (*Genesis 16-50*, 111).

prophets but only in one other place in the Pentateuch (Num 14:28).¹ This underscores God's dependability.

The verb נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי is a "Perfect with present meaning, for utterances felt to be past as soon as spoken."² More effect is seen in the phrase כִּי יַעַן אֲשֶׁר "(for) because" (Gen 22:16). This "appears to pile up words to introduce the causal clause."³ Gen 22:16 is the only place in the Old Testament where כִּי and יַעַן אֲשֶׁר are used together. By so doing, "the consequences of Abraham's obedience are strongly emphasized."⁴

The entire vs. 17 reads:

כִּי־בָרַךְ אֶבְרָהָם וְהִרְבָּה אַרְבֵּה
אֶת־זַרְעוֹ כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְכַחֹל אֲשֶׁר עַל־שֹׁפֵת הַיָּם
וַיִּרֶשׁ זָרְעוֹ אֶת שַׁעַר אֹיְבָיו:

"For I will surely bless you and greatly multiply your seed abundantly, like the stars for the heavens and the sand on the seashore. And your seed will possess the gate of his enemies."

¹Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 111.

²*Ibid.*, 99. See Joüon and Muraoka, 2:362, 112f passim.

³Mattson, "290. Ewald observes that this כִּי is introduced after actual adjurations (*Syntax of the Hebrew Language*, 206). See also Gen 22:17; 1 Sam 20:3; 1 Kgs 1:29-30; 2:23-24; 2 Kgs 3:14. Wenham mentions that יַעַן אֲשֶׁר occurs only here in Genesis (*Genesis 16-50*, 111). Wenham calls יַעַן אֲשֶׁר "an emphatic causal conjunction. Causal clause as here usually precedes main clause" (*Genesis 16-50*, 99).

See Joüon and Muraoka, 2:638-640, 170f-n. Wenham also points out here that at the end of this verse, Samaritan Pentateuch, LXX, and Syriac text add "from/because of me" as a way of assimilating to vs. 12.

⁴Mattson, 290.

The preposition ׀ here “introduces direct speech (the substance of the divine oath) with a secondary idea as particle of asseveration.”¹ The divine words have already been introduced with ׀ in vs. 16. “So although the usage in vs. 17a could be simply resumptive with no further significance, it is perhaps more likely that the *kī* has asseverative force, ‘surely,’ ‘indeed,’ to add extra emphasis to what follows.”² It is a common ׀ that governs the two clauses in this conjunctive sentence.³

The emphatic verbal expression, בִּרְךָ אֶבְרָכְךָ, comprises the infinite absolute Piel, plus imperfect Piel of the same verb plus the second-person masculine singular suffix. It is translated as “I will assuredly bless you.” Divine promises of blessing are spoken or referred to in Gen12:2; 17:16, 20; 24:1, 35; 25:11; 26:3, 12, 24; 28:3; 32:30; 35:9; and 48:3, but nowhere in Genesis, other than 22:17, is this emphatic verbal form used. Elsewhere in Genesis, the promise of blessing is only strengthened with the addition of וְאָמַר when such emphasis is intended.⁴

Besides, the emphatic form וְהִרְבֵּה אֶרְבֶּה “I will greatly multiply” (Hiphil absolute + Hiphil imperfect first-person singular) is unusual in Genesis. It is used only twice in Gen 16:10 (Hagar’s promised descendants) and Gen 22:17 (only instance used for the promised seed of Abraham, through Isaac). This usage also underscores the

¹Snaith, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of Genesis XXII-XXV & XXVII*, 24. See Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax*, 165; and GKC §157b.

²Moberly, “Commentary on Akedah,” 316.

³Andersen, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 101.

⁴Moberly, “Commentary on Akedah,” 316. Such usage is found outside Genesis in Num 23:11, 25 and 24:10 and Josh 24:10 (All about Balaam’s blessing of Israel); Deut 15:4 (ref. to God’s promised blessings); 1 Chr 4:10 (Jabez’s request); Ps 132:15 (ref. to David and Zion).

special emphasis intended in Gen 22:15-18.¹

Two similes are used in reference to the unimaginable number of Abraham's promised descendants: כְּכּוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וּכְחֹל אֲשֶׁר עַל-שְׂפַת הַיָּם "like the stars of heaven and like the sand on the seashore." This combination of these two similes is unique, occurring only once in Genesis. This "further highlights the unusually emphatic nature of the promise"² in Gen 22:17.

The phrase "like the stars of heaven" is "always used in connection with the growth of the people of Israel." Gen 22:17; 26:4 and Exod 32:13 consider the blessing of the growth of the people as part of an oath.³ On the other hand, the phrase "like the sand on the seashore" has a "wider usage" in the OT, though found only twice in the patriarchal stories, Gen 22:17 and 32:13.⁴ Both phrases illuminate the collective use of the word "seed" to refer to multitude.

In the last part of vs. 17, a new element is added to this promise which "is not in

¹Ibid., 316-317. If a strengthening of the multiplication promise is intended in Genesis, it is usually be an addition of מְאֹד (26:4; 28:3; 49:4) or מְאֹד מְאֹד (17:2, 20). Mattson agrees that the blessing of "multiplying" is "one of the most frequently repeated promises in the Old Testament, used in a variety of contexts. The blessing is strongly connected with the Abraham tradition" (260); e.g., Gen 17:2, 20; 16:10; 22:17; 26:4, 24.

²Moberly, "Commentary on Akedah," 317. Each of them is used singly elsewhere in divine promises in Genesis (never combined): Stars in 15:5; 24:4 (cf. Exod 32:13); while Sand in 32:12 (Heb 13). Mattson mentions two Ugaritic parallels, though the first refers only to birds of the heavens and fish of the sea, while the second "appears to use the words 'heavens' and 'seas' alone as a pair apparently expressing totality" (294, referring to 23.62-63 and 1003.6-7 in Loren A. Fisher, ed., *Ras Shamra Parallels*, vol. I Analecta Orientalia, 49 [Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1972], 356ff., no. II. 555).

³Mattson, 294.

⁴Ibid., 295. The full expression is found in Gen 32:13: "And I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea which cannot be counted for multitude."

some way paralleled in other divine promises in Genesis. Its sole other occurrence is in Gen xxiv 60, the blessing pronounced on Rebekah and her offspring by her family.”¹

This closing clause is וְיִרְשׁוּ זְרַעְךָ אֶת שַׁעַר אֹיְבֵייו “And your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.”

This expression is intended to “make explicit the enviable condition which the numerous descendants of Abraham will enjoy; their lot will not be the misery of the downtrodden, but rather the joy and prosperity of the victorious.”² It could also be understood as an oblique reference to the promise of the land.³

This clause begins with the third-person masculine singular Qal imperfect verb וְיִרְשׁוּ. A “striking feature” here is that this clause “does not begin with a *vav*-consecutive; rather it is introduced by the imperfect verb וְיִרְשׁוּ preceded by a non-converting וְ.”⁴ Syntactically, this arrangement “leaves open the possibility that the וְיִרְשׁוּ

¹Moberly, “Commentary on Akedah,” 317.

²Ibid.

³For example, Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 36; and Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora*, 503. Wenham takes the phrase, “possess the gate of your enemies,” as “conquer your enemies’ cities” (*Genesis 16-50*, 112). See Gen 24:60. Wenham continues: “This again is a novelty, a more realistic formulation of the promise of the land than earlier promises (cf. 12:1, 7; 13:15-17; 15:7-8; 17:8), doubtless implying that its fulfillment is now closer than when it was first enunciated” (ibid.). Speiser verifies that this phrase “refers to capture of the opponent’s administrative and military centers. Analogously, in Akkadian omen literature, favorable signs promise the conquest of enemy territory, while unfavorable signs indicate surrender to the enemy” (*Genesis*, 164).

⁴Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” 365. Snaith comments on how the RV takes this verb as ordinary-*waw* (“and thy seed shall possess”). He posits that it could also be simple-*waw* with jussive (“in order that . . .”) (*Notes on the Hebrew Text of Genesis XXII-XXV & XXVII*, 25). Looking at the whole vs. 17, Andersen declares that the first two clauses are conjoined, “and then one subordinating conjunction governs the conjunctive sentence as a whole” (*Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 116).

referred to in the final clause differs from that mentioned in the first part of the verse.”¹

The first עֲרַבָּ in vs. 17 clearly refers to numerous descendants as it is used in the context of “the stars of heaven” and “the sand on the seashore.” However, the second עֲרַבָּ employs a third-person singular masculine verb inflection שָׁרַבָּ and also a third-person singular masculine pronominal suffix with the second עֲרַבָּ as its antecedent in אֵיבָיו “his enemies.”² This definitely means that the second עֲרַבָּ denotes a singular individual destined to be victorious over his enemies.³

This clearly signals a narrowing from the plural collective seed to the singular individual representative Seed. Since we are here dealing with the chosen descent of the seed of the woman who will crush the head of Satan (Gen 3:15), a pattern of narrowing becomes the key signal of this Messianic interpretation of these verses. From the many chosen seeds/offsprings, one Special representative singular Seed rises up to deliver the

¹Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” 365.

²It does serious violence to the Hebrew text to translate this into “*their* enemies” as most translations do (emphasis mine). A major meaning is thus lost completely. We must allow the text to speak to us, faithfully respecting syntactical functions of all verb forms.

Niccacci appeals: “Syntactic analysis should never follow the lead of interpretation and semantics,” but rather precede them (“Analysis of Biblical Narrative,” 182). He insists: “One should not begin with semantics or interpretation but with morphology and function. Semantics is important but subservient to morphology and function (syntax)” (ibid., 168). He also supports: “Syntax assists interpretation. . . . By means of the syntactic devices of Biblical Hebrew the biblical authors presented their information in a structured form. Our interpretation must be based on them, not on our modern understanding or taste” (ibid., 177-178). See also idem, *Syntax of the Verb in Classical Hebrew Prose*.

³See Richard M. Davidson, “Interpreting Scripture: An Hermeneutical Decalogue,” *JATS* 4, no. 2 (1993): 105, 112. Davidson rightly adds: “This phrasing is parallel to Genesis 3:15, where we find the same narrowing of the word ‘seed’ from a collective to Messianic singular” (“New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” *JATS* 5, no. 1 [1994]: 30-31). We have noted in our previous chapter that עֲרַבָּ always follows a constant pattern in its use of related pronouns in the OT, whereby all its related pronouns are always singular when a singular seed is intended and all its related pronouns are always plural when a collective seed is intended.

rest from the “enmity” of Satan and his voracious followers.

Thus, Gen 22:17 is the best parallel to our text of Gen 3:15 in the book of Genesis. This confirms that Genesis is consistent in its treatment of the “seed” of the woman. This narrowing phenomenon may very well be the strongest Messianic feature of Gen 22 beyond the idea of the substitutionary sacrifice portrayed by the “ram caught in a thicket by his horns” (Gen 22:13). This is supportive of my thesis for calling Gen 3:15 Messianic!

Moreover, the combination of the fertility and dominion motifs of Gen 1:28 is reiterated both in Gen 3:15 and in the promise to Abraham in Gen 22:17. In 22:17 as well as 24:60, the “promise of posterity” is expressed in terms of fertility, while the “promise of land” is expressed in terms of military victory. “Numerous descendants is viewed as an essential ingredient of success, in military ventures.”¹

This understanding of Gen 22:17 as moving from the plural collective seed (17a) to the singular individual Seed (17b) also has implications for Gen 22:18a which immediately follows it: וְהִתְבְּרַכּוּ בְּזַרְעֶךָ כָּל גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ “And in your Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Alexander is very correct:

If the immediately preceding reference to “seed” in 22:17 denotes an individual, this must also be the case in 22:18a, for there is nothing here to indicate a change in number. The blessing of “all the nations of the earth” is thus associated with a particular descendant of Abraham, rather than with all those descended from him.²

The strong verb of action in 22:18a is וְהִתְבְּרַכּוּ, comprised of a strong-*waw*

¹W. Malcom Clark, “The Animal Series in the Primateval History,” *VT* 18 (1968): 436.

²Alexander, “Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” 365.

plus third-person plural perfect Hitpael. It entails invoking “a blessing on themselves in the name of Abraham’s descendants who will become proverbial for prosperity.”¹

Similar promises of blessing the nations found in Gen 12:3 and 18:18 were to be through Abraham himself while this occurrence and those of 26:4b; 28:14 are to be through Abraham’s descendant(s).²

A similar use of Hitpael is found in Ps 72:17, וַיְתְּבְּרְכוּ בּוֹ כָּל-גּוֹיִם “In him shall all nations be blessed.” This connects the Davidic monarchy with the Abrahamic blessing. “The closest parallel to the patriarchal blessing is found in Psalm 72.”³ The prayer of this Psalm refers to a singular individual royal figure.⁴ This striking similarity supports “the idea that the ‘seed’ mentioned in Genesis 22:17b-18a does not refer to all

¹Snaith clarifies: “The vowel under the *resh* varies even in the best MS; it is wrong to insist always on *shewa* or always on *chateph-pathach*. The *chateph-pathach* is better attested in this particular instance” (*Notes on the Hebrew Text of Genesis XXII-XXV & XXVII*, 25). Mattson observes that the use of Hitpael and Niphal forms of *brk* is “very uncommon in the Old Testament” (196, n. 28). The Niphal is used only three times, Gen 12:3; 18:18; and 28:14, always in connection with the same blessing formula. The Hitpael form is attested only twice, Gen 22:18 and 26:4-5 (*ibid.*).

²The content of the “blessing” promised in Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14 “was never specified.” Robert A. Pyne argues: “That may be the one reason why some commentators have favored a reflexive meaning of the verb (i.e., ‘shall bless themselves’), an interpretation that seems unnecessary in light of the Septuagint translation and a number of rabbinic commentators, who debated the nature of the blessing the Gentiles would receive through Abraham. For example some saw the blessing as a promise of health and fruitfulness, while others viewed it as a triumph of God’s grace over His judgment on the basis of Abraham’s merit or intercession (as may be illustrated in Gen 18)” (“The Seed, the Spirit, and the Blessing of Abraham,” *BSac* 152 [1995]: 212).

The passive rendering “shall be blessed” is defended by Kidner, *Genesis*, 114. For rabbinic discussions, see H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1926), 3:538-541.

³Mattson, 196, see n. 28. He reiterates that this promise was “explicitly claimed as fulfilled by the monarchy (Ps 72:17)” (*ibid.*, 298-299). Also, Van Seters notes the connection between Abraham and the monarchy, citing the “great name” motif in association with Ps 72:17 (*Abraham in History and Tradition*, 274 *passim*).

⁴More details about Ps 72 are given in chapter 3 below.

Abraham's descendants, but rather to a single individual."¹

Gen 24:60

Gen 24 exhibits "inner unity" in its present state.² Hence, vss. 55-60 constitute an integral part of this chapter. These verses also echo some of the themes and ideas already encountered in the earlier stories of the Patriarch, in search of the chosen line of the Special Seed of the woman.³

Rebekah's relatives complied because they apparently perceived God's guidance in the whole episode involving Abraham's servant taking her away to become Isaac's wife. They gladly pronounced the customary Oriental betrothal blessing to her in vs. 60.

"The blessing in verse (two 'quadrameters') should perhaps be conceived as a bridal

¹Alexander, "Further Observations on the Term 'Seed' in Genesis," 365. He indicates that "while Genesis 22 does not directly indicate that this 'seed' will be of royal standing, it is noteworthy that Genesis 17 anticipates that kings will come from Abraham and Sarah through Isaac (Gen 17:6, 16). This divine promise is later repeated to Jacob (Gen 35:11)" (ibid., 365-366).

²Wolfgang M. W. Roth, "The Wooing of Rebekah: A Tradition-Critical Study of Genesis 24," *CBQ* 34 (1972): 177. Roth continues: "The last will and testament of the patriarch Abraham is stated and its execution duly described. This seems to be the socio-institutional setting of Gen 24 as a whole" (ibid.).

³Roth sees in Rebekah's reply, "I will go" (vs. 58), a repetition in words, of "the very response which Abraham had given more than a generation ago by wordless obedience (12:1-4a)! In other words, not only is Isaac the child of Abraham's obedience, also Isaac's wife-to-be responds to the call 'to go' from her father's house to a land not known to her. She 'goes out' as Abraham had gone out (24:5); only in this way could she become Isaac's wife and Israel's mother" (ibid., 178-179). Both Abraham and Rebekah left behind: "'their country' (12:1/24:4), 'their kindred' (12:1/24:4) and 'their father's house' (12:1/24:38)" (ibid., 179). Both are being "blessed" (12:2-3 / 24:1, 35) and are to "become great" (12:2 / 24:35) (ibid.).

Some similarities have been observed between Gen 24 and the book of Ruth, the court history of David, and the Joseph story. See Ronald M. Hals, *The Theology of the Book of Ruth*, Facet Book (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969); and Roth, 180.

song.”¹

Rebekah’s name רִבְקָה sounds like a wordplay on the root “to bless” (בָּרַךְ) and also on the word רִבְבָה for “multitude, ten thousand.” This also connects with “the frequent command and promise about multiplying (רַבֵּה; cf. 1:28; 9:1, 7; 17:2; 22:17). It is through Rebekah that the promise of a multitude of descendants for Abraham will begin to be realized.”²

“The valediction is concerned with progeny and security.”³ This seems to have coincided, by divine design, with the blessing that God bestowed on Abraham in Gen 22:17. Rebekah’s marriage to Isaac is “an historic, providential event by virtue of which the divine promises are to come to fruition.”⁴ Rebekah was to become the “mother of an exceedingly numerous and victorious posterity.”⁵

The betrothal blessing of Gen 24:60 reads:

הָיִי לְאַלְפֵי רִבְבָה וַיִּירֶשׁ זַרְעֶךָ אֶת שַׁעַר שְׂנְאָיו “Become thousands of myriads, and let your seed possess the gate of his enemies.” This is a combination of Imperative:

¹Gunkel, *Genesis*, 255. Gunkel adds: “The blessing at betrothal also occurs in Ruth 4:11-12; Tob 7:12. . . . The statements are very general. . . . The young woman in those days preferred to hear nothing more than this.” Skinner hints: “The blessing on the marriage (cf. Ruth 4:11 ff.), rhythmic in form, is perhaps an ancient fragment of tribal poetry associated with the name of Rebekah” (*Genesis*, 347).

²Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 151. “Rebekah’s name sounds even more like a play on the root ‘to bless’ (בָּרַךְ) than does Abraham’s” (*ibid.*). See Andrzej Strus, *Nomen-omen: la stylistique des noms propres dans le Pentateuque* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978), 165. Cf. Gen 49:8.

³Sarna, *Genesis*, 169.

⁴*Ibid.* This is in spite of the fact that Gen 24:60 is not “a divine promise,” as retorted by Von Rad, *Genesis*, 242-3.

⁵Keil and Delitzsch, 3:260.

“be thousands of myriads,” with Jussive: “and let your seed possess his enemies’ gate.”¹

The phrase “become thousands of myriads” is a “hyperbolic expression for an innumerable host of children.”² The combination לְאַלְפֵי רִבְבֹתָהּ consists of a construct plural of masculine noun “thousand” plus feminine noun “ten thousand.”³

The purpose of this first part of the blessing is to signify a collective plural seed promised to the woman, Rebekah. This falls in line with earlier mentions of feminine possession of seed which began in Gen 3:15 and recurred in 4:25 and 16:10. Needed to be reiterated is the fact that Rebekah did not here receive the blessing of conceiving while remaining a virgin! This must finally settle the postulation of the virgin birth merely from Gen 3:15, where it is only an incidental, not primary, implication.

The second and final part of this blessing is verbatim with Gen 22:17a, with only minor variations: וַיִּירָשׁ זַרְעֶךָ אֶת שַׁעַר שְׂנְאָיוֹ “And your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.”⁴ Similar to Gen 22:17a, this clause does not begin with a *vav*-

¹Andersen, *Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 113. Similar combinations are found in Gen 38:24; Exod 7:26.

²Keil and Delitzsch, 3:260.

³Snaith notes: “Greek has the plural here. Targum and Syriac have ‘thousands and ten thousands’” (*Notes on the Hebrew Text of Genesis XXII-XXV & XXVII*, 70). Ewald adds: “Very high numbers also readily take up their position after a word put in the construct state. . . . In poetic language, רִבְבוֹת אֲלָפִי *myriads of thousands*, Num 10:36, is used interchangeably with אֲלָפֵי רִבְבֹתָהּ, Gen 24:60, it would appear that the first word stands in the construct state merely for the purpose of connecting the two” (80).

⁴Snaith explains וַיִּירָשׁ as a weak-*vav* plus a third-person masculine singular Qal imperfect verb which may be jussive: “and may thy seed occupy.” The noun שַׁעַר “gate” is a construct singular masculine noun (*Notes on the Hebrew Text of Genesis XXII-XXV & XXVII*, 25, 70). “It was ‘in the gate’ that leaders and kings held their courts of justice and gave sentence after victory” (70).

Concerning the similarity between Gen 24:60 and 22:17, Alexander recommends: “The blessing pronounced on Rebekah has probably been influenced by the divine oath in Genesis 22:17-18 . . . and may

consecutive imperfect verb, because the verb **וַיִּירָשׁ** is preceded by a non-converting **ו**.

Syntactically, this arrangement also possibly signals a change in the emphasis of the number of offspring wished for Rebekah from the multitude to a singular individual Seed, who will possess the gate of *his* enemies. The undeniable evidence includes the third-person singular Qal imperfect verb **וַיִּירָשׁ** “and he shall possess”; and the third-person singular pronominal suffix attached to the noun **וְאֹיְבָתָיו** “*his* enemies.”¹

There is a grammatical narrowing in the number of the offspring being referred to here. This echoes similar narrowing in the seed of the woman being traced from Gen 3:15 to Gen 22:17 and repeated in Gen 24:60. This seems to be the book’s pattern of delineating the Special Seed of the woman who will crush the head of Satan in victory. This phenomenon of *narrowing* must be quite significant in identifying the Messiah from the collective plural seed.

The arguments thus presented show that the Messianic hope was alive and well among the common patriarchal worshipers of Yahweh. The intentional shift to a specific singular Seed reveals the faith of the family of Rebekah in the coming victorious Messiah.

Gen 49:8-10

As mentioned above, Gen 3:15 set out the programmatic plot of delineating a

be due to Abraham’s servant recounting Yahweh’s oath to Rebekah’s family. Since Rebekah is travelling to Canaan to marry Isaac, it is quite appropriate that her relatives might send her away with the two-fold blessing that she should increase greatly and have a descendant who would defeat his enemies. In this way they acknowledge the importance of the role which Rebekah will play in the fulfillment of God’s purposes for all humanity” (“Further Observations on the Term ‘Seed’ in Genesis,” 366).

¹We must recall that the singular individual seed always employs singular verb inflections, pronouns and adjectives; while the collective plural seed generally employs plural ones. See above discussions and references.

single male child from each generation of the collective plural seed of the woman, that is, those righteous among humanity. This trail began with Seth, the surviving chosen seed out of the offspring of Adam and Eve. The process of elimination seemed easily defined from then on. The book of Genesis expresses God's chosen seed from time to time, even when multiple offspring seem to compete for this first-place designation which often bypassed age and order of birth in the family.

Abraham's chosen seed, Isaac, was clearly named. So also, Isaac's chosen seed, Jacob, was clearly distinguished even from the womb. However, of Jacob's twelve sons, none was clearly named as the bearer of the chosen Seed of the woman. Hence, all the tribes constitute the chosen nation of God. Nonetheless, only one tribe will yield the Messianic Seed. This remained rather ambiguous or suspensive throughout the stories of Jacob and his children until the last chapter of his life when he pronounced blessings on all his offspring.

Judah, the fourth son, was the one who received the special royal blessing and commission, and the designation as firstborn of Jacob's sons with the "rights of primogeniture."¹ He was designated as the "specific ancestor and forerunner of the promised royal One."²

Over all, "Judah was promised: (1) the praise of his brothers, (2) the

¹Gerard Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 167.

²Ibid., 168. "Joseph received recognition as the prince and an abundant bestowal of blessings. But he was not designated to be the firstborn of Jacob's sons. . . . Nor did Reuben, the very first son born of Jacob and Leah. . . . True, Joseph had been given royal authority and power to serve as an agent of redemption; herein he was a type of Christ" (ibid.).

preeminence in Israel, (3) victories over his enemies, (4) the obedience of the nations, and (5) unusual prosperity in his fields and herds.”¹

In vs. 8, “hands on the neck of enemies” signifies “victory, after struggle and pursuit.”² The brothers bowing down to Judah indicates “submission to a ruling person, a monarch.”³ Victory over enemies and every one bowing to him, and the scepter not departing from Judah, make him echo the special blessing to the special Seed, traced from Adam to Abraham to Jacob as royal. Its royal aspect is well emphasized here.

From vss. 8-9a, Jacob begins by addressing Judah in the presence of his brothers in terms of the second-person singular, “you.” Since Jacob intends to speak to Judah also as a tribe, these statements have a collective meaning up to this point. However, as Jacob proceeds, in this same setting, he suddenly shifts to the third-person singular “he, him” from vs. 9b to the end of his pronouncements to Judah in vs. 12. This narrowing from the collective tribe, embodied in and led by Judah, to the singular royal person from among the tribe of Judah is significant in the light of our previous considerations of how the book of Genesis has repeatedly employed this unique phenomenon to underscore the Messianic Seed (See Gen 3:15; 22:17-18; 24:60).

Gen 49:8-12 “holds before us the collective and the single idea of royalty. Judah was to be one tribe, but from that collective whole a single royal one was to emerge and

¹Kaiser, *Messiah in the Old Testament*, 51. Further explanations of “Shiloh” and “Scepter” are found in David Baron, *Rays of Messiah’s Glory: Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955; reprint of 1886), 258-262; Kaiser, *Messiah in the Old Testament*, 51-53; W. L. Moran, “Genesis 49:10 and Its Use in Ezekiel 21:32,” *Biblica* 39 (1958): 402-425.

²Groningen, 171.

³Ibid.

thus the preeminent One was singled out.”¹ This is a predictive prophecy concerning the personal sovereignly ruling king to emerge from Judah.

The personal king to come is set forth in a climactic manner in this prophecy. Judah was addressed as the preeminent one. But, as Jacob proceeded, he used the third person. Still speaking to Judah in the presence of his brothers, Jacob spoke of another one, who, inseparable from Judah and the community over which he was to rule, was, nevertheless, distinctly discernible. Judah the man was important, but Judah the tribe no less; the truly preeminent one was the coming royal one, who was to *the ruler, the victor, the prosperous performer*. He it was who was to receive obeisance, praise, and honor.²

The future king arising from the Judahic tribe is “clearly linked to the line of ‘seed’ that is traced throughout the book of Genesis.”³ God’s blessing will flow through this king to all those nations who accept his authority, causing them to “experience a new age of prosperity with the reversal of the divine curse which caused the earth to become less fertile as a consequence of human sin.”⁴ The emphasis on the victory that he will bring over all enemies echoes: “(a) the promise in 3:15 that the ‘Seed of the woman’ shall overcome the powers of evil, and (b) the divine oath to Abraham in 22:17: ‘Your seed will take possession of the cities of his enemies.’”⁵

In vs. 9, the three terms referring to the lion present a “vivid picture of the growth of power, prowess, and preeminence. The lioness is a poetic, picturesque, and

¹Ibid., 178.

²Ibid., 178-179.

³Alexander, “Messianic Ideology in Genesis,” 36.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid. Groningen believes: “The battle that was to be waged by the seed of Jacob, Abraham, and Adam would have to be thought of in terms of the irrevocable hostility the Lord had pronounced and placed between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent” (178).

powerful expression of Judah's development and the final issue of his royal rule and victory."¹

In vs. 10, Shiloh² is a ruler, "coming from and following Judah,"³ who will have the "willful and cheerful obedience"⁴ of peoples of the earth. "Judah will exercise royal prerogatives until his ruler comes to wield it himself."⁵ Moreover, Judah will fulfill the "mediatorial role"⁶ to "represent the Lord to the community and the people, in turn, to the Lord"⁷ just as Abraham was to serve between the Lord and the nations (Gen 12:3). He was to be "the royal mediator, in his character, position, and prerogatives."⁸

In vs. 11 and 12, prosperity, good health, and general well-being are prefigured

¹Groningen, 171.

²Richard M. Davidson notes: "The appellation Shiloh, probably coming from the Hebrew *šlh*, 'to be at ease, quiet, tranquil, to prosper,' in contrast points to a future royal messianic figure who would usher in an age of peace and prosperity and obedience to his rule. The picture of the Messiah is highlighted in the preceding verses (vv. 8-9), with the imagery of a warrior victorious over his enemies, and a lion resting after taking his prey. It is further developed in the succeeding verses (vv. 11-12) with the imagery of an exuberant, invigorating, abundant Golden Age." ("The Eschatological Literary Structure of the Old Testament," in *Creation, Life, and Hope: Essays in Honor of Jacques B. Doukhan*, ed. Jifi Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Department of Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2000), 353-354. See Jerusalem Talmud *Sanhedrin* 98b; and Kiel and Delitzsch, 1:393-401.

³Groningen, 175.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid. Groningen explains that a shepherd's staff or rod was used to "redirect, chastise, smite, or slay"; or as a scepter in a ruler's hand, "a symbol of power and authority" (ibid., 175). He was also the "lawgiver" (ibid.). See von Rad, *Genesis*, 419.

⁶Groningen, 177.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 178.

for Judah the royal one and his successor and all their subjects. “But struggle, pain, and bloodshed may well be alluded to also; prosperity is not to be without a price.”¹

The journey that traces the Special Seed of the woman from Gen 3:15 ends very hopefully in Gen 49:8-12 with the last identified chosen progenitor in the book of Genesis, Judah. It is a key link to the chain that connects the singular “Seed of the woman” to the singular “Seed of Abraham,” the singular royal “Seed of David,” and Jesus Christ, the Messiah of the New Testament.

Summary

Echoes of the “seed” of Gen 3:15 began in Gen 1:28 with God’s mandate for humanity to be fruitful and multiply, filling and subduing the earth, and exercising dominion over all creation. Procreation entails multiplication of “seed.” Posterity was assured to the human race in the promise of the woman’s seed in Gen 3:15.

Aspects of subduing and exercising dominion are perpetuated by the victorious crushing of the serpent’s head by the representative Seed of the woman. Although human dominion over animals was completely devoid of hostility between both parties in Gen 1-2, the entrance of sin through the snake changed the status quo.

It is the identification of this special redeemer Seed who will champion the cause of humanity against Satan that is the major pre-occupation of the rest of the book of Genesis. This programmatic “Seed” couples with the תולדות headings to form the organizing fabric of the entire book, with a view to delineating the special line of descent

¹Ibid., 176.

that will produce the chosen Seed.

By a process of divine elimination and discrimination, the choice of the Seed is narrowed down through the twists and turns of the narratives in the book of Genesis. First, Seth is singled out from his generation to be the “appointed seed” (Gen 4:25). Seth’s genealogy in Gen 5 itemizes the chosen progenitors until Noah “found favor in the sight of the Lord” (Gen 6:8). This process continues until God selects Abraham and elaborates the promise of Gen 3:15 to him and his seed. From here onwards, the “Seed of the woman” of Gen 3:15 becomes the “Seed of Abraham.”

Eve definitely understood Gen 3:15 as a promise of salvation through the Messiah as is made evident by her profound exclamation at the birth of Cain, “I have got the Man, the Lord!” (Gen 4:1). This is the first biblical commentary to Gen 3:15! Likewise, the other major seed passages studied above, because of their intratextual allusions to the seed and its related pronouns in Gen 3:15, show a similar and consistent pattern of understanding of the Messianic implication of the Seed. These passages supply the needed illuminations to the cogent, poignant, and programmatic statements in Gen 3:15. Gen 22:17-18 and 24:60 similarly exhibit the structural movements and narrowing phenomenon from the collective plural to the individual singular. This is the major signal of Messianic understanding of these texts.

The Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15) becomes identical to the Seed of Abraham (Gen 22:17-18, etc.) and the kingly Judah at the end of the book of Genesis (49:8-10). The book is very consistent in its treatment of the Seed. The understanding of the “seed” was intended to set a pace for and to have great implications for the whole book of

Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch and beyond.

At this juncture, it is of interest to examine the intertextual allusions to the seed of Gen 3:15 elsewhere in the Old and New Testaments in order to discover if there is similar and consistent understanding of the “seed.” It is important to see how the New Testament uses the Old in relation to the seed, paying particular attention to the structural and terminological parallels. This endeavor is the object of chapter 3.

CHAPTER THREE

INTERTEXTUAL ALLUSIONS TO THE “SEED” OF GEN 3:15 ELSEWHERE IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The text of Gen 3:15 is a watershed and programmatic passage that sets the stage for the rest of the Bible. So much is already encapsulated in Gen 3:15 that the rest of Scripture elaborates more and more progressively on the themes raised in Gen 3:15. Since the “Seed” is the central figure in this verse, his identification and references continue beyond the book of Genesis into the rest of the Old and New Testament until a full picture is clearly painted.

I demonstrated in chapter 2 above, treating the passages of Genesis that illuminate the “seed” of Gen 3:15, that the book is consistent in its understanding and treatment of the “seed,” following the pattern established in Gen 3:15. In this chapter, I explore various intertextual allusions to the “Seed” of Gen 3:15, first of all in the Old and then on to the New Testament, in order to discover to what extent the understanding of the “Seed” established in Gen 3:15 influenced later revelations in the Canon, and to what extent later writers remained consistent with the meaning of the “Seed” already set forth in Gen 3:15.

Intertextuality Defined

Intertextuality¹ may be defined as “the study of all features that bring a text into an open or hidden relationship to other texts. It is an umbrella term covering several types of relationships between texts.”² This calls all previously encountered texts to attention as important for what is currently being read or written about.

Intertextual reading is inevitable since no text is an island on its own. “Intertextuality lies at the very heart of the writing and reading of texts.” Both readers and writers perceive that the process of their reading and writing is “due to the cross-fertilization” of what they have read or known before.³ “Texts are not autonomous entities independent from extra-textual reality.”⁴

Some scholars wrongly posit that Gen 3 is largely or wholly absent from the rest of the OT tradition. They argue that “no prophet, psalm, or narrator makes any

¹A bibliography of Intertextuality, including its histories, theories and practices include among many: T. Beal, “Ideology and Intertextuality,” in *Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation*, ed. D. Fewell (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 27-39; idem, “Glossary,” in *Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation*, ed. D. Fewell (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 21-24; Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981); Gérard Genette, *Palimpseste: Die Literatur auf zweiter Stufe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), 9-21; S. J. Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), esp. 5-8; Ellen van Wolde, “Trendy Intertextuality?” in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings*, ed. S. Draisma (Kampen: Kok, 1989), 43-9; and M. Worton and J. Still, eds., *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

²Knut Heim, “The Perfect King of Psalm 72: An Intertextual Enquiry,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterhwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 231. Heim follows the definitions and discussions of Genette, 9.

³Heim, 232; referring to Worton and Still, 1-2.

⁴Heim, 233.

recognizable reference to the story of the Fall.”¹ Some fail to see any trace of any tradition of the narrative of Gen 2-3 throughout the whole of the Old Testament, saying: “It is not quoted and is never mentioned. It is never included in the syntheses of the acts of God (Credo).”²

My findings and arguments in the preceding chapters constitute a reassessment of this position. Furthermore, “even if it should prove impossible, unlikely or uncertain that an author had Genesis 3 in mind while expounding on another text, there is bound to be a thematic similarity.”³

Further evidence of intertextual allusions to the “Seed” of Gen 3:15 are presented below in the brief examination of major passages beyond Genesis in the biblical canon. This treatment does not pretend to be exhaustive, but representative. Care is taken to remain focused on the allusions to the “Seed” rather than other numerous ramifications of these texts.

Intertextual Allusions to the “Seed” of Gen 3:15 within the Pentateuch

Within the larger scope of the Pentateuch, the “Seed” of Gen 3:15 remains a programmatic plot. Strategically situated at its beginning, it influences the remaining discourses in the Pentateuch. Beginning with the first few verses in the book of Exodus,

¹von Rad, *Genesis*, 98.

²Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 276. Westermann explains: “The reason for this is that Israel never considered it to be a historical incident side-by-side with other historical incidents. . . . It was only in late Judaism, when the perception of the difference between historical reality and primeval reality was lost, that the “fall” of humanity was leveled off to a historical or quasi-historical incident” (ibid.).

³Andrews, 96. “The very act of associating one text with another must be regarded in some sense as interpretation” (ibid.).

the major preoccupation of the Pentateuch is revealed. The Pentateuch seems preoccupied with the preservation of seed for the chosen people of Israel through whom the special Seed promised in Gen 3:15 will come. The Egyptian slavery could not prevent the children of Israel from being fruitful, increasing abundantly, multiplying, waxing exceedingly mighty, and filling the land (Exod 1:7). This echoes the seed promise of Gen 3:15 which reaches back to Gen 1:28.

Several hints are given in some of these Pentateuchal allusions which vividly point to the fact that the fulfillment of this promise goes beyond the scope of the Pentateuch to a distant future. "The Pentateuch as a whole is not merely concerned with God's work in the past but is also interested in the work of God that lies in the future."¹ It must be seen as transcending the initial successes of the nation and pointing to the coming Messiah, using Moses, as well as Joshua, as a type.

Numerous instances in the Pentateuch "associate God's earlier acts in the Garden with the covenant He made with Israel."² Below are some select representative passages that elucidate the deep connections of the seed of Gen 3:15 to the prophetic salvific hope of the people of Israel and the world at large.

Exod 11:1-10

The death of the firstborn of every human and beast in Egypt and the simultaneous deliverance of the children of Israel from death in the last plague ended their

¹Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 271.

²*Ibid.*

Egyptian slavery. This typifies “redemption from sin and death.”¹ In the contention between the seed of the Egyptians and the seed of the Israelites, the seed of the Israelites were spared from death and destruction. Similar to the judgment of death in Gen 3:15, “God provided a way of salvation for the promised seed.”²

Exod 15:1-21

The occasion for this Song of Moses was God’s defeat of the Egyptian army at the deliverance of the Israelites in their crossing the Red Sea. These words are clearly prophetic as evidenced by vss. 17 and 18. This casts Moses into prophetic roles, his concern being “the future King who will reign over God’s eternal kingdom.”³ This claim is collaborated by Miriam’s title as “prophetess” in vs. 20.

“The poetic imagery that dominates the song is that of the Lord as mighty warrior”⁴ (Exod 15:3). These images are “reminiscent of the struggle portrayed in Genesis 3:15.”⁵ The Lord **רָעַץ** “shattered” the enemy (Exod 15:6), just as the special Seed **שָׁרַשׁ** “fatally bruised” the serpent (Gen 3:15).

In Gen 3:15, we have discovered that the special Seed is not merely human but supernatural. Only a supernatural power could match and overcome the power of the tempter, Satan, represented by the serpent. Indeed, it was the Lord who triumphed over

¹Ibid., 258.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 271.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

the “serpent” enemy of Gen 3:15 just as He triumphed over the “Egyptian” enemy in Exod 15:1-21.

Lev 12:1-8

It has been rightly observed and acknowledged that “this section of Leviticus follows remarkably closely the pattern of the Creation account in Genesis.”¹ It is therefore remarkable that the word used in Lev 12:2 to describe the woman “becoming pregnant” deviates from the usual verb **הָרָה**. Rather, the verb **עָרַב** “to sow seed” or “to produce seed” is used. This appears to be an intentional verbal link with Gen 1:11-12, referring to “plants bearing seed.”

The use of “seed” in Lev 12:2 also alludes to Gen 1:28 concerning human childbirth and procreation, which is the background of the Seed promise of Gen 3:15. This also adds to the understanding of Gen 3:16 concerning the woman’s pains in childbearing. These connections further underscore the fact that “divine blessing for humankind is centered on the woman’s role in childbirth.”² Indeed, the promised Seed of Gen 3:15 “lies at the center of the hope of blessing (e.g., Gen 12:1-3).”³

Childbirth lies at the root of the hope of God’s fulfilling His promise of blessing.

¹Ibid., 335. Just as God distinguishes the “good” in each creative act in Gen 1, God also, here in Leviticus, distinguishes the “clean” from the “unclean” for human consumption within the covenant framework. Sailhamer mentions further: “The order God follows in creation—dealing first with the animals, birds, and sea creatures, and then with humanity—is the same order he follows here—dealing first with the animals, birds, and sea creatures, and then with humanity (Lev 11-12). The author is clearly intent on our seeing a similar pattern in God’s overall purpose and work” (ibid.). Cf. Rabbi Rashi, *Commentary on the Torah* (Hebrew), ed. Chaim Dov Shual (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1988).

²Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 335.

³Ibid.

Hence, the preservation of Moses at birth was spectacular because his survival at the time ensured the fulfillment of the hope of Israel's deliverance and salvation from slavery.

Sailhamer correctly proclaimed:

God's provision of blessing for Israel in the covenant at Sinai also contains an echo of the hope that is centered in childbirth. In the later biblical narratives as well as in Prophetic Books, the future fulfillment of God's promised blessing continues to be centered in the joy and expectation of childbirth (e.g., Isa 7:14; Mic 5:1-2).¹

The reference to a woman producing "seed" in Lev 12:2 is as unusual as its first reference in Gen 3:15. Production of seed is expected to be associated only with males, not females. Other similar references to females producing or possessing seed, as earlier mentioned above, are found in Gen 4:25; 16:10; 19:32, 34; 24:60; Num 5:28; and Rev 12:17.²

Num 23-24

The record of Gen 1 suggest that "at the center of God's purpose in creating humankind was his desire to bless them."³ His blessing was immediately pronounced after creating mankind, saying: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the land" (Gen 1:28). This blessing was couched in the promise of procreation and "seed-making." Even humanity's fall into sin did not thwart God's plan to bless them. God reiterated His blessing plan in the form of a promised Seed in Gen 3:15. "God's original intention for

¹Ibid., 335-336.

²See Wolde, *Stories of the Beginning*, 50-51; and Pieters, 87.

³Sailhamer, *Pentateuch as Narrative*, 405.

humanity was blessing and his continual concern for them has been the same.”¹

Furthermore, through the promised Seed shall all nations be blessed (Gen 3:15; 12:1-3; 17:1-8; 22:17-18; 49:8-12).

The strong allusions of Balaam’s prophecy to the promised Seed of Gen 3:15 are thus clear. Balaam could not curse those whom God has blessed in perpetuity. Balaam’s three attempts (Num 23:1-12, 13-26; 23:27-24:9) turned into blessings (Num 23:11-12, 25-26; 24:10-11). Consequently, Balaam forcefully reiterated the birth of God’s chosen deliverer, the “Star” who will arise from Jacob (Num 24:7-9, 17-19). This points to a future King, Prophet, and Messiah.

Balaam gave three oracles, the language of which evidences a shift from the plural representation of Israel in the first two (Num 23:1-12; and 13-26), to a singular representation in the third (Num 24:1-24). This is reminiscent of the shift from the plural to the singular Seed in Gen 3:15. Incidents in Israel’s past mentioned in Num 23 are also repeated in Num 24, but here it describes the work of a “future King.”

The Hebrew text renders the narrations of the two oracles in Num 23 plural forms, but intentionally shifts to the singular forms in the third oracle in Num 24. The text shifts from a reference to the collective plural seed of Israel to the individual singular Seed who is the future prophetic Messianic King (Num 24:7-9, 17-19). For instance, in reference to the great salvific event of the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, the text uses the plural form in Num 23:24: “God brought them [*plural*] out of Egypt; he has as it were the strength of a unicorn.” The same line is now repeated in Num 24:8, using singular

¹Ibid.

forms because Balaam has introduced the King in the preceding verse (Num 24:7). Vs. 8 reads: “God brought him [*singular*] out of Egypt; he has as it were the strength of a unicorn.”

Num 23:24: אֵל מוֹצִיאָם מִמִּצְרַיִם כְּתוֹעַפַת רֵאִם לוֹ

Num 24:8: אֵל מוֹצִיאֹו מִמִּצְרַיִם כְּתוֹעַפַת רֵאִם לוֹ

The passage casts the future King in the language used to express “God’s great acts of salvation in the past. . . . What God did for Israel in the past is seen as a type of what he will do for them in the future when he sends his promised king.”¹ The Messianic King was to experience an eschatological Exodus, thereby “recapitulating in his life the events of historical Israel in their Exodus from Egypt and conquest of their enemies.”²

Balaam draws heavily on God’s words of promise and judgment used in Gen 3:15. In the duel involving the special Seed of the woman, He will crush the head of His enemy, Satan. Balaam insists that this coming King will “crush [מַחֲרֵץ] the foreheads of Moab and the skulls of all the sons of Sheth” (Num 24:17). This further alludes to all the illuminations of this victory of this special individual singular representative Seed as recorded in Gen 12:3; 22:17-18; 24:60; 49:8.

Furthermore, a solid link with the previous seed passages is seen in the fact that Balaam quotes, verbatim, Jacob’s prophecy of the coming King from the line of Judah in Gen 49:9. Balaam repeats in Num 24:9a: “Like a lion he [*singular*] crouches and lies

¹Ibid., 408.

²Davidson, “Eschatological Literary Structure of the Old Testament,” 357. See further discussion of this New Exodus in Ninow, 160-169.

down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him [*singular*]?” Similarly, the promise of blessing those who bless him and cursing those who curse him (Gen 12:3; 27:29) is similarly worded in Num 24:9b.

All these are Messianic evidences. Moreover, Balaam clarifies the expectation as being futuristic and eschatological, rather than being a sooner fulfillment. Balaam says: “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but he is not near” (Num 24:17). It was not limited to king David because Num 24:23-24 extends the oracle of the victory of this future king to the defeat of nations that only arose after the demise of the historical king David.¹

Deut 17:14-20

The office of kingship was anticipated already in Gen 1-3 as discussed above. This justifies the understanding of the special individual singular representative Seed of Gen 3:15 as a kingly figure. This is further illuminated with the renewed promises calling this special Seed a King (Gen 17:16; 35:11; 36:31; 49:9-12).

This promise of kingship in Deut 17:14-20 is partially fulfilled in historical David (2 Sam 7:18-24; Ps 78:70) though it points further to an ultimate ideal future King. This

¹Sailhamer explains: “The victory of the future king is extended over the defeat of ‘Asshur and Eber’ (probably Babylon) at the hands of the Kittim (probably the Romans). Moreover, in the end, even the Kittim ‘will come to ruin’ (vs. 24) ‘when God does this’ (vs. 23). From the standpoint of later biblical history, the events alluded to here extend far beyond the reign of the historical David. It is difficult in this context not to think of texts like Genesis 10:2-4, where the Kittim are associated with nations such as Magog, Tubal, Media, and Meshech, nations which figure prominently in the later prophetic books (e.g., Eze 38:2-3), and of Daniel 11:30, where Kittim are again mentioned in reference to the last great battle. In any case, this last oracle of Balaam appears to place the scope of his oracle too far in the future to be a reference to the reign of David” (*Pentateuch as Narrative*, 409).

There is no basis for relegating this eschatological oracle to the status of a mere “late addition” to the Pentateuch. This is because we cannot rule out any possibility of true prophecy in the Bible. This is contrary to the opinion expressed in H. Holzinger, *Numeri*, Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1903), 125.

underlying prophecy is made stronger by the fact that there were no kings in Israel at this juncture of their history.

Intertextual Allusions to the “Seed” of Gen 3:15 within the Rest of the OT

The identification of the “Seed” of Gen 3:15 continues to preoccupy the subsequent authors of the Prophets and Writings. This is not surprising if one believes that the Torah is the basis and source of the OT. It has been shown above that the Torah is intent on tracing the lineage of the promised Seed.

Below are some select passages which constitute intertextual allusions to the Seed of Gen 3:15. I have followed the order of the Hebrew Bible. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. This analysis covers certain verbal, terminological, thematic, and structural links.

2 Sam 7:4-19

This chapter, describing king David’s proposal to build a temple for the ark, shows a logical sequence with 2 Sam 6 which described the bringing of the ark to Zion. It is a “coherent account, and is closely integrated into the narrative in which it now stands, developing themes which run through the preceding narrative. But it also has an importance which goes beyond its immediate context.”¹

¹Philip E. Satterthwaite, “David in the Books of Samuel: A Messianic Expectation,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 52-53, and n. 37. He further insists that 2 Sam 7 “clearly does have a pivotal position in the surrounding narrative” (ibid., n. 39). See Arnold A. Anderson, *2 Samuel* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 109-128; Carlson, *David the Chosen King*; R. P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1984), 77; and Tomoo Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties*

The message of 2 Sam 7 reflects Deut 12, esp. vss. 10-11, with David being settled and having rest from his enemies.¹ It records a covenant between God and David which is comparable to the one set between God and Abraham (cf. Gen 15).² The two are similar commitments from God in that “God is bound by an oath and that God made a promise to the individuals.”³ Furthermore, God’s covenantal promise to make David’s “name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth” (2 Sam 7:9),⁴ has not been made by God to another individual since the days of Abraham (cf. Gen 12:2).

There are several relevant ancient Near Eastern parallels whereby kings devote “national resources to the enhancement of temples in order to honor their gods and secure divine blessing for themselves and their kingdoms.”⁵ Building a temple for a deity

in Ancient Israel: A Study on the Formation and Development of Royal-Dynastic Ideology, BZAW 142 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), 81-117.

¹This does not mean that chap. 7 is out of chronological sequence with chap. 8 which mentions more wars fought by David.

²See Clements, *Abraham and David: Genesis 15 and Its Meaning for Israelite Tradition*; and Gordon, *I and II Samuel*, 236.

³Robert D. Bergen, *I, 2 Samuel*, The New American Commentary, 7 (Broadman & Holman, 1996), 335. Cf. George E. Mendenhall and G. A. Herions also believe that Nathan was hereby “simply applying the age-old Amorite political theory of Jebus (now Jerusalem) to its new king (and now in the name of its new king’s God, Yahweh)” (“Covenant,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 1:1188). Similarly, Frank Charles Fensham parallels “the eternal throne of David’s descendants” to the promise like “a blessing in the Hittite vassal treaties, i.e., that the faithful vassal’s sons would reign eternally on his throne” (“Alliance Covenant,” *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1:329).

⁴Bergen, 339.

⁵*Ibid.*, 335. Cf. N. Scheider, *Die Zeitbestimmungen der Wirtschaftsurkunden von Ur III* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1936). A. B. Mercer cites an example of an Ur-Nammu period date formula as: “The year the foundation of the temple of Ningubla was laid”; and a Shulgi period date: “the year the foundation of the temple of Ninurta was laid” (*Sumerian-Babylonian Year-Formulae* [London: Luzac, 1946]). See further, *ANET*, 501-502.

is thus associated with special blessing and divine legitimation for the king. Similarly, 2 Sam 6-7 associates temple-building with the future dynasty of David.¹

One cannot but see a connection between Nathan's oracle here and the Torah. These words "constitute the longest recorded monologue attributed to him since the days of Moses (197 words)."² Apart from the connection with the Abrahamic covenant mentioned above, it is also a fulfillment of the programmatic divine prophecy given hundreds of years earlier that the "scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh comes" (Gen 49:10). David claims this link and thus receives the only divinely instituted and uniquely favored royal family in perpetuity (עַד-עוֹלָם, vs.16; cf. vs.13).³ This immediately connects 2 Sam 7 with the "Seed" of the woman been traced from Gen 3:15. "The royal character of the Seed was made more definite than before."⁴

Moreover, 2 Sam 7:8b mentions how God took David from being a shepherd to become a ruler over Israel, לְהִיּוֹת נָגִיד עַל-עַמִּי עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל, "to be a ruler or preeminent one or prince over my people Israel." The term נָגִיד, "ruler or preeminent one or prince," rather than מֶלֶךְ "king" is used to refer to "David's place under Yahweh,

¹Satterthwaite, "David in the Books of Samuel," 53-4; and Ishida, *The Royal Dynasties*, 85-88. I consider meritorious the positions of D. J. McCarthy, who considers this chapter as an important part of the "Deuteronomistic history" ("II Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History," *JBL* 84 [1965]: 131-138); and also W. J. Dumbrell, accepting 2 Sam 6-7 as important in integrating the Davidic covenant and the Sinai covenant. David and his seed will reflect and defend the Sinai covenant ("The Davidic Covenant," *RTR* 39 [1980]: 40-47). See also W. Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1990), 253, 259.

²Bergen, 336.

³Ibid., 337.

⁴Groningen, 301.

the King of Israel.” This is a “fulfillment of Jacob’s words that a ruler was to come from Judah’s tribe (Gen 49:8-10)” which was necessary for what God was about to say later on in 2 Sam 7:12-16.¹

God calls king David “my servant” (2 Sam 7:5), a term used elsewhere in regard to honor faithful patriarchs such as Abraham (Gen 26:24), Jacob (Ezek 37:25), and Moses (Num 12:7-8; Josh 1:2, 7); and prophets such as Isaiah (Isa 20:3); Israel (Isa 41:9; 44:1-2, 21; 49:3; Jer 30:10); and the Messiah (Isa 52:13; Zech 3:8).² This supports the idea of the “Seed” of the woman being a servant, king, prophet, leader, priest, and indeed the Messiah.

God’s initiative is constantly stressed in this chapter, especially in the fact that God gives David a name (vs. 8) before David’s son builds a temple for God. “David will not build God a temple (‘Will you build me a בַּיִת to dwell in?’ vs. 5); rather, God will found a dynasty for David (‘. . . YHWH will establish a בַּיִת for you,’ vs. 11).”³

Similarly, the enmity between Satan and humanity was divinely initiated in Gen 3:15 where a divine human representative “Seed” was also promised to redeem humanity from Satan, in spite of man’s disobedience.

¹Ibid., 295.

²Bergen, 338. Heinz Kruse recalls: “The highest title of David, like that of Moses (Num 12:7), is ‘servant (‘*ebed*) of Yahweh,’ and even this is, among the kings, reserved to David” (“David’s Covenant,” *VT* 35 [1985]: 152-153). Cf. Ronald de Vaux, “Le roi d’Israël, vassal de Yahvé,” *Mélanges Eugène Tisserant* I (Città del Vaticano, Rome: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1964), 12.

³Satterthwaite, “David in the Books of Samuel,” 54, also n. 45 on p. 55.

David's son is also called God's son in vs. 14.¹ Adam would be the first being who could be called God's son, having being the premier and unique human to come out of the Creator's hands. Adam was royal and kingly. Thus, the special Seed promised for the redemption of humanity will thus very likely have similar resemblance to the first Adam.

The divine promise to David: "I will raise up your seed (after you) to succeed you" (vs. 12), concerns a royal successor. The Hebrew word used here is קָוָם, "which in certain contexts is synonymous with חָיָה, 'to live' (Isa 26:14, 19)."² This is translated as ἀναστήσω in the LXX, also meaning "I will resurrect."³ This has obvious Messianic implications.

It has also been rightly observed that this reference to "your seed after you" is a common method of "referring to the continuation of a covenant into the indefinite future." Similar covenantal statements are found in Gen 9:9; 17:7, 8, 9, 10, 19; 35:12;

¹Ishida discusses the use of an adoption metaphor for kingship in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East. An Israelite king was ritually "adopted" by God upon assumption to the throne (108-109). P. K. McCarter labels Pss 2:7-8; 89:27-28 [MT 26-27] as the evidence that God ritually adopted David as His son upon David's enthronement (*II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, Anchor Bible [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984], 207). Cf. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, *Social Institutions*, trans. J. McHugh (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 112-113.

The language that God used here אָנִי אֲהִיָּה לּוֹ לְאָב וְהוּא יִהְיֶה לִּי "I will be to him a father and he to me a son," provides a strong echo of the covenantal language of Sinai seen in Exod 6:7; Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; 11:4 30:22; Ezek 36:28; Hos 1:9. For example, Lev 26:12 says, "I will be God to you and you a people to me" וְהָיִיתִי לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְאַתֶּם תְּהִיְיִרְלִי לְעָם. In particular, the verbal form, first-person singular imperfect of הָיָה, "adverts to the covenantal language of Sinai." Lyle Eslinger, *House of God or House of David: The Rhetoric of 2 Samuel 7*, JSOTSup 164 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 59.

²Bergen, 340, n. 68.

³Ibid. O. Betz gives more details on this and its Messianic implications ("Das messianischen Bewusstsein Jesu," *NovT* 6 [1963]: 20-48).

48:4; Exod 28:43; Num 25:13; Deut 1:8; 4:37; 10:15; 1 Sam 24:21.¹

David's royal successor was stipulated as "one who will come from your body" אִשָּׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶיךָ (2 Sam 7:12), a description that identically echoes the covenant given to Abraham as "one who will come from your body" אִשָּׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶיךָ (Gen 15:4).² This also solidifies the link between the Seed or son of David and the Seed of Abraham, which constitute further descriptions of the Seed of the woman in Gen 3:15. Everything that the ultimate Seed/son of David is equals the representative "Seed" of the woman!³

The prophetic verb forms (prophetic perfects) used in 2 Sam 7:12-16 "suggest that the individual who will become David's royal successor had not yet been born."⁴

First, this fits Solomon's situation because "he was certainly much younger than any of

¹Eslinger, 45. He thinks it unusual that "the person to whom the promise is announced is himself excluded (by virtue of mortality) from the experience" (ibid.). The similar statement in Gen 17:19 is part of other statements there, thus showing that "Abraham is party to the arrangement" (ibid.). However, I think that David cannot be said to be excluded because it is his seed and not another's that is in view! Moreover, God was perhaps here emphasizing the fact the prophecy went beyond the physical immediate offspring to the eschatological Messiah. Eslinger himself suggests: "The move is another subtle reminder to David that he has no personal role to play in the new plan that God lays out here" (ibid., 59).

²Ibid., 45. Mattson explains that children are referred to in connection with אִשָּׁר, meaning "bowels, belly, inward parts," only in Gen 25:23; Ruth 1: 11; 2 Sam 7:12; 16:11; Isa 48:19; and Ps 71:6. Excepting Ruth 1:11 and Ps 71:6, the אִשָּׁר are "mentioned only in connection with the birth of eponymous ancestors or members of the royal family" (225-226). Therefore this prophecy given to king David is most important because it connects אִשָּׁר and אִשָּׁר יֵצֵא מִמֶּעֶיךָ in a royal context. "Abram, the ancestor of kings, received the same promise that was later made to David" (ibid., 226).

³For the relationship between the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, see Clements, *Abraham and David*, 47-60; Thomas Edward McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985); and N. E. Wagner, "Abraham and David?" in *Studies on the Ancient Palestinian World*, ed. J. W. Wevers and D. B. Redford, Toronto Semitic Texts and Studies, 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 117-140.

⁴Eslinger, 45.

the sons born in Hebron and probably was not the first born to David in Jerusalem.”¹

Second, and more importantly and most fittingly, this prophetic statement fits a future perfect king to emerge from the Davidic dynastic line.

Historically, Solomon, David’s immediate successor to the throne, fulfilled the temporal part of the prophecy to “build a house for” the Lord (2 Sam 7:13) by constructing a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem between 966 and 959 B.C. (Cf. 1 Kgs 6:1-38; and Acts 7:47). But this must only be a partial and temporal fulfillment of this prophecy for several reasons. First:

The Lord’s promise to “establish the throne of his kingdom forever” seems to vault this portion of the prophecy beyond the bounds of Solomon’s reign and give it eschatological and/or messianic overtones. The throne of Solomon’s kingdom was not permanently established; in fact, his kingdom—in the strict sense of the word—ceased to exist immediately after his death (cf. 1 Kgs 11:31-38).²

Hence, one must understand that the primary, full, and permanent fulfillment of the prophecy is eschatological and Messianic.³

Second, this same context of 2 Sam 7 ties into a larger account of David’s sin which brought judgment upon his household and disunity in Israel, leading to a curse in chap. 12. Though the promise of a perpetual Davidic dynasty remained in effect, “David’s own history as king shows an ominous decline which comes close to calling the

¹Ibid., n. 69.

²Ibid., 45. “This incongruity between divine prophecy and human history invited the NT writers to look to a different son of David for the fulfillment of the word” (ibid.).

³See how the NT reports Jesus’s claims to build a temple (Matt 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; John 2:19-22); possess an eternal throne (Matt 19:28-29); and possess an imperishable kingdom (Luke 22:29-30; John 18:36).

whole venture into question.”¹

Awful judgment befell the Davidic dynasty up till the end of the book of Kings (2 Kgs 25:27-30), but the nation still held tenaciously to the covenantal promise of perpetuity. “It is certainly a hope focused on the unforeseen future, a time which is not this time.”² It remained a hope in “the King of the future”³ who cannot be “anything other than a distant prospect.”⁴ He will be “an ideal king.”⁵

Collins rightly insists that the “clearest syntactic parallel” to Gen 3:15 is 2 Sam 7:13.⁶ The passage of 2 Sam 7:12-15 (= 1 Chr 17:11-11) vividly displays several masculine singular verb inflections and masculine pronouns as referents to **לְיְהוָה**. These

¹Satterthwaite, “David in the Books of Samuel,” 64. Bergen notes that the punishment inflicted on David’s family for their disobedience accords well with Torah’s teaching that the disobedience of covenant people will be punished (Lev 26:25; Deut 28:25, 49-52; 1 Kgs 11:14, 23-26) (341). “Without affirming Jesus’ need for punishment due to personal sin, the writer of the Book of Hebrews seems to suggest that this passage is likewise messianic (cf. Heb 5:8-9)” (ibid.).

²Iain W. Provan, “The Messiah in the Book of Kings,” in *The Lord’s Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, ed. Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 76.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid. Provan continues: “The book of Kings always measures its monarchs in terms of the ideal, finding almost all of them wanting in serious respects. The least two criticised, Hezekiah and Josiah, together with the early Solomon (criticised, but nevertheless blessed by God to an unparalleled extent) are themselves interesting, to the extent that they may be taken as indicating the shape of the ideal towards which the authors of Kings were looking” (ibid.).

Provan refers to Mowinckel who “distinguishes between an ideal of kingship which belongs to the present (though also looking towards the future) and an expectation of the Messiah as a purely future, eschatological figure. Before the ideal of kingship could become the expectation of a future Messiah, he maintains, it had to be separated from those possibilities which were associated with the next festival and the next king, yet never realized. The gulf between ideal and reality had to become considerable” (ibid., 80, referring to Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 123, 157).

⁶Collins, “A Syntactical Note (Gen 3:15),” 144-145.

include:

(vs. 12) מִמְּלֶכְתּוֹ ... יֵצֵא ... זֶרְעֶךָ “Your seed . . . he shall come out . . . his kingdom.”

(vs. 13) מִמְּלֶכְתּוֹ ... הוּא יִבְנֶה “He, he will build . . . his kingdom.”

(vs. 14) וְהוּא יִהְיֶה-לִּי לְבֵן ... בְּהַעֲוֹתוֹ וְהִכַּחַתִּיו לוֹ “To him . . . and he, he will be my son (singular) . . . If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him . . .”

(vs. 15) מִמֶּנּוּ “From him.”

This use of masculine singular verbs and masculine singular pronouns and pronominal suffixes has been shown above as indicating that a singular individual Seed is in view in both Gen 3:15 and supported here in 2 Sam 7:12-15 (= 1 Chr 17:11-13).

Similar to Gen 3:15, there is an emphatic use of the masculine singular personal pronoun הוּא “he” in its so-called “clearest syntactic parallel,” 2 Sam 7:13 הוּא יִבְנֶה “He, he will build . . . his kingdom.” This is repeated in 2 Sam 7:14 וְהוּא יִהְיֶה-לִּי לְבֵן “And he, he will be my son (singular).”

Since the subject pronouns are not normally necessary for the meaning, the singular masculine personal pronouns הוּא “he” were intentionally included in the Hebrew manuscripts to make it plain that a singular individual is being promised in each instance. Furthermore, reference is being made to the same ultimate representative individual, the Messianic “Seed of the woman” traced from Gen 3:15, all through Genesis

into the Writings.¹

David's ecstatic and flabbergasted response to God's unbelievably buoyant promise to his household found him sitting before the Lord in exclamatory prayer: "Who am I, O Adonai Yaweh, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far? And as if this were not enough in your sight, O Adonai Yahweh, you have spoken about the future of the house of your servant. This is the charter for humanity, O Adonai Yahweh!" (2 Sam 7:18-19).²

David recognizes that the promises God had just given him were identical to the ancient promises that have formed the foundation of the people's "hope of salvation and for the future."³ That these promises were now being repeated to him and placed in his offspring forever was beyond his wildest imagination!

David's use of the exceptionally awesome name of God אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה "Adonai Yahweh" five times (2 Sam 7:18, 19 [twice], 22, 28, 29) has no parallel in the books of

¹Bergen traces this Messianic promise into the Prophet writings: "The covenant that the Lord established with the house of David became the nucleus around which messages of hope proclaimed by Hebrew prophets of later generations were built (cf. Isa 9:1-7; 11:1-16; 16:5; 55:3; Jer 23:5-6; 30:8; 33:15-26; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Zech 12:7-8). To a people broken and humbled by invaders sent as agents of divine punishment, the Lord's promise to David of a kingdom that 'will endure forever' (vs. 16) was the seed of hope that resurrected a nation. The Lord's promise of an enduring house for David became Israel's assurance that God would once again lift the nation up and cause it to flourish anew" (337).

²I have followed the personal translation offered by Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 79. Kaiser argues against mistranslations of vs. 19 in most versions, especially, NIV's rendering: "Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign Lord?" where the Hebrew reads: וְזֹאת תּוֹרַת הָאֲדֹנָי. The word תּוֹרַת "law, charter" is what NIV erroneously renders as "your usual way of dealing with" ("The Blessing of David: A Charter for Humanity," in *The Law and the Prophets*, ed., John Skilton [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974], 298-318).

³Kaiser, *Messiah in the Old Testament*, 80.

Samuel or Chronicles.¹ Carlson sees this as a significant link with God's promise of a Seed to Abraham in Gen 15:2, 8, because Abraham also addresses God with the same name combination "Adonai Yahweh."² This correlation is far from being accidental! "David wants to show that what God is telling him is indeed part of the same promise-plan that was given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."³

Kaiser enumerates the implications of this being a charter for all humanity:

What David received is to be conveyed to everyone, including all the Gentiles and nations of the earth. This is further reinforcement of the gospel motif announced in Genesis 12:3, that in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Rather than viewing the gifts that God has just conferred on him in a selfish way, David sees them missiologically. The "charter for humanity" is nothing less than God's plan for the whole human race. All humanity can profit from what he has just been told about his house/dynasty, kingdom, and throne.⁴

Extrabiblical support for this position is provided by the Midrashic fragment on 2 Sam 7:10b-14 and Pss 1-2, found in Qumran document called 4QFlorilegium (4QFlor.). This document sheds light on the Qumran exegesis, post-biblical tradition, and Christian use of Nathan's oracle of 2 Sam 7. This is clearly taken as "a prediction of the coming Messiah at the end of days,"⁵ boldly quoting God's words that call the Messiah His

¹Ibid. "The other five instances of 'Adonai Yahweh' are Deut 3:24; 9:26; Josh 7:7; Judg 6:22; 16:28. Note the promise content in each prayer. In Kings the double name occurs only in 1 Kgs 2:26; 8:53, while 'Adonai' by itself appears in 1 Kgs 3:10, 15; 22:6; 2 Kgs 7:6; 19:23" (ibid., n. 17).

²Carlson, 127.

³Kaiser, *Messiah in the Old Testament*, 80.

⁴Ibid., 80-81.

⁵Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 62-63. "The midrash offers a striking comparison with the opening chapter of Hebrews, where both 2 Sam 7:14 and Ps 2:7 are quoted to speak of Jesus the Messiah as God's son" (ibid., 63). George J. Brooke notes that its remaining undecipherable fragment seems to

“Son.”

The English translation of parts of lines 1, 7, and 10-13 from Fragment 1 of 4QFlor which deal with 2 Sam 7:10b-14 are as follows:

(1:1) . . . “And his enemies [will not disturb him] any more; neither will a son of wickedness afflict him anymore as formerly . . .” (1:7). . . . And that he said to David, “And I will give you rest from all your enemies,” that means that he will give rest to them from all the sons of Belial who cause them to stumble in order to destroy them [through their errors] . . . (1:10-13) “And the Lord declares to you that he will build you a house. And I will raise up your seed after you, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he will be my son”: he is the Branch of David who will stand with the Interpreter of the Law, who [will rule] in Zion in the latter days as it is written, “And I will raise up the booth of David which is fallen”: he is the booth [or Branch] of David which was fallen, who shall arise to save Israel.¹

This part of the document seems to focus on an eschatological holy house for God which God actually builds with his hands, God’s promise to “give rest,” and finally on to describing David’s “Seed” as the coming Messiah, the Branch of David.² In order to achieve this, the commentator seems to have intentionally omitted several lines from 2 Sam 7:10-14 probably for reasons which are to serve the purpose and emphasis of the commentator. For instance, he omits the phrase “he will build a house for my name” (2 Sam 7:13) because “this goes against the main intent of the passage which is trying to

include comments on selected verses from Deut 33 and Num 24 (*Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in Its Jewish Context*, JSOTSup, 29 [Sheffield: JSOT, 1985], 80-84). Cf. John Allegro, ed., *Discoveries in the Judean Desert of Jordan V: Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998); Yigael Yadin, “A Midrash on 2 Sam vii and Ps. i-ii (4QFlorilegium),” *IEJ* 9 (1959): 95-98; John Strugnell, “Notes en marge du volume V des Discoveries in the Judean Desert of Jordan,” *RQ* 29 (1970): 163-276; and Géza Vermès, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin, 1975).

¹Juel, 64. Juel principally follows the English translation from Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran*, 91-92, with emendations from Vermès, *Dead Sea Scrolls in English*.

²Juel, 65.

suggest that the future house (sanctuary) is not to be made with human hands but to have its origin from God.”¹

This commentator also excludes the phrase “who will come forth from your body” (2 Sam 7:12) in order to avoid the “delicate subject of the origin of the messianic kingly figure”² which the Qumran texts typically avoid. Similarly, he omits the phrase “when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your father” perhaps because of “its temporal content.”³ Over all, the commentator wanted to underscore the eschatological Messianic aspect of David’s promised Seed.

The last comments on lines 10-13 of fragment 1 of 4QFlor. that are the ones that concentrate directly on identifying the Seed promised to David as Messiah. He is called the “Branch of David.” The kingly and Messianic designation “branch” comes from Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; and 6:12, which are usually treated as Messianic texts.⁴

This text boldly speaks of the Messiah it describes as God’s “son” even though such imagery for the Messiah was generally avoided in later Targumic and rabbinic traditions. Even though this document does not explain the title “Son of God” as messianic, such usage is “surely conceivable.”⁵ First of all, the text is clearly royal.

¹Brooke, 112. See further details in Juel, 65-67.

²Brooke, 112.

³Ibid.

⁴Juel, 67. Juel notes such belief in the Qumran and among the Rabbis (*Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark*, SBL Dissertation Series, 31 [Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977], 172-182).

⁵Juel, 67.

Second, “the placement of a midrash on Pss 1-2 immediately following the messianic interpretation of 2 Sam 7:10-14 in 4QFlor lends greater probability to the suggestion that ‘the Son of God’ was understood as royal and messianic language in post-biblical Jewish circles.”¹

The other related title mentioned here is “the Interpreter of the Law.”² This title is not clarified here but is mentioned in the Damascus Document (CD), particularly CD VI, 7 and CD VII, 15-19 with reference to Num 21:18; 24:17-18; Gen 49:10. This involves an understanding of a Davidic “Prince” who is going to teach righteousness in the last days as a priest and king.³

On the whole, 2 Sam 7:4-22 sheds light on the understanding and identification of the “Seed” of the woman in Gen 3:15. The intertextual allusions are abundant and give us leads to other texts both in the Old and New Testaments as seen below.

Isa 53

The Messianic presentation as a suffering and atoning Servant is the “summit of OT prophetic literature.”⁴ It elaborates on the suffering, death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah. However, it underscores his triumph and success with a structural pattern

¹Ibid., 68. Martin Hengel states that such designation is “not completely alien to Palestinian Judaism” (*The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion*, trans. J. Bowden [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976], 45).

²Juel, 68.

³Ibid., 68 passim. See Brooke, 197-205. Reference is made to Deut 33 and Num 24 also featured in 4QFlor, fragments 5-11; 1QM, 4QpIsa* and 4QpPs*.

⁴Kaiser, *The Messiah in the OT*, 178.

of an inclusio in 52:13 and 53:11-12.¹

Yahweh is the speaker, while the prophet Isaiah is his spokesman. The other “Servant Songs” (Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-6 ; 50:4-9) are also related to this final one. This Servant-Seed will experience both “royal exaltation and extreme degradation and suffering.”² This is “an individual Servant who represents the collective servant.”³

This passage is about the one and the same “covenantal Seed, the anointed One of the Davidic house, called and assigned to be Yahweh’s Servant”⁴ who suffered severe humiliation on behalf of Yahweh’s people. The Servant-Messiah who is definitely of the “seed of Judah, of Abraham, and of the woman (Gen 3:15), is consistently spoken of as the suffering one. He is to have his heel bruised; he is typified by sacrificial animals slaughtered and offered up vicariously.”⁵

The fact that this Servant was suffering vicariously is underscored by the sharp distinction between “us” and “him” in vss. 4-6ff. He served as our substitute. He is representative of the collective humanity who have sinned. His “seed,” which he will

¹Ibid. “He begins with the words: ‘Behold/See, my servant will have success’ (52:13), and concludes with the Servant’s receiving a portion with the great ones (53:12) and with his soul’s being satisfied with what his death and resurrection have accomplished (53:11). In other words, the agony of this song is bracketed by the news of the Servant’s success and triumph” (ibid.). James Muilenburg affirms: “The poem as a whole is one of triumph” (“The Book of Isaiah, Chapter 40-66,” *Interpreter’s Bible* [New York: Abingdon, 1956], 5:615).

²Ibid., 629.

³Ibid.

⁴Groningen, 620.

⁵Ibid. See Isa 53:1-3; Pss 22:6 [MT 7]; 40:6-8 [MT 7-9]; 69:3 [MT 4]; Isa 49:4; and 50:6.

later see, constitute “those whom He by His vicarious suffering and expiatory sacrifice has redeemed from guilt and the power of their sins.”¹ King David himself spoke of his own suffering in Pss 22:1-2 [MT 2-3]; 41:5-9 [MT 6-10]; and 69:4 [MT 5]. The idea of the royal One enduring pain is reminiscent of Gen 3:15-16.

David and his royal descendants are fondly called Yahweh’s servants, or “my servant.” Though several prophets like Moses also answered “servant,” including even the Persian Cyrus, they were “servants” only as far as they prefigured the Messiah. These were Yahweh’s agents who prepared for, pointed to, or prophesied about the coming Messiah. The real Servant par excellence is the Messiah.

Groningen observed that Isaiah had the house of David in view in his reference to the Persian king, Cyrus, who was called to be God’s agent because of the sin and failure of the Davidic house resulting in the suffering of the descendants of David (Isa 44:28; 45:1). Isaiah here portrays the royal suffering Servant as taking “upon himself the punishment”² due to these sinful and rebellious people.

As long as this connection of the Davidic house with this suffering Servant is retained, it becomes easy to see how his identity connects back to the seed being traced from Gen 3:15. The suffering Servant is also the Seed of the woman, of Abraham, of Judah, and of king David.³

¹Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 3:313.

²Groningen, 646.

³Scholars who identify the servant as a “royal servant,” linking him with the traditional Messianic interpretation involving the promised offspring of King David include, among others: W. A. M. Beuken, “*Mišpāṭ*: The First Servant Song and Its Canonical Context,” *VT* 22 (1972): 1-30, esp. 2-4; R. J. Clifford, “Isaiah 40-66,” *Harper’s Bible Commentary*, ed. J. L. May (San Francisco: Harper & Row,

One other aspect that connects the suffering Servant with Gen 3:15 is the fact that the suffering and enmity upon the Servant are God-initiated. The Servant is vicariously smitten and stricken of God, though sinless. Isa 53:4-5 uses passive verbs: **נָגַעַ** Qal passive participle masculine singular, “stricken”; **מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים** Hofal participle masculine singular construct, “smitten of God”; **מְחֻלָּל** Piel participle masculine singular, “wounded”; and **מְדַכָּא** Pual participle masculine singular, “bruised/crushed/shattered.” “Thus God is emphatically the actor.”¹

God is said to be responsible for these actions only as far as God divinely instituted the enmity culminating in the fatal clash between the Seed and Satan (Gen

1988), 575; J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1993), 13, n. 1; D. H. Odendaal, *The Eschatological Expectation of Isaiah 40-66 with Special Reference to Israel and the Nations* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 129-135; Harold Henry Rowley, *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament* (London: Lutterworth, 1952), 59-88; P. D. Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1992), and Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:110, n. 5.

I reject other attempts at identifying the Servant as inconsistent and insufficient, in view of scriptural parallels that support his positive link with the Davidic house. Some scholars take the servant figure as a collective referent to “corporate Israel” whether the whole nation of Israel, an ideal Israel, or a faithful remnant Israel: e.g., K. Jeppesen, “Mother Zion, Father Servant: A Reading of Isaiah 49-55,” in *Of Prophets’ Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honour of R. Norman Whybray on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. H. A. McKay and D. J. A. Clines, JSOTS 162 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1993), 109-125; J. Lindblom, *The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah: A New Attempt to Solve an Old Problem* (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1951), 46-51, 102-4; Muilenburg, “The Book of Isaiah, Chapter 40-66,” 5:406-414; J. E. Rembaum, “The Development of a Jewish Exegetical Tradition Regarding Isaiah 53,” *HTR* 75 (1982): 239-311; N. H. Snaith, “Isaiah 40-66: A Study of the Teaching of Second Isaiah and Its Consequences,” in *Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah*, VTS 14 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977) 135-264; and L. E. Wilshire, “The Servant-City: A New Interpretation of the ‘Servant of the Lord’ in the Servant Songs of Deutero-Isaiah,” *JBL* 94 (1975): 356-367. Other scholars identify the servant as “A Prophetic Servant,” the Deutero-Isaiah himself: e.g., J. Begrich, *Studien zu Deuterocesaja*, BWANT 4/25 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1938); K. Elliger, *Deuterocesaja in seinem Verhältnis zu Tritocesaja*, BWANT 63 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1933); idem, *Deuterocesaja. 1. Teilband: Jesaja 40, 1-45, 7* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1978), 198-221; and R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 71, 171-183.

¹Kaiser, *Messiah in the OT*, 180.

3:15). God appointed that both will “crush” each other, but the Seed will have the upper hand because he is crushed at the heel, as opposed to the head of Satan yielding Satan utter defeat.

The MT uses “He” for the servant in vs. 10 as can be seen in the third-person masculine singular verbal suffices, and also the third-person masculine singular suffix “his” for soul of the servant. However, the LXX changes to second-person singular but remains singular, “showing fidelity to the same Hebrew as the MT.”¹

Eugene Ekblad rightly observed similar vocabulary regarding sin-offering between Isa 53:4ff. and Lev 5:6-8. He then correctly notes the strong intertextual links between the promise to the servant for offering the sin-offering (Isa 53:10-11) and “the Lord’s promise to Abraham in the LXX of Gen 22:17-18 that he will multiply his seed and bless all the nations in his seed in response to his near offering his son.”²

Some linkage is also observable between Abraham’s Seed inheriting the cities of his enemies (Gen 22:17) and the Servant inheriting many (Isa 53:12). All the above lead to the conclusion that the Seed of the woman of Gen 3:15 is finally identified as the

¹Eugene Robert Ekblad, Jr., *Isaiah’s Servant Poems According to the Septuagint: An Exegetical and Theological Study*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 23 (Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 246. Ekblad notes how the LXX made some word selections different from the MT in verses like Isa 53:4, 6, in order to “avoid implicating God in the oppression” of the Servant (ibid.). The theological perspective of the LXX translator(s) “likely influenced their word choice. Rather than reinforcing an image of God as one who delights in crushing his servant and people, even if it were a means to some greater end. . . . According to the LXX the Lord is disassociated from the persecutors. The Lord is not implicated as perpetrator of wrongdoing against the persecuted servant, whether that be an individual or the community. Rather, in the Lord’s desire is to restore his servant, purifying him of the plague” (ibid., 217). He sees the LXX as emphasizing the solidarity between the Servant and His people.

²ibid., 247. “While this link is also present in the MT, the servant there is identified with Abraham as the one who will see a descendant” (ibid.).

suffering but victorious Messianic Servant of Isa 53. This suffering comes in spite of the victory assured the Messiah in both texts.

Ps 2

Ps 2 has an inherent Messianic meaning, especially through vss. 10-12.¹ The content of Ps 2 has been described as a royal psalm about the “enthronement” ceremony of a Judean king.² In this case, it reflects the ancient practice of ritually adopting the new king as “son” of the deity³ as can be seen in vs. 7: “You are my son, this day have I begotten you.” This bears some resemblance with the Davidic covenant of 2 Sam 7:14, and therefore, indirectly echoes the premier Seed of the woman being traced from Gen 3:15.

It also seems to have been composed during David’s time when he was being challenged by surrounding enemy nations.⁴ In this respect, this psalm pictures enemies rising in rebellion and hostility against God and his Anointed One (Ps 2:1-3). This seems

¹Davidson, “New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 23-27.

²Cf. Hermann Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen*, 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 5. Joachim Schaper refers to a comparatively clear “messianic passage in 1 Enoch 51,3 where the Chosen One, seated on his throne, teaches wisdom on the day of Judgment. The Messiah’s teaching of the ‘secrets of wisdom’ is considered as one of the central features of eschatological fulfillment” (*Eschatology in the Greek Psalter* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1995], 74). Schaper concludes that “the imagery of Psalm 2 LXX was conceived of as messianic” (*ibid.*, 76).

³Ishida discusses the use of an adoption metaphor for kingship in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East. An Israelite king was ritually “adopted” by God upon assumption to the throne (*Royal Dynasties*, 108-9). McCarter labels Pss 2:7-8; 89:27-28 [MT 26-27] as the evidence that God ritually adopted David as His son upon David’s enthronement (207).

⁴Kaiser believes that David was the author of both Pss 1-2, as a “double introduction to the whole Psalter” (*Messiah in the Old Testament*, 96-97).

to typify the enmity divinely instituted in Gen 3:15 between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan. The two moral classes of the human race are involved. This battle is climaxed with God delivering the victory to Himself and His son (Ps 2:8-9). The ultimate victory of the representative Seed of the woman is again assured and explained eschatologically.

Ps 18:50 (Heb 51)

This was a special psalm of praise to God sung by David in commemoration of his deliverance from his enemies. At the very end of this series of thanksgiving, David exclaims in vs. 50 (Heb 51): “Great deliverance He gives to His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his seed forever.”

(מגדל) [מגדיל] ישועות מלכו ועשה
חסד למשיחו לדוד ולזרעו ער-עולם

There is an obvious parallelism between the first and second lines of this verse. Moreover, more parallelism is featured in the second part between מְשִׁיחַ, “Messiah,” and דָּוִד, “David,” and זֶרַע “Seed” all of which are parallel to מֶלֶךְ “King” in the first part of the verse. Of course, יְשׁוּעָה “deliverance” is parallel to חֶסֶד “mercy.”

If this suggested parallelism is true, one may conclude that the “Seed” is the “Messiah” because they appear to be parallel to each other. Of the thirty-seven OT uses

of מָשִׁיחַ “Messiah,”¹ and the 226 OT uses of the noun זֶרַע “Seed,”² these two important words are used together here only in Ps 18:50 (Heb. 51) and 2 Sam 22:51.

Both Ps 18: 50 (Heb. 51) and 2 Sam 22:51 are identical verses with verbatim expressions and word order.

The link of this verse with 2 Sam 7:12-13 makes it abundantly clear that the Seed of Gen 3:15 is also the Messiah promised for our salvation. This Seed is still portrayed as the Davidic Messiah.

Ps 68

The Hebrew text of Ps 68 has been fraught with many problems with the resulting divergence in its interpretations.³ The MT names David as its author, being the psalm sung upon the return of the Israelite army from battle, suggested to be after his victory over the Syro-Ammonite coalition (2 Sam 10). Also, it “undoubtedly was sung at feasts and temple worship services.”⁴

¹The 37 occurrences of the word מָשִׁיחַ “Messiah” include: Lev 4:3, 5, 16; 6:15; 1 Sam 2:10, 35; 12:3, 5; 16:6; 24:7, 11; 26:9, 11, 16, 23; 2 Sam 1:14, 16; 2 Sam 19:22; 22:51; 23:1; 1 Chr 16:22; 2 Chr 6:42; Pss 2:2; 18:51; 20:7; 28:8; 84:10; 89:39, 52; 105:15; 132:10, 17; Isa 45:1; Lam 4:20; Dan 9:25, 26; and Hab 3:13.

²See list above.

³See comments in A. A. Anderson, *The Book of the Psalms*, NCBC, 1:481; John Baigent and Leslie C. Allen, “The Psalms,” *The International Bible Commentary*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 645; Leupold Sabourin, *The Psalms* (New York: Alba, 1974), 327-328; and Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms*, trans. Herbert Hartwell, *OTL* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 481. Marvin E. Tate mentions that this psalm has been variously tagged “an eschatological hymn,” “a victory song,” “a processional hymn,” and “liturgy” (*Psalms 51-100*, WBC, 20 [Dallas: Word, 1990], 173).

⁴Groningen, 371. Ernst Hengstenberg maintains that David authored this Psalm in celebration of the return of the ark to Mount Zion after it had been captured (*Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. John T. Leith [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1870], 2:335-336). However, Michael D. Goulder believes that it is the

First, the terminological correlation between Gen 3:15 and Ps 68 is captured in the interplay of the “foot” and the “head” in Ps 68:21-23 [MT 22-24]. Interestingly, the interplay of the head and the foot in Gen 3:15 is alluded to in Ps 68:21-23 [MT 22-24] through an *inclusio*. The “head” is found in the introduction of this section (Ps 68:21 [MT 22]), while the “foot” is found in the conclusion of this section (Ps 68:23 [MT 24]).

In Ps 68:21, 23 [MT 22, 24] God seems to crush His enemies’ heads with the foot. In Gen 3:15, the enemy seems to be crushed on its head by the foot of the Seed, causing a reciprocal attack on the heel of the Seed. This inseparably binds these two texts together.

In Ps 68:1, the psalmist wishes that “God would arise, his enemies be scattered.” This echoes the championing of the cause of God’s followers against their enemies in the here and now and in the end times.¹ In vs. 21 [MT 22], it is stated that “God shall smash the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of those who walk in trespasses.”² Both passages spell total ultimate victory for God and His people while the wicked are shamed and destroyed.

God Himself carries out this victorious act over the enemies instead of delegating

“victory hymn of the royalists after the defeat of Absalom’s rebellion at Zalmon in the forest of Ephraim. It describes the flight of the kings, and the expropriation or execution of the rebels. . . . God’s promise that David would return from Bashan (the East Bank) is seen as fulfilled” (*The Prayers of David [Psalms 51-72]: Studies in the Psalter, II*, JSOTSup 102 [Sheffield: Sheffield, 1990], 191).

¹Kaiser, *Messiah in the Old Testament*, 131. I accept his translation as more faithful to the Hebrew text.

²Goulder suggests: “The scalp is hairy *šē’ār*, because the rebels also grew their hair long to consecrate themselves for battle; and the long hair makes them look like demons (*šāir*, a hairy one), and so suited to extermination for the public good” (206). Tate also includes a possible hint of a demonic reference (181-182).

it to some other. The victory is God-given, full and final. These verses therefore show a thematic link with the promises about the Seed of the woman who will “crush the head of the serpent” (Gen 3:15), the Seed of Abraham who will prevail over his enemies (Gen 22:18; 24:60), and the Seed of David (2 Sam 7:9, 11).

In vs. 22, “God said he would bring David back from Mahanaim in Bashan; no doubt the royal prophets felt that such a prediction was a corollary of his more general covenant to David in 2 Sam 7. He would bring him back from the deep places of the sea.”¹ This is another link with the rest of the Messianic prophecies in 2 Sam 7 which definitely refer back to the promised Seed from Genesis onwards.

The main Messianic import of the Psalm comes from vs. 18, which depicts a divine person ascending to heaven, taking captives, and receiving and giving gifts. This may reflect the Messiah’s advent, ascension, and endowing of His people with gifts which will enable them to share in His victory over the enemy now and in the final day.²

Ps 72

Generally, Ps 72 is treated as a “royal psalm.” It is a petition on behalf of a new king of Israel on the occasion of his enthronement and/or “a reconstructed annual festival of the king’s enthronement in Israel.”³ Its “poetic imagery and intertextuality as part of

¹Goulder, 206.

²Kaiser, *Messiah in the OT*, 133.

³Heim, “The Perfect King of Psalm 72: An Intertextual Enquiry,” 223. “In the NT, Christ was identified as the (partial) fulfillment of the psalm’s intercessions and benedictions” (ibid., 224). See Matt 21:4-5; John 12:15-16. Enthronement association of this Psalm is found in Gunkel, 140-171; R. E. Murphy, *A Study of Psalm 72 (71)* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1948); Weiser, 502; and Tate, 222.

the Old Testament canon and tradition”¹ made it open to Messianic interpretations. In fact Kaiser considers it a “direct messianic prediction because it uses the future tense throughout and not even Solomon in all his glory could have fulfilled what is said here.”²

This Psalm is self-identified as one of the prayers of David (vs. 20). It was specifically “for Solomon” (vs. 1), i.e., for the enthronement of Solomon, the son of David.³ It echoes Nathan’s dynastic promise in 2 Sam 7:1-17 and David’s responses in 2 Sam 7:17-29 and 2 Sam 23:1-7.

Structurally, it consists of “requests followed by positive descriptions of the king’s reign.”⁴ The verb forms in vss. 2-7 and 9-11 “express future events contingent on

¹Heim, “The Perfect King of Psalm 72: An Intertextual Enquiry,” 224.

²Kaiser, *Messiah in the OT*, 133-134. Solomon’s reign merely supplies “the imagery, language, and line of descent through which the peaceful and prosperous reign is to come” (ibid., 134). Ps 72 has been treated as Messianic by many scholars like Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, 501-502; Heim, 223-248; K. Larkin, *The Eschatology of Second Zechariah* (Kampen: Pharos, 1994), 75-76; R. Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 89-90; C. L. Meyers and E. M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 172-173; D. L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi* (London: SCM, 1995), 59-60; Schaper, 26-30, 72-126, 138-164, 174-176; to mention but a few.

However, some wrongly contend that Ps 72, like other royal psalms, was originally only intended for the reigning kings in Israel, but were later reinvented with Messianic interpretation to express the expectation of a new and different future king after the termination of the Israelite monarchy. They argue that this was done because the political reality of the monarchy’s failure did not correlate with Nathan’s Oracle in 2 Sam 7:1-17, which promised the unlimited continuity of the Davidic dynasty. See Ronald E. Clements, “The Messianic Hope in the Old Testament,” *JSOT* 43 (1989): 3-19; and Claus Westermann, *The Living Psalms* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989), 56-59. In contrast, there are no textual signs of later additions. Also, the echoes of earlier Messianic promises link this psalm properly with the Messiah. In fact, Heim demonstrates its intricate structural chiasmus which rather points to its unity (228).

³See N. Fuglister, “Die Verwendung und das Verständnis der psalmen und des Psalters um die Zeitenwende,” in *Beiträge zur Psalmenforschung*, ed. J. Schreiner, *Forschung zur Bibel* 60 (Würzburg: Echter, 1988), 374; Goulder, 240-246; and Heim, 235. Weiser sees that the LXX’s use of εἰς Σαλωμων for Solomon in vs. 1 supports Davidic authorship (502).

⁴Heim, 226. Cf. Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 506-512. More discussions on its structure can be found in

the fulfillment of the requests in vv. 1 and 8.”¹ Vs. 1 requests the Lord to grant the king a divine sense of justice. Vs. 8 requests the king’s international/universal rule in perpetuity, occasioned by the positive results of his righteous reign outlined in vss. 2-7. Vss. 9-11 anticipate the result of this to be that everybody will fear and obey him and there will be peace. Vss. 15-17 contain a third request for the king’s long life, superiority, and peace/blessings for all.

I am convinced that only the Messiah could fit into the superlative descriptions and ideals stipulated in this Psalm, none else, whether in the Davidic dynasty or elsewhere. The Messiah is here represented as “ruling in righteousness, justice, and peace as he receives the homage of the nations of the world.”² With this setting ascertained, it is striking to see how the Psalm strictly connects to the earlier revelations about the Special Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), also the Seed of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3, 7; 22:17-18), clearly identifying him as the Messiah.

Vs. 9b states that וְאֹיְבָיו עָפָר יִלְחָכוּ: “And his enemies shall lick the dust.” This echoes the Edenic pronouncement that the serpent would eat dust: וְעָפָר תֹּאכַל: “And dust shall you eat” (Gen 3:14). The word עָפָר “dust” occurs in both places. Dust is to become an object of consumption in both cases. This definitely connects with the context of the Messianic promise of the special Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15).

Heim, 226-229; J. S. Kselman, “Psalm 72: Some Observations on Structure,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 220 (1973): 77-81; and Patrick W. Skehan, “Strophic Structure in Psalm 72,” *Biblica* 40, no. 2 (1959): 302-308.

¹Heim, 226.

²Kaiser, *Messiah in the OT*, 134.

Similarly, vs. 17 entreats:

יְהִי שְׁמוֹ לְעוֹלָם לְפָנֵי־שָׁמֶשׁ (יְנִיחַ) [יְנִיחַ] שְׁמוֹ וַיִּתְבָּרַךְ בּוֹ כָּל־גּוֹיִם יִאֲשְׁרֶהוּ

“His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and all nations shall be blessed in him and they shall call him blessed.” The first part of this verse is clearly based on the Abrahamic promise of Gen 12:2 where God had promised Abraham a great name.

The second part of Ps 72:17 parallels Gen 12:2-3; 22:18 and 26:4 promising that in Abraham and Isaac and their seeds shall all nations be blessed. It is very striking that David uses the same verb form Hithpael of “to bless” to avoid any doubt that he is connecting with the earlier related blessing which began with the patriarchs (used only twice: Gen 22:18 and 26:4-5). The Niphal verb form of “to bless” is also used three times: Gen 12:3; 18:18; and 28:14, always in connection with the same blessing formula. Definitely, “the closest parallel to the patriarchal blessing is found in Psalm 72.”¹

In retrospect, Ps 72 must be well-connected with Gen 3:15, illuminating the identification of the Seed of the woman. It is the same promise and not another that was repeated and expanded to the patriarchs. “It has not changed in its basic thrust”² when it came into effect in David and Solomon’s day. “Its focus and center is on the Anointed One, the Messiah, who will come in the line of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David;

¹Mattson, 196, see n. 28. See also Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Rock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1993), 168; Robert A. Payne, “The ‘Seed,’ the Spirit, and the Blessing of Abraham,” *BSac* 152 (1995): 213; and Schaper, 93-60. Anderson also suggests that “the intention may have been to stress the fact that the divine promise to the patriarch has been fulfilled in the house of David” (526).

²Kaiser, *Messiah in the OT*, 135.

but its benefits are to be made available to all the families of the earth.”¹ This is the gospel “with its call for all to believe in God’s Man of Promise who is to come.”²

Ps 89

This Psalm was written by Ethan, a major player in the worship program of Solomon’s temple (1 Chr 15:17, 19). It abundantly reflects the terminology of 2 Sam 7 (=1 Chr 17:1-15).³ The tone of this Psalm shows that it was composed at an “unstable time for the Davidic house and the oracle of Nathan”⁴ concerning its perpetuity.

This supplication Psalm is based on the promises made to David in 2 Sam 7:4-16. The Psalm recollects many aspects of the Davidic covenant, such as divine assistance (vs. 21), victory over enemies (vss. 22-24), sonship (vss. 24, 26, 28), universality (vss. 25, 27), and perpetuity (vss. 29-37). These connections make this Psalm Messianic.⁵

Consequently, Ps 89 reinforces and equally expands our understanding of the special Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15), whose line of descent has been traced through Abraham to Judah, and finally to David (2 Sam 7:12-16). The word “seed” is repeated in

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Several scholars accept the relationship among Ps 89; 2 Sam 7; and 1 Chr 17:1-15, namely: Groningen, 310; F. W. Grosheide, *De Psalmen* (Kampen: Kok, 1955); Heim, 240; S. R. Hirsch, *The Psalms* (New York: Feldham, 1966); Ishida, 82; Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150* (London: Inter-Varsity, 1975); J. Ridderbos, *De Psalmen* (Kampen: Kok, 1958); Nahum M. Sarna, “Psalm 89: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis,” *Brandeis University (P. W. Lown Instit.) Studies and Texts* 1 (1963): 29-46; and Matitiahu Tsevat, *The Meaning of the Book of Job and Other Biblical Studies: Essays on the Literature and Religion of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Ktav, 1980), 102.

⁴Kaiser, *Messiah in the OT*, 84.

⁵Ibid., 85-87.

Ps 89:4, 29, 36 (Heb 5, 30, 37).

Ps 110

This is a Davidic Psalm as the superscription indicates.¹ It can only be “a direct and specific messianic psalm”² because no human being perfectly fits into every description found in it. It refers directly only to the future ideal king, the Messiah. David must have received this description by revelation based upon his knowledge of Messianic Nathan’s oracle in 2 Sam 7:12-16 to this effect.³

¹See *GKC*, 419; Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, 2:391; Waltke and O’Conner, 207, n. 70; and Robert D. Wilson, “The Headings of the Psalms,” *Princeton Theological Review* 24 (1926): 32.

²Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on Psalms* (1871; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 3:186 passim. See Hasel C. Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 141-142; Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 3:313-331; Kaiser, *Messiah in the OT*, 96; Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, 391-396; Dwight Dongwan Kim, “Is Christ Sitting on the Davidic Throne? Peter’s Use of Psalm 110:1 in His Pentecost Speech in Acts 2” (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1993), 43-46; Edward J. Kissane, *The Book of Psalms* (Westminster: Newman, 1954); J. B. Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 259-260; J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms* (Reprint; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 2:297 passim; and Allen Ross, “Psalms,” *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Old Testament ed. (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1985), 789-790.

I reject the Cultic interpretation: e.g., Sigmond Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship* (New York: Abingdon, 1967), 1:48; Historical interpretation: e.g., F. L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 34; and the Typological-Prophetic interpretation which shares the application with Solomon and the ultimate Messianic reign on the Davidic throne: e.g., Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology*, JSNTSup Series 12 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 128-130.

³Kim, 43-46. Kim cites the following reasons: (1) The use of the formulaic phrase **וַיִּבְרַךְ** **יְהוָה** which is common only in the prophetic books, used only here in the Psalms, always denotes “an oracle of God.” Usually used at the end of the message, its appearance at the beginning of Ps 110, must be emphatic. Moreover, David was also a prophet. (2) King David could not have addressed any of his descendants as “my lord.” “It is almost inconceivable in the oriental mind for a father to call his son ‘my lord’” (ibid., 45). (3) No Davidic king was both an eternal priest and king simultaneously like Melchizedek, a description reserved only for the Messiah. (4) “Jewish tradition supports the messianic interpretation of this Psalm” (ibid., 46).

The three distinct persons involved in this psalm are “Yahweh, the speaker; David, the recipient of the message; and one whom David calls ‘my Lord.’”¹ The central figure who is being described is the sovereign entity that David calls “my Lord.” The descriptions of this central figure are so reminiscent of earlier identifications of the Seed in Genesis that such a link is unavoidable.

First, his enemies are to be totally subdued and vanquished. In vs. 1, he is to sit at the right hand of Yahweh until “I make your enemies a footstool.” In vs. 2, he “rules in the midst of your enemies.” In vs. 5, “he shall strike through (מִדָּוָר) kings,” employing a verb related in meaning to שָׁוַף “to bruise” used in Gen 3:15. Furthermore, the very words in Ps 110:1: אֲשִׁית אֹיְבֵיךָ “Till I make your enemies” are a verbal echo of the first part of Gen 3:15: וְאִי־בָהּ אֲשִׁית “I will put enmity.” The combination of the verb שִׁית and the root אִיב is found only in these two biblical texts.

Both texts also employ the imagery of the enemy and foot to express the same idea of victory over the enemy. In Ps 110:1, the enemies are made unto a footstool. In Gen 3:15, the enemy seems to be crushed on its head by the foot of the Seed, causing a reciprocal attack on the heel of the Seed. Interestingly, the interplay of the head and the foot in Gen 3:15 is alluded to in Ps 110 through an *inclusio*. The “feet” is found in the introduction (Ps 110:1), while the “head” is found in the conclusion (Ps 110:6-7). This inseparably binds these two texts together.

In vs. 6, “he shall judge” and “he shall wound the heads” (וְרָאָה מִדָּוָר) of the kings of all the nations in the earth. This is a similar construction to the expression in

¹Kaiser, *The Messiah in the OT*, 94.

Gen 3:15c “he shall fatally bruise your head” (יִשָּׁרְפֶךָ רֹאשׁ). All these strongly echo Gen 3:15 where the special singular Seed of the woman “shall fatally bruise the head” of Satan, his arch-enemy. The further expatiations in Gen 12:1-3; 22:17; 24:60; 49:8-9; Num 24:16-19; Ps 72:2, 9-11, and others, underscore the fact that this Child of promise will completely overcome and annihilate all enemies.

Second, vs. 2 mentions that the “scepter is given to him.” This is a vivid allusion to the promise made to Judah (Gen 49:10) that the scepter shall never depart from Judah “until it was given to the one to whom it belonged. That scepter, with the authority it symbolized, now appears in Psalm 110.”¹ The Seed of the woman as a representative figure is definitely a ruler also. It has been shown above that this image remains in the explanation of this Seed throughout Genesis. He is a conquering king.

Lastly, he is also a priest appointed by God eternally, combining kingship with priesthood like the priest-king of ancient Jerusalem, Melchizedek. This echo is latent in Gen 3:15 also. The Seed of the woman gives himself sacrificially for his people as he faced a lethal battle with Satan vicariously. He was not only the priest but also the sacrificial lamb at the same time. Only the Messiah fits all these descriptions perfectly.

We have presented tangible evidence in chapter 2 above to suggest that Adam and Eve were pre-Fall priests. Consequently, one may justifiably consider the special Seed promised to Adam and Eve in Gen 3:15 as qualified to be a supreme Priest, in the light of the vicarious and heroic actions that he was to take upon Himself! I find this view attractive and logical, without extending and generalizing this priesthood in order to

¹Ibid., 95. See also Num 24:16-19.

include all humanity according to natural birth.¹ This completes the picture of the Seed of the woman in the Old Testament.

Thematic and Terminological Links Between the Book of Job and Gen 1-3

The book of Job is an integral part of the canon. Interestingly, just as the opening chapters of the canon (Gen 1-3) contain several key motifs and themes that run through the Scriptures, the book of Job re-echoes some of these same themes. Job 1-2 is the prologue of Job, like Gen 1-3 constitutes the prologue of Genesis or the whole Bible. “The correlations between the texts are not accidental but instead result from a conscious adaption of Genesis to the fabric of the new narrative.”²

Gen 3 contains vocabulary which is characteristic of wisdom literature.³ “Job’s reflections are probably meant to echo directly Gen 3:19 or a similar story, and meted as the basis for a doctrine of perpetual plagues for earthborn humans.”⁴ Meier boldly

¹It is not surprising that the Apostle Peter recognizes this fact as obvious in 1 Pet 2:9.

²Sam Meier, “Job 1-2: A Reflection of Genesis 1-3,” *VT* 39 (1989): 183. There is a relationship of wisdom to creation tradition. See Donn F. Morgan, *Wisdom in the Old Testament Tradition* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1981), 46-47, 112-114, for discussion and bibliography.

The Mosaic authorship of the books of Job and Genesis has been suggested by Baba Bathra 14b-15a recorded by Seder Nezikin, *The Babylonian Talmud*, trans. into English with notes, glossary and indices by Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein (London: Soncino, 1935), 71-74. See also *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation*, vol. 22A, *Tractate Baba Bathra Chapters 1-2*, trans. Jacob Neusner (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1992), 70-72. Cf. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 464. The chronological link of these two books calls for contextual linkage discussion.

³George E. Mendenhall, “The Shady Side of Wisdom: The Date and Purpose of Genesis 3,” in *A Light Unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers*, ed. Howard N. Bream, Ralph D. Heim, and Carey A. Moore, Gettysburg Theological Studies, 4 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 38.

⁴Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 131-132. He sees a direct allusion to Gen 3:17-19 in Job 5:3-7 because they share the following terms:

asserts that Job is the “second Adam” who “does not succumb to the temptation.”¹

Among many other motifs that can be noted between Job and Gen 1-3, the following are mentioned because of their direct interference with Gen 3:15:

1. Character and Blessing.

Job’s name is given in Job 1:1 and his unique character as “blameless and upright, one who feared God, and turned away from evil” (see also 1:8 and 2:3). Like Adam, Job was a unique human being who was about to be confronted with a test from God. Therefore, Job echoes the perfect condition of righteousness, obedience, and sinlessness of the first Adam in the garden of Eden.² It is the reverse of Adam’s righteous character that necessitated the pronouncements of Gen 3:14-19.

The imperative command to be fruitful and multiply given in Gen 1:22, 28, and addressed to both man and animals, is fulfilled in Job’s life in Job 1:2-3, 10. God blessed Job’s work like He blessed everything in Gen 1:22, 28.³ This same command is reflected in the promise of continuity in the human generation that is included in the woman’s seed of Gen 3:15.

צַמַּח, עֹפֵר, אָדָם. W. Michel labels Job 5:22-23 as a “reversal of Gen 3:17-19” (*Job in the Light of Northwest Semitic*, vol. 1, *Biblica et Orientalia* 42 [Rome: Biblical Institute, 1987], 128-129). Cf. David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20*, WBC, 17 (Dallas: Word, 1989), 141; and Thomas P. McCreesh, *Biblical Sound and Sense: Poetic Sound Patterns in Proverbs 10-29*, JSOTSup, 128 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1991), 121.

¹Meier, “Job 1-2: A Reflection of Genesis 1-3,” 183, 193. He sees this as the fact “which motivates the entire prologue of Job and separates it from Gen. i-iii” (*ibid.*, 183). He concludes: “The verdict pronounced at Eden is reversible” (*ibid.*, 193).

²*Ibid.*, 186.

³*Ibid.* In Job 1:2-3, “The interplay of sevens and threes and three sums of ten marks the scenario as dynamic perfection” (*ibid.*). Job fulfilled the imperative by exercising his “dominion over the animals, for it is in his presence and as his property that the animals fulfill their role in multiplying” (*ibid.*).

2. The Temptation and the Result.

Satan demanded that God should touch Job's "bone and his flesh" (2:5). On the literal level, this means Job's body would undergo significant pain. On another level, like Adam's usage in Gen 2:23, it refers to Job's wife.¹

Just as Adam's wife was instrumental to his temptation that brought the curse of death (Gen 3:6-7), also Job's wife counseled him to "curse God and die" (Job 2:9). However, Job does not succumb to the temptation like Adam did. Consequently, the verdict pronounced at Eden was reversed in his case.²

3. The Great Controversy.

The Great Conflict set forth in Gen 3 is elaborated in the book of Job in a cosmic setting. It engulfs the whole universe, the "sons of God," the inhabitants of the unfallen worlds. Similarly, the issue in Job is the character of God. "Satan insinuates that God is not trustworthy, that he is arbitrary, and unfair."³ At the end, God attests that Job has been speaking of God rightly (Job 42:7-8).

4. Gospel and Redemption Promise.

Just as Gen 3:15 appears at the peak of the chiasmic structure of Gen 3, giving a definite hint on the gospel and redemption promise, so also does Job 19:25-29 for the

¹Ibid., 189. "Augustine already compared Job's wife to Eve" (ibid., 190, n. 22). The expression "bone and flesh" is used elsewhere to refer to relatives as in Gen 29:14 and Judg 9:2.

²Meier proposes: "Although Job is not Everyman, there is nevertheless an affirmation that the Fall is not the final word on the human condition. . . . Everyman can be Job" (ibid., 193). David Clines argues that Job's plight is unique and different from every man ("False Naivety in the Prologue of Job," *Hebrew Annual Review* 9 [1985]: 134).

³Richard M. Davidson, "Unlocking Old Testament Treasures" (Unpublished paper, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1997), 7. See especially Job 1-2.

whole of the book.¹ Job refers to the coming of a divine Redeemer, Vindicator, and Savior.

5. Eschatology.

All the events climax in the major reference to an eschatological resurrection and judgment of the latter days (19:25). This is the final climax on earth which ends all the evil and vindicates God and His true followers. God's plan of redemption moves toward a final victorious solution.

Intertextual Allusions to the "Seed" of Gen 3:15 in the New Testament

Seed echoes are abundant throughout the New Testament. In fact, every NT verse that relates to Jesus Christ is a potential echo of the seed-motif from the Old Testament. The OT promises made to Abraham (Gen 12-22) and David (2 Sam 7:4-16) are applied to the Messiah in the NT. Jesus is identified as the "Son of man" (Matt 9:6; 26:2, 24; Heb 2:6-9), "son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1; Gal 3:16), "son of David"² (Matt 1:1; Mark 12:35-37; Acts 13:22-23; Rom 1:3-4; 15:12), and "Son of God" (Matt 8:29; 14:33; 26:63).

The NT uses "seed" in the sense of "offspring" or "prosperity." It usually

¹Ibid. Cf. Gordon Eugene Christo, "The Eschatological Judgment in Job 19:21-29: An Exegetical Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1992).

²That Jesus possesses a Davidic genealogy is defended by: Oscar Cullman, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. S. C. Guthrie and C. A. M. Hall (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 128-130; L. R. Fisher, "Can This Be the Son of God?" in *Jesus and the Historian: Written in Honor of Ernest Cadman Colwell*, ed. F. T. Trotter (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 82-97; R. Fuller, *The Foundations of the New Testament Christology* (New York: Scribner, 1965), 111, 163; and Ferd Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology*, trans. H. Knight and G. Ogg (London: Lutterworth, 1969), 240-241.

transcends physical relation to include spiritual descendants. This reflects the collective aspect of the Seed of the woman of Gen 3:15 which has been earlier mentioned above as delineated according to “moral quality.” Hence, the NT uses the “seed of Abraham” not in the restricted sense of the generic natural-born Israelites but “includes all who possess the same kind of faith as the patriarch. NT believers are represented as the true seed of Abraham (Gal 3:29).” This also transcends the “material prosperity of the nation to include the ultimate spiritual blessing of all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom 4:16ff).”¹

The directly Messianic Davidic psalm of Ps 110 is echoed in Matt 22:41-46 and Heb 5:5-11 and 7:11-27. These carry on the seed echoes, giving further explanation to his identity and activities. Peter’s Pentecost sermon of Acts 2:29-33 and Paul’s Antioch (Pisidia) sermon of Acts 13:31-37 reflect Pss 16, 89, and 132, and God’s oath to David concerning his posterity. “Both Peter and Paul see in these broader contexts evidence that David himself understood the predictive, Messianic character of God’s oath and promise to him.”²

The “Seed of Abraham” is clearly identified as the “Seed of David” in several places in Luke-Acts. Angel Gabriel’s words to Mary in Luke 1:30-32 do this as they echo Nathan’s prophecy to David in 2 Sam 7:12-16.³ Other such correlations are present

¹Demarest and Brown, 523.

²Davidson, “New Testament Use of the Old Testament,” 27. See also, Walter Kaiser, Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985); and Hans LaRondelle, *Deliverance in the Psalms* (Berrien Springs, MI: First Impressions, 1983).

³See Otto Betz, *What Do We Know about Jesus?* (London: SCM, 1968), 101-102; idem, “The Kerygma of Luke,” *Interpretation* 22 (1968): 141-142; and Evald Lövestam, *Son and Saviour: A Study of*

in Luke 1:51, 55, 69-73; Acts 3:25 and 13:23. The intention is clearly to connect the promise of Seed to Abraham together with that made to David, and then to find “their proper ‘actualisation’ in the person of Jesus.”¹

Angel Gabriel must have intended to appeal to the Abraham narrative in his closing words to Mary (Luke 1:37) which echo Gen 18:14, “with God nothing shall be impossible.”² Similarly, the angel’s mention of Jesus being called the “Son of the Highest” as a Davidic king in Luke 1:32 echoes the “Seed of David motif of 2 Sam 7:12-16.”³

Furthermore, Luke 1:51 echoes Ps 89:10 in terms of the victory over enemies given to the Seed while Luke 1:55, “and to his seed forever,” connects with the promise to Abraham in Gen 17:7; 18:18; and 22:17. Also, Acts 3:25 alludes to Gen 12:3 and 22:18, saying “in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

The speech of Stephen in Acts 7:2-53 (especially vss. 5, 6, and 17) contains numerous references to the promise of the seed to Abraham, at least seed in the collective sense. Notably, vss. 45 and 46 seem to link the promises to Abraham and to David (2 Sam 7:12).⁴

Acts 13,32-37, With an Appendix: “Son of God” in the Synoptic Gospels, Coniectanea Neotestamentica 18 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1961), 12-13.

¹Max Wilcox, “The Promise of the ‘Seed’ in the New Testament and the Targumin,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 15 (1979): 12.

²*Ibid.*, 11.

³See Betz, “The Kerygma of Luke,” 101; and Lövestam, 13.

⁴Wilcox, 13.

Along with these and many other general references to “seed” in the NT, some select NT passages call for more detailed attention because they employ identical vocabulary with Gen 3:15.¹

Rom 16:20a

The wording of Rom 16:20a is as follows:

ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης συντρίψει τὸν Σατανᾶν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας ὑμῶν ἐν τάχει

“And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.”

Many scholars actually do not see any strong echo of Gen 3:15 in the NT. Some allow Rom 16:20 as “one possible allusion to it. . . . The wording is not like the LXX text of Gen 3:15, which uses *tērēsei*. The offspring implied here, if the statement reflects Gen 3:15, would not be an individual but would be the totality of Christians.”²

However, Joseph Fitzmyer, among others, is very definite that Paul here alludes

¹On the contrary, Claus Westermann, referring to NT’s use/understanding of Gen 3:15 and Isa 7:14, rebuffs: “Plainly, such interpretation based on comparison of isolated texts brings a strong factor of unreliability into the attempt to determine the Old Testament’s relation to the message about Christ. This determination depends upon the interpretation of single statements without regard to their context” (*The Old Testament and Jesus Christ*, trans. Omar Kaste [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1970], 11). I totally oppose this view in the light of abundances of authentic connections between OT and NT, and the demonstration that the NT does indeed respect the OT contexts of the passages it cites.

²Lewis, “The Woman’s Seed,” 303. “Paul’s statement, however, may also be influenced by Jesus’ statement about victory over serpents (Luke 10:19) and by the Biblical image of putting enemies under feet (Josh 10:24; Heb 2:8)” (ibid.). Some scholars who allow for Rom 16:20 being a probable reference to Gen 3:15 include James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC, 38b (Dallas: Word, 1988), 905. Douglas J. Moo does not see enough closeness to Gen 3:15 or to the “alleged Jewish parallels to Gen 3:15: *Jub.* 23:29; *T. Mos.* 10:1; *T. Levi* 18:37; *T. Sim.* 6:22; and also the twelfth benediction in the *Shemoneh Esreh*” (*The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary of the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 932). Cf. W. Kramer Schlier, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, Studies in Biblical Theology, 50 (London: SCM, 1966), 449-450.

to Gen 3:15. He sees Paul here interpreting the serpent of Genesis “as Satan, the personification of all evil, disorder, dissension, and scandal in the community.”¹ Paul advocates that God will do away with “dangers that threaten the community.”²

The context of Rom 16:20 is about false teachers who are troubling and causing divisions among the church (Rom 16:17-20). Paul thus “implies that the false teachers are under the influence of Satan, as in 2 Cor 11:14-15.”³ Paul’s promise of victory over Satan, while including the Roman believers’ victory “over the false teachers of vss. 17-19, is much broader, extending to the final eschatological victory of God’s people”⁴ over Satan.

There is a strong eschatological sense to this verse is “hard to diminish.”⁵ Much as victory of the enemy is assured here and now, the ultimate and final victory is reserved until a later eschatological time when Satan and his followers are destroyed in the “lake of fire.” In spite of the adverbial phrase ἐν τάχει which means “without delay,” “at once” or “speedily,” this verse applies more to the future than the present.

¹Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 746. “The God of peace will soon crush . . .” rather than following some Greek MSS (A, 365, 630) as does KJV, for instance, which reads: “May the God of peace crush . . .” (ibid.).

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 746-747.

⁴Moo, 933. This is contrary to the erroneous view that Paul was looking for an immediate victory over Satanic forces in history, as taught by A. Schmithals, *Paul and the Gnostics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1972), 235; G. P. Wiles, *Paul’s Intercessory Prayers: The Significance of the Intercessory Prayer Passages in the Letters of St. Paul*, SNTSMS 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 95, and others.

⁵Dunn, 905.

Paul's prediction that this would happen ἐν τάχει "quickly" should, therefore, be understood in the context of the NT concept of imminence. "The parousia was always imminent—its coming certain, its timing incalculable."¹ The next event in God's plan for this world is the second coming of Jesus Christ, and it could happen at any time in Paul's generation or ours!²

Indeed, Rom 16:20 must be referring to the collective seed in terms of the believers in the Church. This brings to bear the second level of Gen 3:15 which includes the collective seed of the woman at enmity with the collective seed of Satan. More than this, Rom 16:20 underscores the representative and corporate aspect of the special Seed of the woman engaged in the final battle with Satan in the last part of Gen 3:15. The victory is obtained by Jesus on behalf of all His followers and its effect engulfs them too. Thus, Christ's victory is the victory of His believers. They are one and the same in the victory! This is the good news! In Christ we are victorious now and eschatologically.

Gal 3:16, 19, and 29

Paul often interprets the Old Testament in a way often described as

¹Moo, 822. Moo refers to Henry Alford, saying: "On the *certainty of the event*, our faith is grounded: by the *uncertainty of the time*, our hope is stimulated, and our watchfulness aroused" (ibid., referring to Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4 vols. [1845-1860, reprint; Chicago: Moody, 1958]). This general perspective is also found in A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, 13 (Leiden: Brill, 1966); and Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology*, trans. John Richard De Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 487-497. On the related issue of apocalyptic and imminence, see William R. Baird, "Pauline Eschatology in Hermeneutical Perspective," *NTS* 17 (1971): 314-327; J. Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993) 176-181; and I. H. Marshall, "Is Apocalyptic the Mother of Christian Theology?" in *Tradition and Interpretation in the New Testament: Essays in Honor of E. Earl Ellis for His 60th Birthday*, ed. Gerald Hawthorne and Otto Betz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 33-42.

²Moo, 822.

Christocentric. “Paul read Scripture as a coded message about Jesus Christ, whose coming was promised by the Law and the Prophets, whose death and resurrection occurred ‘according to the Scriptures’ (1 Cor 15:3-4).”¹ However, Paul’s Christology is the “foundation on which his ecclesiocentric counter-readings are constructed.”²

The general context including Gal 3:1-29 shows that Paul’s preoccupation here is with proving that “the gift of God’s Spirit, not Torah, is the fulfillment of the solemn promise God made to Abraham.”³ Paul’s intention is to finally show that all believers in Christ through His Spirit become Abraham’s seed and heirs of the promise (vss. 26-29).

His first proof was the spiritual experiences of his audience whereby they were changed and still sustained only by God’s spirit, rather than the Torah (vss. 1-5).

Second, the “blessing of Abraham” becomes the “promise of the Spirit” (vs. 14) mediated through Jesus, rather than the Torah, and accepted by faith.

Third, according to common human practice, one cannot annul a ratified covenant. “Thus the promise made to ‘*the seed*’ (emphatic singular with the definite article) as opposed to ‘the seeds’ of Abraham cannot be nullified by the introduction of the Torah some 430 years later.”⁴

¹Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 84. Cf. Edward Earle Ellis, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 115-6; and Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 104-5, 205-9.

²Hays, 121.

³Barclay M. Newman, “Translating ‘Seed’ in Galatians 3.16, 19,” *The Bible Translator* 35 (1984): 335.

⁴*Ibid.*

By using the emphatic singular seed with the definite article τῷ σπέρματι “*the seed*” (twice in vs. 16) and τὸ σπέρμα “*the seed*” (vs. 19), Paul intends to emphasize that “the Abrahamic blessing (= promise) is realized in and mediated solely through Christ.”¹ Linking these with vs. 29, Paul wants us to know that it is “only through faith in ‘*the seed*’ that others may become ‘seed’ of Abraham.” While vss. 16 and 19 insist on Christ being “the *sole heir* to the Abrahamic promise,” vs. 29 establishes that Christ has become “the *sole mediator* of the promise” enclosing all who choose faith in Christ.²

Paul is not here appealing to some midrashic or rabbinic principle of interpretation³ but rather carefully following “divine revelation”⁴ previously given meticulously in the OT about the seed. Paul’s insistence on the grammatically singular Seed in Gal 3:16, 19 faithfully follows the identical grammatically singular Seed of Gen 3:15 (the Seed of the woman), Gen 13:15; 22:17-18; 24:7, 60 (Seed of Abraham), and

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 336. See also F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 172. Hays rightly comments: “Thus, Gal 3:29 finally unlocks the riddle of the relation between Paul’s ecclesiocentric hermeneutic and his christological convictions. Galatians demonstrates more clearly than any other Pauline letter how these aspects of Paul’s thought are complementary rather than contradictory. With this Christological warrant firmly in place, Paul can proceed to read Israel’s Scripture as a mysterious prefiguration of the church, a story in which Christ’s Gentile adherents can find their own story prewritten” (121).

³This is contrary to the opinions of David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1965), 440 passim; Ellis, 70-73; James Patrick, “Seed, Seedtime,” *A Dictionary of the Bible Dealing with Its Language, Literature, and Contents*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner’s, 1911), 4:429; and Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, 3:553.

⁴Kaiser, *Messiah in the Old Testament*, 49.

2 Sam 7:12-14 (Seed of David), following both the MT and the LXX.¹ Hence, Paul correctly interprets the promise to Abraham's Seed as "a promise made to the Messiah (*Christos*), who is to be the heir of God's promised blessing."²

The crux of my argument is that Paul was not twisting the text but rather faithfully following the intended meaning of the seed as used in the book of Genesis. Paul perfectly understood and followed the narrowing of the seed of the woman from the plural collective to the singular individual representative Messianic Seed in Gen 3:15. This narrowing from collective seed to singular Seed is also followed in the parallel seed passage of Gen 22:17-18.³

Conclusively, the "context, grammar, and theological patterns support the thesis that *the seed*" in Gal 3:16, 19 is specifically a reference to Jesus Christ and none other."⁴

¹See D. Moody Smith, "The Pauline Literature," in *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars*, ed. D. A. Carlson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 271.

²Hays, 85. Cf. Nils A. Dahl, *Studies in Paul: Theology for Early Christian Mission* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1977), 128, 130; and idem, "The Atonement—An Adequate Reward for the Akedah? (Rom 8:32)," in *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black*, ed. E. E. Ellis and M. Wilcox (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), 15-29, esp. 24; Dennis C. Duling, "The Promises to David and Their Entry into Christianity," *NTS* 20 (1973-74): 55-77; Juel, 77-88; and Wilcox, 2-20.

³I have noted above how the "seed" in Gen 22:17a is clearly plural as it is compared to the stars of the heaven and the sand of the seashore. However, vs. 17b narrows to singular Seed who will "possess the gates of *His* [singular] enemies." See references already mentioned above. See also Jo Ann Davidson, "Abraham, Akedah, and Atonement," in *Creation, Life, and Hope: Essays in Honor of Jacques B. Doukhan*, ed. Jifi Moskala (Berrien Springs, MI: Old Testament Dept. of S. D. A. Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2001), 49-72; and Richard M. Davidson, "Interpreting Scripture," 105, 112; and idem, "New Testament Use of the Old Testament," 30-31." I should mention the useful comment that Paul was not simply citing Gen 12 but particularly Gen 22:17-18 as expatiated by Max Wilcox, "'Upon the Tree'—Deut 21:22-23 in the New Testament," *JBL* 96 (1977): 94-97.

⁴Newman, "Translating 'Seed' in Galatians 3.16, 19," 337.

By so doing, Paul was not “twisting the Old Testament to prove a point,”¹ but rather faithfully “using the passage in exactly the way it was intended, following its original sense and understanding the nature of who might be its referents.”²

Rev 12

It has been suggested that materials from the book of Genesis have been re-introduced to the visions of John in the book of Revelation.³ Quite strikingly, the overall scenario of Rev 12 employs the cosmic descriptions from Genesis, “as if a new creation were being patterned after the first.”⁴ This immediately sets the stage for the parallels and allusions to expect in this vision.

The woman and the serpent who were prominently featured in Gen 3 also appear here with the same distinctive elements and characters as before. The enmity that God divinely instituted between them in Gen 3:15 “provides the backdrop of Revelation 12.”⁵ The resultant “pain in child-bearing” that became the lot of Eve (Gen 3:16), the “mother

¹Dale Mark Wheeler, “Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Galatians 3:16” (Th.D. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1987), 332.

²*Ibid.*, 333.

³John P. M. Sweet suggests that Gen 3:15-20 dominates the whole of Revelation 12 (*Revelation* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979], 203). Paul S. Minear builds on this and observes “the multiple ways in which God’s curses, as described in Genesis 3, are executed and finally reversed in John’s vision” (“Far as the Curse Is Found: The Point of Revelation 12:15-16,” *NovT* 33 [1991]: 71-77). This is contrary to R. H. Charles who prematurely and unbelievably posits: “There are no parallels in the Old Testament or Judaism” from the book of Revelation (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920], 2:331 *passim*).

⁴Minear, 71. He enumerates that the woman of Rev 12 is described in terms of the sun, moon, and stars of Gen 1:16, and the heavens, earth, and waters assume some roles as in Gen 1:3-10.

⁵*Ibid.*, 72.

of all living” (Gen 3:20), is echoed in Rev 12:2 as the woman “cried out in the pangs of her birth, in anguish for delivery.”

The enmity that passed on from the woman and the serpent to their respective collective seeds narrowed down to the face-up between the singular representative Seed of the woman and Satan himself (Gen 3:15) as explained above. It is this final stage of this enmity that is pictured in Rev 12:4 where the dragon tried “to devour the child when she brought forth.”¹ This male child is the Messiah!

The mention in Rev 12:5 of the seed of the woman being a universal ruler alludes to the seed passages in Genesis where the chosen Seed was a conquerer and ruler (Gen 3:15; 12:1-3; 22:17-18; 24:60, etc.), same as the Seed of David (Pss 2; 68; 72; 89; 110; 2 Sam 7:4-16). This also identifies the child of Rev 12 to be the special Seed of the woman promised in Gen 3:15.

The identity of the serpent of Gen 3 is specifically given as “that serpent of old, the Devil, and Satan” in Rev 12:9.² Satan made war with the ‘seed of the woman’ (Rev 12:17) which is to be taken collectively here just as in the Palestinian Targums. That this seed will “keep the commandments of God” (Rev 12:17) is also reflected in the TJI’s paraphrase: “when the children (i.e., the seed) of the Woman keep the commandments of

¹George B. Caird posits that the birth of the Messiah referred to the Cross, rather than the nativity (*A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* [New York: Harper & Row, 1966], 149). Minear supports this view (72-73). However, I think that it covers the whole life of the Messiah, from nativity to His resurrection, throughout which Satan tried to destroy Him.

²The Apocalypse calls the enemy of the human race several names including: Satan (2:9, 13, 24; 3:9; 12:9; 20:2, 7); the Devil (2:10; 12:9, 12, 20; 20:10); the Dragon (12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13: 2, 4, 11; 16:13; 20:2); the Ancient Serpent (12:9, 14, 15; 20:2). See McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, 221-2.

the Law.”¹

Summary

The OT writers clearly had the same understanding of the “seed” of Gen 3:15 as can be seen from the “seed” passages explained above. Several verbal, linguistic, and even structural linkages were established with the passage of Gen 3:15 and its allies in the book of Genesis (especially, Gen 22:17-18). Many cross-references are evident from the passages examined above from the Pentateuch, the Prophets, the Writing, and even the New Testament. The Pentateuch is consistent in its treatment of the seed, and the other biblical writers followed suit.

At this juncture in the inspired canon, the writers equated the “Seed of the woman” (Gen 3:15) with the “Seed of Abraham” (Gen 12-50), and also “Seed of David” (2 Sam 7:10-14). It seems that these later writers were intent on creating visual images that will link their hearers and readers to the promises already made in the book of Genesis. They continued to make references to the earlier patriarchal promises in order to legitimize the current claim to the chosen Seed.

The most profuse references to the Seed of Gen 3:15 are found in the intrinsically-Messianic psalms of David. They are based mostly on the Davidic dynasty promises of 2 Sam 7:10-12 which parallel Gen 22:17-18, both of which exhibit a similar narrowing from the collective plural to the singular individual referent in consonance with the Seed of Gen 3:15.

¹McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*, 221-222.

Together with the seed echoes in Isa 53, these OT allusions to the Seed of Gen 3:15 give a composite picture of the identity of this special representative Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15). He is the Messiah, Savior, Redeemer, King, Priest, Prophet, and the vicarious, suffering, and substitutionary sacrifice for humanity. His victorious reign engulfs all the earth and heaven in perpetuity. He rules over His enemies and gives peace and posterity to His loyal subjects.

The NT recognizes the *collective* aspect of the seed of the woman of Gen 3:15. In Rom 16:20a, God promised to bruise Satan under the feet of God's faithful followers (*collective*). Paul also calls believers in Christ, "Abraham's seed, and heirs (*collective*) according to the promise" (Gal 3:29). So also, Rev 12:17 calls the Church the remnant of the seed of the woman.

In the same vein, NT recognizes the narrowing of the collective seed to the *singular individual* Seed of the woman, in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. This is the strength of Paul's arguments in Gal 3:16, 19. Salvation has been assured to believing human beings through the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus. It is only Christ and through Christ that believers are inducted into the status as "seed of the woman."

CHAPTER FOUR

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN PARALLELS

Our modern-day understanding of the stories of Gen 2-4 may be illuminated by the numerous parallels that can be found in ancient Near Eastern literature. While it cannot be said that the biblical stories were based on these ANE parallels, the biblical author or compiler or editor(s) and the audience were surely aware of some of them.

The biblical story has a radically different twist, purpose, and theme when compared with them.¹ The biblical account was intended to contradict the work-oriented emphasis of the neighboring national religions. God is the Creator and demands obedience and worship, rather than the creature-worship found in those religions. The purpose of this section is to compare and contrast some aspects of Gen 3:14-15 with their ancient Near Eastern parallels.

¹Soggin affirms that Gen 3 “contains an Israelite attack on syncretism as it existed between Israelite and Canaanite religion” (“The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis,” 88-111, esp. 88, 108). It is “an original Canaanite account disclosing the rite of fertility taken over by Israel and turned completely around as a direct polemic against those same rites, accusing them of producing not life and fertility, but death and sterility” (ibid., 88). This view is also shared by F. F. Hvidberg, “The Canaanite Background of Gen. I-III,” *VT* 10 (1960): 285-294; and Wyatt who suggests that “it is the cult of El and Ašerah and not that of Ba‘al which is attacked” (“Interpreting the Creation and Fall Story in Genesis 2-3,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93 [1981], 19).

Eden and the Paradise Myth

There used to be myths of a Golden Age existing as a background knowledge of most religious systems, whereby “gods and men lived in closer union, and happiness and justice prevailed on earth.”¹

The Sumerian paradise myth of “Enki and Ninhursag” is compared to the garden of Eden by S. N. Kramer as follows:

Dilmun is a land that is “pure,” “clean,” and “bright,” a “land of the living” which knows neither sickness nor death. What is lacking, however, is the fresh water so essential to animal and plant life. The great Sumerian water-god, Enki, therefore orders Utu, the sun-god, to fill it with fresh water brought up from the earth. Dilmun is thus turned into a divine garden, green with fruit-laden fields and meadows.²

Kramer correlates the biblical paradise, “a garden planted *eastward* in Eden” to Dilmun, “a land somewhere to the east of Sumer.”³ In like manner, the “fresh water

¹Oesterley, 140, referring to John B. Wordsworth, *The One Religion: Truth, Holiness, and Peace Desired by the Nations and Expressed in Jesus Christ* (New York: Oxford, Parker and Co., 1881). Oesterley recalls that “among all races a belief in a happier time long ago has been formulated, differing in form according to the genius of each race” (142).

²S. N. Kramer, “Enki and Ninhursag: A Paradise Myth,” in *ANET*, 37, see pp. 37-41; see idem, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 147 passim. For a recent translation, see P. Attinger, “Enki et Ninḫursaġa,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische* 74 (1984): 1-52.

In search of the Garden of Eden, Speiser refers to Dilmun as “‘the land of living,’ which lay near the head of the Persian Gulf and tries to identify the Pishon and the Gihon with actual rivers not far from the mouths of the Tigris and the Euphrates” (E. A. Speiser, “The Rivers of Paradise,” in *I Studied Inscriptions From Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study, vol. 4 [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 177). Cf. David T. Tsumura, “Genesis and Ancient Near Eastern Stories of Creation and Flood: An Introduction,” in *I Studied Inscriptions From Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, ed. Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study, vol. 4 [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994], 38.

³*ANET*, 37.

brought up from the earth”¹ in Dilmun compares with the *éḏ*-water in Gen 2:6.

The ancient name of Babylon points to the name Bab-ilu, meaning “the gate of God.”² It is also called “the holy mount of cedars, the ‘abode of gods,’ where the Elamite hero Humbaba ‘with stately step walks upon the well-cultivated path.’”³ It is elsewhere called “a garden of the gods, into which men seem to have entrance . . . situated on a mountain, there are holy trees with delicious fruit; and there is a river with the water of life.”⁴

The garden of Eden also reflects “the old Canaanitic *Bāmā*, the sacred grove, with everything in it: the tree of life, the living water, the guardians at the entrance to the shrine, and above all the sacred Massebe or serpent.”⁵

The Greeks considered the ancients to be “like the gods, and being good by nature and living a perfect life” filled with leisure, rest, health, and peace.⁶ The Persians

¹Ibid. Kenton L. Sparks agrees: “Adam’s role in tilling and keeping the Garden of Eden is reminiscent of the work assigned to humans in the Sumerian and Babylonian creation myths” (“The Problem of Myth in Ancient Historiography,” in *Rethinking the Foundations: Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible: Essays in Honour of John Van Seters*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Thomas Römer [New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000], 278). This is like the spring of fresh water in the Akkadian story of Marduk’s creation.

²Ibid., 143.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Hvidberg, 286.

⁶Oesterley, 154-155. Oesterly elaborates that, compared to the men of the present age who are “debased and degraded,” these ancients had “no living animal slain” (ibid., 155) “All good things were theirs, and the fruitful earth did of itself bear fruit in great abundance, while they of their own free will tilled their fields in peace with many blessings. . . . Everything grew of its own accord . . . an existence of leisure without labor or care . . . immunity from sickness . . . neither wars nor factions among them . . . so that the sum of their life was mere leisure, rest from the stress of life, health, peace and friendship” (ibid.).

spoke of Yima, “the first king of the Iranians . . . whose life, like that of his subjects, was lived in the midst of the joys of Eden, in the Paradise of Airyana-Vaedja, the abode of primeval man.”¹ They enjoyed a life of bliss for “a thousand years, and it was only because of Yima’s sin that men forfeited their happy state.”²

Despite several similarities, the obvious contrast is that the biblical account describes only two married individuals, Adam and Eve, as the only human beings who existed in this sinless state where there was absolute perfection. The ANE accounts evidence some lack in a comparable state of existence, also involving numerous humans. The multiple deities involved in the ANE accounts are completely absent in the Bible which only recognizes the Almighty God, Yahweh.

Talking Animals

Animals are represented as talking to humans in only two stories in the Bible, namely, Gen 3:1-5 and Num 22:28-30. Similar instances of animals speaking to humans are found in the *Stories of Anubis and Bata* where cattle would tell Bata where the pasture was more excellent for grazing; and in the second instance, a cow warns Bata of impending danger.³ Dialogue between animals and humans is also found in Egyptian

¹Ibid., 150.

²Ibid.

³Victor H. Matthews and Don C. Benjamin cites the *Stories of Anubis and Bata: i:5-10*: “Every morning, Bata got up, cooked the morning meal for Anubis and his wife, and packed a meal for his brother to eat at noon. Then Bata drove the cattle out into the pasture to graze. As he walked alongside the cattle, they would say to him: ‘The grass in this pasture is excellent,’ and Bata would listen to them and drive them to whatever pasture they wanted to graze, so Anubis cattle became prime livestock, calving twice as often as the livestock from any other village” (*Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories from the Ancient Near East*, fully rev. and expanded ed. [New York: Paulist, 1997], 62).

tales like “The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor”¹ and “The Doomed Prince.”²

Animals and trees communicate only with each other rather than humans in the Babylonian stories of “The Ox and the Horse,”³ “The Fable of the Willow,”⁴ “The Date and the Tamarisk,”⁵ and “The Fable of the Fox.”⁶

These ANE examples are mostly superstitious folklore. The instances in the Bible reflected a divine encounter or supernatural confrontation with the divine. The biblical examples represent more of reality than these ANE parallels.

Serpent

Serpents, called snakes, were “universally feared throughout the ANE. . . . Dating back to Chalcolithic times, snakes in Mesopotamia appeared as cultic symbols on poetry and bronze castings.”⁷ Ancient peoples viewed serpents positively and negatively.

Serpents were used from place to place to symbolize positive qualities such as

There is more information from the *Stories of Anubis and Bata: v: 1-5*: “Anubis became as furious as a leopard. He fetched his spear, sharpened it and stood behind the barn door to wait for Bata to return with the cattle later that evening. . . . When the first cow went into the barn, she warned Bata: ‘Your older brother is waiting to kill you with his spear. Run!’” (ibid., 64).

¹Mariam Lichtheim, ed., *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), 1:211-215.

²ibid., 2:156-159.

³W. G. Lambert, ed., *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 150 passim. The story of the serpent and the lion in the epic of Etana is found in *ANET*, 114-118.

⁴Lambert, 150.

⁵ibid.

⁶ibid.

⁷Stallman, 85.

sovereignty, life, immortality, youthfulness, helping, healing, fertility, potency. knowledge, wisdom, as well as negative qualities like evil, enmity, chaos, and death. In reality, the serpent seems to use its association with life and wisdom to realize his objective of deceiving and destroying mankind as evident in the Gen 3 story.¹

The Egyptian goddess named Nenet, also called *Hemset*, is described as “the snake who measured the world, and who in the beginning bore the god Cheper, the great Deep.”² The serpent was also considered “a good genius, an agatho-demon, even as he appears in Greek mythology connected with Hermes, or Asklepios, worshipped at Epidaurus as a serpent, or like the Egyptian serpent Chnuphis.”³

A fascination with the serpent as a supernatural creature is reflected in Philo’s Phoenician history.⁴ “Among the Arabs every snake is the abode of a spirit, sometimes bad and sometimes good. . . . In the sphere of religion the serpent was usually worshiped as a *good demon*.”⁵

The serpent motif in Palestine could be seen in the numerous Palestinian pottery with serpent decorations on the handle.⁶ Interestingly, the serpent and the woman were

¹See Karen Randolph Joines, “The Serpent in Genesis3,” *ZAW* 87 (1975): 9.

²Oesterley, 67-68.

³William Hayes Ward, “The Serpent Tempter in Oriental Mythology,” *BSac* 38 (1881): 210.

⁴See Sparks, “The Problem of Myth,” 278.

⁵Skinner, 72.

⁶John J. Scullion refers to Avi-Yonah who mentioned a silver cup found in a tomb (c. 2250-2000 B.C.E.), at Ain Samiyā, northest of Rammallah (*Genesis: A Commentary for Students, Teachers, and Preachers*, OTS, 6 [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1992], 47, referring to Michael Avi-Yonah, ed., *Encyclopedia of Archeological Excavations in the Holy Land* [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall],

labeled as “originally identical.”¹ This links the serpent deities and the idea of the “Mother Goddess tradition.”²

Several cultures in the ancient Near East have attributed positive qualities to serpents. One of the commonest is that of life and immortality. The serpent was associated with the “animating force of living forms,”³ and sometimes thought of as “their own human ancestor”⁴ in numerous cultures including those of the Sumerians, Egyptians, Hindus, Greeks, Africans.⁵ Conklin reported:

The primal deity worshiped by the early Sumerians was the serpent Ea and in ancient Sumer, a number of snakes may have served to inspire the notion of this spirit entity. . . . For the Sumerians, the animating force of the serpent was seen to be animistically present in the water, soil, wind, fire, and all formations of existence. In the sacramental cuneiform tablets, the serpent Ea is referred to as “Zi-Ki-a,” (Zi = spirit, Ki = earth, a = water) spirit of the earth and water. . . .

2:357-358). “It is decorated in two scenes, with a serpent in each; in the left hand area, an upright snake faces a janiform figure (i.e., a figure with two faces turned in opposite directions) with a human head and an ox-shaped body, each hand grasping a plant” (Avi-Yonah, 2:358). Scullion discloses: “From Beth Shean, just south of the lake of Galilee, some cult stands from the eleventh century with the serpent motif entwining them. And Hazor, north of the lake, has given up a silver placed cult stand of bronze with two serpents upright” (Scullion, 47, referring to Avi-Yonah, 2:477).

¹Williams, “The Relationship of Genesis 3:20 to the Serpent,” 364; referring to H. Greßmann, “Mythische Reste in der Paradieserzählung,” *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 10 (1907): 345-348.

²Williams, “The Relationship of Genesis 3:20 to the Serpent,” 364. Other examples of the association of the Mother Goddess with the serpent are found in W. F. Albright, “The Goddess of Life and Wisdom,” *AJSL* 36 (1919-1920): 284-294; Edwin O. James, *The Cult of the Mother Goddess: An Archaeological and Documentary Study* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1959), 115, 119, 129 passim; M. Jastrow, “Adam and Eve in Babylonian Literature,” *AJSL* 15 (1898-1899): 209-212; and I. M. Kikawada, “Two Notes on Eve,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 33-37.

³Conklin, 43.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid. “In an Ethiopian tradition, the serpent stood at the head of the genealogy of the human race” (ibid.). See Williams, “The Relationship of Genesis 3:20 to the Serpent,” 362, referring to Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, 308, n. 1.

Without the serpent presence of the water within the plant, tree, animal or human, it would wither away. In this way, the serpent force was immanent within all living things. The serpent was the visible symbol for an unseen immanence.¹

In the Canaanitic cult, the serpent is the “giver and renewer of life.”² He is the restorer.³ The Phoenician serpent was believed to be “a divine animal identified with the breath of life, the symbol of eternal youth and everlasting life, and it was considered immortal unless it died a violent death.”⁴

The serpent is expressed as a symbol of recurring youthfulness and a figure of life immortality in Mesopotamia and Egypt.⁵ “The serpent cult is the fundamental expression of the desire, inherent in man, for immortality.”⁶ The sloughing of the skin is a symbol of taking on new life as seen in the serpent.⁷ The sloughing of its skin is

¹Conklin, 44-45. Francois Lenormant supports that the spirit was that “. . . which animated everything, penetrated into everything, and made everything which existed in the universe live and move” (*Chaldean Magic* [London: Samuel Bagster, 1877], 156). Likewise, H. W. F. Saggs calls Ea “the immanent aspect of deity” (*Everyday Life in Babylonia and Assyria* [London: B. T. Batsford], 191).

²Hvidberg, “287.

³Ibid.

⁴Soggin, 97-98. The possibility of a violent death is perhaps alluded to in Gen 3:15.

⁵Joines, “The Serpent in Gen 3,” 2. “The serpent renews its youth almost indefinitely” (ibid.). The ancient Egyptians accepted that the sloughing of the skin reflected the “eternal youthfulness of the serpent” (ibid.).

⁶V. Lloyd-Russell, “The Serpent as the Prime Symbol of Immortality, Has Its Origin in the Semitic-Sumerian Culture” (Ph.D thesis, The University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 1938). See J. A. Soggin, “La caduta dell’uomo nel terzo capitolo della Genesi,” *Studi e Materiali di Storia Delle Religioni* 33 (1962): 227-256.

⁷Joines, “The Serpent in Gen 3,” 2.

believed to be a “representation of the immortality of the serpent.”¹

In Egypt, the serpent is often a symbol of immortality. “The cobra, or uraeus is the Egyptian ideograph for ‘immortal,’ and the immortality of the pharaoh may be described as ‘the living years of the uraeus.’”² The heavenly serpent Bata is “of millions of years, millions of years in length.”³ “A serpent biting its tail is a common Egyptian emblem for eternity. . . . The Egyptians could symbolize life itself by a rearing serpent.”⁴

The common Semitic word for the serpent, *hawwa*, is reported as reflecting the same root as the word for life.⁵

Concerning the positive quality of fertility, serpents have been described in several terms. “The Canaanitic Baal appears not only in the form of a man, or a bull, but

¹James G. Frazer, *Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead* (London: Dawsons, 1968), 1:69-72.

²Joines, “The Serpent in Gen 3,” 3, referring to W. R. Cooper, “Observations on the Serpent Myths of Ancient Egypt,” *Journal of Transactions of the Victoria Institute* 6 (1873): 339.

³Joines, “The Serpent in Gen 3,” 3.

⁴Ibid. Don C. Benjamin defends: “The serpent swallowing its own tail is Egypt’s official symbol of immortality, and the coiled serpent represents the *ma’at* laws which govern the universe” (“Stories of Adam and Eve,” in *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim*, ed. Henry T. C. Sun et al. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 51).

⁵J. Morgenstern, “On Gilgamesh-Epic XI, 274-320,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 29 (1915): 291. R. B. Coote believes that despite various speculations to prove a connection between “life” and any term meaning “serpent,” such etymological connection is difficult (“The Serpent and Sacred Marriage in Northwest Semitic Tradition” [Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972], 128). Williams thinks that one can only at best see “Gen 3:20 as a pun on the name which has associations with the Hebrew term for life” being a “word-play” (“The Relationship of Genesis 3:20 to the Serpent,” 369).

also in the form of a serpent,"¹ stressing the "god's virility and potency."² This serpent is the "helper of the goddess, by whose aid she fulfils her functions."³ He is called the "fertilizer,"⁴ the "masculine element, which is with the goddess to do her service."⁵

In other Canaanite myths, a serpent-goddess called 'Ašerah, "the symbol of fertility, the benign wonder-worker, taught man how to achieve partial and temporary dominion over nature, an achievement made possible by forces released by the fertility cult."⁶ The serpent is often associated with the "reproductive areas of the body of the goddess, with water, with the bull, and with the dove."⁷

The serpent is also viewed positively as healer and physician. The Canaanite

¹Hvidberg, 287.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Soggin, "Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis," 110. Willis expresses: "Ancient Egyptian art depicts the naked Canaanite goddess of fertility holding a snake in her hand. Archeologists have unearthed several serpent figures made of metal in various parts of the ancient world, including a snake draped around a goddess in Egypt, snakes draped around occult objects in Beth-Shan, and a god represented in the form of a serpent" (120-121, referring to Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East in Pictures*, 470-474, 585, 590, 692). "The themes of the naked couple (Gen 2:25; 3:7), childbearing (3:16), and productive vegetation (3:17-19) are at home in Canaanite fertility cults" (*ANET*, 692).

⁷Joines, "The Serpent in Gen 3," 3; idem, "The Bronze Serpent in the Israelite Cult," 245 passim. Scullion augments: "Hundreds of small (20-30 centimeters, 10-15 inches) clay figurines representing the fertility goddess, with a serpent around her neck and held by her two hands, have been discovered in Palestine" (42). Numerous Palestinian pottery has a serpent decoration on the handle.

Benjamin supports: "In Syria-Palestine, serpents—like sexual organs, water, bulls, and doves—symbolize human fertility" (51).

Baal is also considered a “healer and physician-god.”¹ The Phoenician god of medicine, “‘Esmûn’ (later known as ‘Adôn, i.e., Κύριος), was also represented by a serpent, an actual ζωοποιούν god, which passed then to the West in the unmistakable emblems of Hermes and Asclepius.”² Likewise, the serpent Ea was given the appellation, “great physician,”³ associated with healing, oracular ability, and women. In addition, the Egyptian *wadjet* or *uraeus* is “a helper serpent who rides on the forehead of pharaohs, protecting them from their enemies.”⁴

The serpent was believed to be a positive figure of knowledge and wisdom. The coffin Texts from Egypt have the primeval serpent saying: “I extended everywhere, in accordance with what was to come into existence, I know, as the One, alone, majestic, the indwelling Soul, the most potent of the gods.”⁵ The Egyptians also believed that “an amulet of serpent skin would add to man’s craftiness and cunning.”⁶

The serpent was usually revered for its ability to discover whatever was hidden or concealed, including knowledge of the past, present, and future. Lidless eyes that never closed were thought to see in the darkness of the underground. This ability may have been related to the view that the serpent inspired nighttime dreams and the prophetic daytime visions of human beings.⁷

¹Hvidberg, 288.

²Soggin, “Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis,” 97-98.

³Conklin, 51.

⁴Benjamin, 51.

⁵Joines, “The Serpent in Gen 3,” 4.

⁶Ibid., 5. Benjamin agrees: “Ordinary Egyptians carried snakeskin to help them make good decisions” (51).

⁷Conklin, 53.

The negative qualities attributed to the serpent in ancient Near Eastern literature are numerous too. The “Tiamat myth” was known in ancient times, involving a “primeval cruel monster who was identified with the principle of ‘evil,’ i.e., harmfulness.”¹ The original story involved a dragon figure like Tiamat taking vengeance on God by instigating humans as God’s rivals because God defeated her in the primeval battle. The Serpent was identical with Tiamat and his purpose was to take vengeance on Jahweh for his victory in the primeval conflict. Though overcome, he was not annihilated. That he is “not to be finally destroyed until some time in the distant future permits of the supposition that the conflict between him and Jahweh might from time to time have been renewed.”²

Moreover, the Egyptian belief that a serpent fought the God of light in primeval times appears in an inscription on a tomb in Qurna as follows: “The Snake (Dragon) Apophis, the adversary of Rā.”³ The serpent is given the “designation of *aiub ilu*, the foe of God. This name, seemingly given to a monstrous sort of serpent living in the mountains, as its Accadian name indicates, must have a mythological basis.”⁴ An

¹Oesterley, 76.

²Ibid., 78-79. Oesterley identifies that Tiamat “the embodiment of harmfulness developed into Satan, the embodiment of the principle of evil” (ibid., 175). The Chaldean believed that Tiamat ruled over a brood of monsters of the ocean which existed before all things. Marduk was the champion of the gods. Marduk was victorious over Tiamat in the conflict that ensued between them. Marduk used his sword to cut Tiamat into two; drawing a bolt before the half which is placed above (ibid.). “This suggests that in spite of defeat Tiamat was still capable of harm and had to be imprisoned” (ibid., 62).

³Ibid., 67-68.

⁴Ward, 228. The principle of evil is clothed in the form of a serpent.

Assyrian word for serpent, *ai-ub-ilu*, is from *aibu*, “enemy” and means “Enemy of God.”¹

The form of a snake was attributed to nearly every power which was hostile to the dead and the living.² “In an Ugaritic ritual text the man (*'adm*) touches a tree he should not touch and is subsequently bitten by a poisonous snake.”³ Serpents’ hostility to humans is further underscored:

Serpents are sometimes called gods, or brothers of the gods, and are usually considered hostile to man. They are evil, they love darkness, and hate the light. Even the sun-god Re could be bitten by a serpent. The serpent Apep or Apophis is the Egyptian figure *par excellence* of evil and chaos. It embodies the hostile darkness and the sea which swallow Re at sunset and through which he must travel at night to rise again in the morning. Apep may be called “the destroyer,” “the enemy of the gods,” and “the devourer of the souls of men”. . . . Serpents on the earth are feared and revered because they are extensions of apep, as hostile to man as Apep is to Re; thus Apep is the embodiment of all evil.⁴

Temptation and deception are also major negative attributes of the serpent in some ancient Near Eastern literature. In the Persian *Zendavesta* the evil god Ahriman in the form of a serpent induces the first men to rebel against God.⁵ One of the Chaldean

¹Joines, “The Serpent in Gen 3,” 8-9.

²Joines recalls some Egyptian Pyramid Texts which include “numerous incantations and magical formulae designed to protect the deceased pharaohs from the evil of the serpents” (ibid., 9, recalling from *ANET*, 326).

³See *KTU*, 1.100 as referred to in Sparks, 278. Joines represented snakes as “biting” (R. Dussan, “Le Mythe de Ba’al d’après des documents nouveaux,” *Revue del’Histoire des Religions* 111 [1935]: 62 quoted in Joines, “The Serpent in Gen 3,” 8).

⁴Cooper, 325, quoted in Joines, “The Serpent in Gen 3,” 9.

⁵Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament, and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*, 1:14-17.

Creation tablets¹ mentions an *asnan* tree whose fruit was sinfully eaten, while one called Merodach came to the rescue. Boscawen saw the *asnan* tree as being a double parallel referring to the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil while the messianic office belongs to Merodach.²

Boscawen collaborates his point with a keen reference to “the great tablet of the War in heaven”³ in which “it is Merodach who slays the serpent and crushes the brain of the creature—bruising his head.”⁴

Davis refers to a Babylonian cylinder containing a graphic “intaglio,”⁵ saying:

On this celebrated cylinder seal a tree is engraved; beneath the boughs of foliage two bunches of fruit hang from the trunk on long naked stems; on each side of the tree a being, in form human, is seated facing the tree and extending the hand as though to grasp the fruit; in the rear of one of the figures, or rather between the backs of the two (for the engraving encircles the cylinder), a serpent is seen erect as though standing. The picture at once strikes the beholder as a representation of

¹Published in the *Babylonian and Oriental Record* for October, 1890, and again in the *Christian Commonwealth* quoted in John D. Davis, *Genesis and Semitic Tradition*, Twin Brooks Series (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 63; first published in 1894 by Charles Scribner’s Sons. The end portion of this tablet reads as follows:

“The great gods, all of them the foretellers of fate,
Entered and in a deadly manner the god Sar was filled [with anger].
Wickedness one with another in assembly makes.
The word was established in the garden of the gods.
They had eaten the *asnan* fruit, they had broken. . . .
Its juice they sucked. . . .
The sweet juice which in drinking crushes the body.
Great is their sin . . . in exalting [themselves].
To Merodach their redeemer he has appointed the destiny” (ibid.).

²Ibid., 64.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 65.

the temptation.¹

William Shea explains the deception in the Story of Adapa as follows:

It seems more likely that Ea deceived Adapa deliberately rather than unwittingly. The reason for this deception is not clear. Ea may have been loathe to lose such a devoted worshiper who provided for him so abundantly. The idea of friction in the pantheon may also be involved here, since Anu concluded, 'Of the gods of heaven and earth, as many as there be, whoever gave such a command [as Ea to Adapa], so as to make his own command exceed the command of Anu?' If there is any biblical parallel to Ea's actions, it would have to be with respect to the serpent's, not God's, activity.²

Numerous contrasts are evident between the way the Bible portrays the serpent and the way it is revered in the ANE. The Bible does not view the serpent positively, perhaps because of its first action at the beginning of human history as recorded in the Bible. Even the wisdom that is attributed to the serpent is not a pure kind of wisdom, but sneaky and sinful. The Bible distances itself from such positive descriptions as "life," "health," "immortality," or "fertility" for the serpent.

Crawling on the Belly

In ancient Near Eastern mythology, the serpent is sometimes shown with an erect posture.³ Though fewer in number, certain serpents having a human shape and form are shown on some ancient Mesopotamian cylinder seals.⁴

¹Ibid., 65-66. Ward noted that this Babylonian cylinder is part of the "Steuart collection, now in the British Museum" (221-222).

²William H. Shea, "Adam in Ancient Mesopotamian Traditions," *AUSS* 15 (1977): 34.

³Skinner, 79.

⁴William H. Ward, *The Seal Cylinders of Western Asia* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1910), 127-128.

Taking the phrase “crawling on the belly” symbolically, one also finds some parallels. For instance, a vassal king (of Tyre) writes to his superior (Pharaoh Akhenaton) that he lies on his belly before him; a bas-relief shows a Syrian crawling on his stomach and imploring the grace of the king’s servant.¹

In the *Decree of Cyrus*, one reads of the elders and soldiers of Babylon surrendering to Cyrus and Cambyses, his son. It states: “Every ruler from the sea above the earth to the sea below it, rulers who dwell in palaces in the east and rulers who live in tents in the west came to Babylon to bring me tribute and to kiss my feet.”²

This phrase, “crawling on the belly,” shares very similar meanings in both biblical and ANE traditions. It signifies humiliation and subjugation. The one who is made to bow or crawl or be at the other’s feet is made inferior to the one who receives such obeisance.

Eat/Lick Dust

The Arabs hold that certain types of spirits feed on dust.³ Moreover, eating or licking dust is used as an expression of humility in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Descent of Ishtar*, and the *Pyramid Texts*.⁴ Lines 1-20 of Ishtar’s Descent to the Underworld recalls:

Ishtar resolved to travel to the land of No Return, to the dark abode of

¹Lipinski, 42-44.

²Matthews and Benjamin, 194.

³Leupold, 1:162.

⁴Lipinski, 42-44.

Ereshkigal, to the house that none depart, to the road to No return, to the house in which no light may enter. Where dust and clay are their meal, where they dwell in darkness. Where, like birds, their garments are exchanged for wings. Where dust covers every door and bolt. When Ishtar reached the gate of the Land of No Return, she challenged the gatekeeper, saying: "Open your gate so I may enter. . . . I will cause the dead to rise and consume like the living. The living will outnumber the dead!"¹

"Eating or licking the dust" shares a common understanding in most ANE cultures and in the biblical tradition. It connotes humiliation and subjugation. It also raises the thought of death because human beings are believed to have been created by God from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7), and returns to the dust at death (Gen 3:19).

Enmity

The creatures of Horonu are snake-like demons, according to *KTU*, 1.82.²

Horonu is the originator of the forces of evil. Man is said to have been bitten by a snake when he touches a tree he was forbidden to touch. "Although *KTU*, 1.107 also attributes the poison to snakebite (lines 10, 20, 34f.) it is highly interesting that the 'snake' is clearly a *demon* here. He is called 'akl 'Devourer', a common Ugaritic designation of monstrous demons."³

In *KTU*, 1.107, which was a broken text from which de Moor reconstructed *KTU*, 1.107:27-4, it is stated as follows: "The premature death of the first man was eventually prevented by invoking the help of all the great gods against the offspring of the

¹Matthews and Benjamin, 308-309.

²J. C. de Moor– K. Spronk, "More on Demons in Ugarit," *UF* 16 (1984): 237-250.

³J. C. de Moor, "Demons in Canaan," *JEOL* 27 (1981-82): 112 passim. Designation of demons in Aramaic incantation bowls can be found in Charles D. Isbell, *Corpus of Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975), 133.

god of the serpents, Horonu the Devil. Therefore the latter had to give in, as related in *KTU*, 1.100.”¹

Serpents are not thought of as “god” or “demon” in the biblical tradition. The serpent that tempted humans in the Genesis record is a natural snake, belonging to the realm of the “beasts of the field” (Gen 3:1, 14). However, that the serpent is opposed to humans and was used as an agent of the archenemy of humanity is a shared belief within the biblical and ANE tradition.

Eve, Mother of Living

In *Atrahasis I:235-40*, Nintu-Mami is called “Mother of the divine assembly.”²

Another version, the *Atrahasis I:250-300*, describes Ea-Enki as the godfather having intercourse with Nintu-Mami, while she sings. She conceives seven sets of fraternal twins: seven males and seven females.³

¹J. C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 146-156, contains his full translation of *KTU*, 1.100. Johannes C. de Moor expresses: “Apparently Horonu only gives in because he realizes that if all the powerful gods invoked would rush in to help his serpents might be exterminated. . . . It is the sun-goddess Shapshu who is intermediary in warding off the poison” (“East of Eden,” *ZAW* 100 [1988]: 108).

de Moor comments further: “The Israelite tradition about the enmity between the seed of man and the seed of the serpent would have been derived from this myth under abolition of all references to a divine power next to God” (*ibid.*, 109).

²Matthews and Benjamin, 33. “The divine assembly gave Nintu-Mami moisture to thin the clay. She wet it with saliva from the *anunnaki* and the *iggigi*. Nintu-Mami sang. . . . The divine assembly heard the hymn which Nintu-Mami sang. The *anunnaki* and the *iggigi* kissed her feet. Yesterday, we called you ‘Mami.’ Today, you are ‘Mother of the divine assembly’” (*ibid.*, referring to *Atrahasis I:235-40*).

³Matthews and Benjamin, 33-35. “Ea-Enki and Nintu-Mami entered their birthing room, she summoned her midwife, he worked the clay. She sang the sacred song, he prayed the special prayer. . . . The tenth month came, Nintu-Mami went into labor. . . . On the birth stool, Nintu-Mami sang: ‘I have created life. Let the midwife rejoice in the labor room when a mother gives birth’” (*ibid.*, referring to

The bilingual Babylonian creation myth, *Enuma Elish*, stated that “Aruru [the mother goddess], together with him [Marduk] created the seed of mankind.”¹ In Ugaritic, the title of Ashera, the Ugaritic mother goddess: *qnyt 'ilm*, means “she that gave birth to the gods,”² the creatress/bearer of the gods. The gods themselves are called “the sons of Ashera.”³

Eve, the “mother of all living,” was fashioned from the rib of Adam. In the Sumerian myth of Enki and Ninhursag, “one of Enki’s sick organs is the rib (Sumerian *ti*); the goddess created for healing his rib was called in Sumerian Nin-*ti* ‘the Lady of the rib.’ But the Sumerian *ti* also means ‘to make live.’ The name Nin-*ti* may thus mean ‘the Lady who makes live’ as well as ‘the Lady of the rib.’” This “literary pun” explains Eve’s title and her being fashioned from Adam’s rib.⁴

While some similarities exist in the mention of the “rib” in connection with the creation of the woman, the Bible rejects the idea of the woman being a goddess.

Moreover, there was no sickness connected with the perfect creation of God, both male

Atrahasis 1:250-300).

Kikawada suggests that “behind the character of Eve was probably hidden the figure of the creatress or the mother-goddess Mami, and that *bhawwāh*, Eve, was an onomastic form derived from her title, *'ēm kol-bay*” (“Two Notes on Eve,” 34). Kikawada points out that the creatress Mami shapes a man out of clay with Enki’s help. The word *itti*, meaning ‘with’ or ‘together with’ is used, which is analogous to the prepositional sense of the Hebrew *'et* (*ibid.*). See Pardes, 180.

¹Skinner, 102-103.

²Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:200.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*, 149. For more recent studies on Eve see W. G. Lambert, “Babylonien und Israel,” *Theologische Revue* 5 (1980): 72-73.

and female, made in God's image (Gen 1:26-27).

Adam

Several similarities and differences exist between the biblical Adam and Adapa of the Mesopotamian Story of Adapa.¹ There is obvious similarity between the names Adapa and Adam. Shea probed this in detail:

The only significant difference occurs in the case of the fourth letter, the last consonant, *p* and *m* respectively. Phonologically speaking, *p* and *m*, along with *b* and *w*, fall into the same category of letters or sounds known as labials. . . . It is clear from comparative studies of both ancient and modern languages that phonemes of the same type may interchange between languages and between dialects of the same language. . . . Thus the changes necessary to go to Adapa from Adam are linguistically well known. . . . The following development may be posited in the case under consideration here: Adam > Adama (>Adaba?) > Adapa.²

Both Adam and Adapa were given clothes.³ Both "underwent a test before the

¹The early discoverers and investigators of the Adapa story claimed that it was a true Babylonian parallel to the biblical Adam. See Albert T. Clay, *The Origin of Biblical Traditions: Hebrew Legends in Babylonia and Israel*, Yale Oriental Series 12 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), 108-116. Later writers claimed that no parallels exist between them. For example, A. Heidel objects: "The Adapa legend and the Biblical story (of Adam) are fundamentally as far apart as antipodes" (*The Babylonian Genesis*, 2nd ed. [Chicago, 1951], 124). Others see not parallels but merely similar issues between them: e.g., G. Buccellati, "Adapa, Genesis, and the Notion of Faith," *UF* 5 (1973): 61-6; B. R. Foster, "Wisdom and the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Or*, n.s., 43 (1974): 352-3; and E. A. Speiser, "Basic Idea of History in Its Common Near Eastern Setting," *IEJ* 7, no. 4 (1957): 201-216. Some show a parallel with due allowance for functional shifts in the material: Shea, "Adam in Ancient Mesopotamian Traditions," 27-41.

²Shea, "Adam in Ancient Mesopotamian Traditions," 38. This phonological interchange is less likely to have occurred in the opposite direction. Furthermore, the final ending *a* in Adapa also appears in the Hebrew form of Adam, meaning "ground, soil." Finally, Adapa appears without a final vowel as *a-da-ap* meaning "man," in an unpublished syllabary text (*ibid.*). Also see S. Moscati, ed., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages* (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1964), 24-26; and *ANET*, 101.

³Shea, "Adam in Ancient Mesopotamian Traditions," 32.

deity and the test was based upon something they were to consume.”¹ Subsequently, “certain consequences passed upon mankind.”²

They were both “summoned before the divinity to give account of their actions.” Adam’s offense is clearly that of eating from the prohibited fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adapa’s offense is not the matter of eating and drinking, but “was clearly breaking the wing of the south wind.”³

In an attempt to locate Eridu, Adapa’s city, Shea points out:

Eridu is the first in the line of the five cities that ruled before the flood. The names of the two kings who ruled at Eridu appear in order as Alulim and Alalgar. The names of the wise men associated with Alulim and Alalgar are Adapa and Uanduga, respectively. This locates Adapa as contemporaneous with the first king of the first antediluvian city. . . . The Sumerians believed that Alulim and Adapa belonged to the first *significant* generation of mankind.⁴

The gatekeeper gods, Tammuz and Gizzida, who admitted Adapa into heaven are like the angelic cherubim (plural or dual) guarding the gate of the garden of Eden on earth (Gen 3:22). “Pairs of Assyrian *karibi* were also stationed at gates (of cities or temples), but Egyptian representations of such beings appear closer in form and function to the cherubim of the Bible than do the Assyrian ones.”⁵

¹Ibid., 39.

²Ibid.

³Niels-Erik Andreasen, “Adam and Adapa: Two Anthropological Characters,” *AUSS* 19 (1981): 186.

⁴Shea, “Adam in Ancient Mesopotamian Traditions,” 36. See also W. W. Hallo, “Antediluvian Cities,” *JCS* 23 (1970): 57-8; W. W. Hallo and W. K. Simpson, *The Ancient Near East: A History* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 29-32; Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 42.

⁵Shea, “Adam in Ancient Mesopotamian Traditions,” 32.

Cursing

A story from Egypt in the ninth Dynasty is recounted in *ANET* 6-7, titled: “The Repulsing of the Dragon and the Creation.” A snake, called Apophis, known to be a dragon or demon of the underworld who obstructs the sun-god Re, is cursed as follows:

He is one fallen to the flame, Apophis with a knife on his head. He *cannot* see, and his name is no (more) in this land. I have commanded that *a curse* be cast upon him; I have consumed his bones; I have annihilated his soul in the course of the day; I have cut his vertebrae at his neck, severed with a knife which hacked up his flesh and pierced into his hide. . . . I have taken away his heart from its place, his seat, and his tomb. I have made him nonexistent: his name is not; his children are not; he is not and his family is not; he is not and his false-door is not; he is not and his heirs are not. His egg shall not last, nor shall his seed knit together—and vice versa. His soul, his corpse, his state of glory, his shadow, and his magic are not. His bones are not, and his skin is not. He is fallen and overthrown.¹

This curse upon the snake is reminiscent of that of the biblical account (Gen 3:14-15). However, the biblical account was intended to set forth a program of ultimate and total annihilation of Satan, thereby giving this curse a universal and eternal implication.

Enki ate eight plants and incurred a curse for his misdeed. This recalls the “eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge by Adam and Eve and the curses pronounced against each of them for this sinful action.”² Similarly, “the birth of the goddesses without pain or travail illuminates the background of the curse against Eve that it shall be her lot to conceive and bear children in sorrow.”³

¹Other such texts are found in *ANET*, 8, 9-10, 11-12, 14, n. 7, 253, 263, 366, 367, and 417.

²Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character*, 148.

³*Ibid.*, 149.

Seed of Woman, Seed of Serpent, and Procreation

The masculine image that construes the “mother earth” as the container of the god’s semen is also found in some ancient Near Eastern literature.¹ In Canaanite literature, for instance, “a husband was like a farmer who cultivated the soil so that it yields a harvest. A woman, like a field, needs the seed and cultivation of a husband, if she is to be fertile.”²

In Egypt, an interesting connection is made between snake-charming and the solemnization of marriage.³ In Babylon, “pregnant women wear amulets of the demon Pazuzu to protect them against the child-robbing demon Lamashtu. The penis of Pazuzu was a serpent and he was often depicted next to the tree of life, the sacred date-palm.”⁴ The giving of a serpent as a bridal gift was “an euphemism for the penis.”⁵ This is made evident by a “Sumerian text related to the sacred marriage rite: ‘he lifted his penis, brought the bridal gift.’”⁶

KTU, 1.100 contains mythological interchange between a bride and groom:

(Bride): “Give a serpent as my bridal gift,

¹Bledstein, 197.

²Cyrus Gordon, “Canaanite Mythology,” *Mythologies of the Ancient World*, ed., S. N. Kramer (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1961), 214-215, quoted in Bledstein, 197.

³Etienne Drioton, *Pages d’Égyptologie* (Le Caire: Éditions de la Revue du Caire, 1957), 60. See de Moor, “East of Eden,” 111.

⁴de Moor, “East of Eden,” 111.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

give a lizard as my bridal gift,
yea, a young viper as a present for my love!”

(Groom): “I give a serpent as your bridal gift,
a young viper as a present for your love!”¹

The biblical account is devoid of the superstitious beliefs and demonology that surrounded mating and procreation in the ANE cultures. There are no real similarities between them in this aspect.

Head and Foot

The monster “Tehom” was “well able to injure men.”² The curse on “Tehom” which included the striking of his skull is similar to the crushing of Tiamat’s skull in *Enuma elish*.³ In *Enuma elish*, Marduk tramples Tiamat’s dead body. Elsewhere, Naram-Sin of Akkad is depicted as standing on two dead bodies after a victory.⁴

“The crushing of the head is also the image of victory over an enemy from neo-Sumerian times; an Assyrian text, in particular, says ‘as that of a snake, I have [struck] your head with my foot.’”⁵

Ward refers to a Chaldean seal which “represents a fleeing serpent, with its head

¹Ibid., 110-111.

²Oesterley, 178.

³Ibid.

⁴Ronning uses these as examples proving that “the crushing of the head is either the end of the fight, or a victory gesture over a dead body. . . . Gen 3:15 is a picture of complete victory, rather than of a battle” (95). See Haspecker and Lohfink, 371.

⁵Ronning, 96. See Lipinski, 42-44.

turned back toward a deity, who is swiftly pursuing it, and who smites it with a weapon.”¹ In another corresponding cylinder: “The dragon, which corresponds with the serpent . . . is in the attitude of retreat, and turns its head back toward its pursuer . . . who shoots it with an arrow.”² The other figure on it is of “a winged monster represented under the feet of Bel . . . very likely an attendant of the Dragon, or possibly of Bel.”³ Ward interprets these to mean “the demiurge Bel-Merodach attacks and punishes the Serpent by bruising its head.”⁴

One of the arrows which Izdubar shot at some beasts and winged figures transfixes a serpent. “Indeed, the massive sculpture of Izdubar, which was often repeated on late palaces, and which was evidently regarded as a *chef d’oeuvre* of Assyrian art, represented Izdubar as grasping a serpent by the neck with his right hand, while strangling a lion under his left arm.”⁵

Another significant common ground between the biblical and ANE tradition is the fact that standing upon or even crushing the head of someone or something signifies the vanquishing and death of such a one. It is a common sign of victory in both cultures.

Savior Myth

The Savior or *Heilbringer*-myth involves a Hero who overcame the primeval

¹Ward, “The Serpent Tempter in Oriental Mythology,” 224.

²*Ibid.*, 225.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, 226.

⁵*Ibid.* Izdubar is identical with “Nimrod, really another form of Merodach” (*ibid.*).

watery monster, and one who also brought temporal blessings to his people. The Babylonian Marduk is the “Heilbringer,”¹ the champion of the gods, who subdues Tiamat, before Marduk later forms men out of clay and the blood of gods. He is the helper of men in distress, healer in diseases, and one who “awakens men from the dead.”²

The Egyptian sun-god Rā who conquered the dragon Apophis “appears in some legends as a man who lived on earth and gave gifts to his people.”³ However, Osiris featured more prominently in the Egyptian pantheon at all events as a “culture-hero.”⁴ Osiris “instituted laws, taught agriculture, instructed the Egyptians in the ritual of worship, and won them from ‘their destitute and bestial mode of living.’ After civilizing Egypt, he traveled over the world.”⁵

In Aryan mythology, Indra is the heilbringer figure. He appeared in human form, and defeated and crushed Vritra, an earthly being who is half serpent and half man.⁶ However, there were various Greek savior figures, namely, Dionysus, Prometheus, and Pythian Apollo. Notably among them was Pythian Apollo, the dragon-slayer, who was victorious over the monster and benefits humanity in several ways including teaching them healing arts, showing them how civil constitutions are formed, and protecting flocks

¹Oesterley, 110.

²Ibid., 111-112.

³Ibid., 113.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., 114.

and cattle.¹

While giving room for wide divergence in detail, the belief in a Savior for humanity is common and cuts across many cultures. It is, however, best developed and advanced in the biblical literature. The divine Savior portrayed in the Bible is a God-man; and the salvation He brings is not just cultural and temporal, but rather holistic, eternal, and mostly spiritual.

Sibling Rivalry

The twin-motif is prominent in the creation stories of the ancient Near East. The Egyptians believed that “life and death were present right from the beginning. Twins came into the world not only bringing twice the life of a single birth, but also the death brought on by sibling rivalry.”²

This developed into numerous common stories of two brothers, twins or rivals. In Egypt, their names were “Anubis” and “Bata” or “Seth” and “Horus.” “The stories of Anubis and Bata tell of two brothers who work together successfully to graze and farm their land. Their rivalry for children, however, leaves them both infertile.”³

Once, Bata had to run away from Anubi, his brother, who was chasing him with

¹Ibid., 117.

²Ibid., 61.

³Ibid. “Anubis was the older, Bata was the younger: Anubis was a villager, who married and owned his own house. Bata was under the care of his brother and lived with him like a son. . . . Bata was young, but he was righteous and blameless in his generation, so the divine assembly of Egypt often let him use their power” (ibid., 62).

his spear.¹ Bata exclaimed: "Why are you hunting me? Why do you want to kill me without giving me a chance to speak in my defense? I am still your younger brother. You and your wife are like father and mother to me . . ."²

The motif of fratricide occurs in pagan mythology. There is an Egyptian legend about "Seth who slew Osiris;"³ and a Canaanite story about "Môt, who murdered Baal."⁴

The dispute between Dumuzi, the Shepherd-god, and Enkimdu, the Farmer-god, is illustrated in a group of Sumerian poetic compositions whose plot resembles the Cain-Abel motif. The two demigods, or two kings, debate each other's superiority; each one extolling "his own virtues and achievements and belittling those of his opponent. . . . The dispute ends in a reconciliation, or at least in a peaceful settlement, rather than in a murder."⁵

Dumuzi, the shepherd-god, "having been rejected by the goddess Innana in favor of the farmer-god,"⁶ Enkimdu, elaborately enumerates his superior qualities, and picks a quarrel with his meek and peace-loving rival, Enkimdu. This aggressive attitude seems to result from "a feeling of inferiority and frustration."⁷

¹Ibid., 65, referring to *Stories of Anubis and Bata: vi:5-10*.

²Ibid.

³Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:179.

⁴Ibid.

⁵*ANET*, 41-42.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

Summary

Several comparisons were elucidated from the ancient Near Eastern literature which tend to illuminate our understanding of the context of Gen 3:14-15. The ANE helps readers today to understand the imagery that the Bible writers employed to communicate the message from God in their contemporary setting.

It is noteworthy that both the biblical and ANE cultures maintain a similar understanding of phrases like “crawling on the belly,” “eat/lick dust,” and “crushing/standing on someone’s head” to include humiliation, subjugation, and possibly death.

Many cultures of the world teach of a golden age before now when and where humanity dwelt in perfect peace of some sort and divinity related well with humanity. For example, the Sumerian had an equivalent of the garden of Eden supplied with good nature, fruits, foods, and clean water in abundance. While many of these cultures teach of multiple deities, the Bible opposes this with monotheism.

A few examples of folklores were seen of animals talking with humans and with nature. These differ from the biblical instances which involve God in the incidences of talking animals.

Snakes were revered and feared in most ANE cultures. Serpents were regarded in many cases as symbolizing positive qualities such as sovereignty, life, immortality, youthfulness, helping, healing, fertility, potency, knowledge, wisdom, as well as negative qualities like evil, enmity, chaos, and death. The serpent’s association with life, immortality, and wisdom mostly resemble its deceptive agenda for destroying mankind as

evident in the Gen 3 story.

Negatively, the serpent was also considered as the principle of evil and harmfulness in the ANE. It is considered as an enemy of God and good from primeval times. It is hostile to humanity, dead or living. Its correlation with deception and temptation in the ANE agrees with the Gen 3 story. Both cultures agree, to some point, that the serpent was cursed because it has been used as an agent by the enemy of humanity. The Bible does not elevate the serpent to the status of a god as does the ANE cultures.

Many ancient cultures recognize the role of some woman as the progenitor of humanity. She is connected with giving life and given the status of a goddess believed to have had some interrelationship or intercourse with some male gods. While some similarities exist in the mention of the “rib” in connection with the creation of the woman, the Bible rejects the idea of the woman being a goddess. Moreover, there was no sickness connected with the perfect creation of God, both male and female, made in God’s image (Gen 1:26-27).

There is similarity between the names of the biblical Adam and Adapa in the Mesopotamian story of Adapa. Both Adam and Adapa were given clothes and underwent a test before the deity based upon something they were to consume. These tests led to certain repercussion which affected all humanity and nature. They were both summoned before the divinity to give account of their actions and some supernatural angel-like beings were involved in the aftermath of their punishment.

The biblical account seems to have intentionally contradicted the pagan

philosophies in order to distinguish the God of the Bible as the Creator-Redeemer. However, the areas of commonalities found include the understanding of the fallen condition of humanity which was preceded by a perfect state of existence. They both teach the need for a savior of some kind, delivering humanity from its present predicament.

In the concluding chapter that follows, attention will be given to the theological implications of the seed of Gen 3:15 as it has been illuminated throughout Scripture. Major themes and minor motifs will be discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SEED OF GEN 3:15

Several themes result from the literary, structural, and semantic analysis presented above, in the light of the seed of Gen 3:15. These themes run through Gen 1-3, the rest of Genesis, and indeed the rest of the canon. Alongside, there are also some minor motifs worth mentioning. All these have theological implications for our understanding and interpretation of the “Seed.”

Major Themes

1. The Theme of Promise.

Promises/blessings were already pronounced in Gen 1:26ff. (image of God, dominion, future posterity, food); 2:1-3 (Sabbath rest); 2:9-17 (blissful home, sustenance, dominion); 2:21-24 (happy marriage, cloth of divine glory). Gen 3:14-19 contains God’s reaction to the Serpent, Woman, and Man. Elements of blessings and promise are found in each address.¹

¹The curse of the serpent contained the promise of the Savior. Richard M. Davidson says: “God pronounces that even though the woman would have difficult ‘labor’ in childbirth—an ordeal that would seem naturally to discourage her from continuing to have relations with her husband—‘yet,’ God assures her, ‘your desire shall be for your husband.’ A divinely ordained sexual yearning of wife for husband will serve to sustain the union that has been threatened in the ruptured relations resulting from sin. Likewise, the curse of the ground and toil contains a blessing because God still promises that the ground will

“No other theme provides such a comprehensive insight into the plan and program of our Lord in both testaments as the ‘promise.’ Beginning with the promise of a victorious ‘Seed’ in Genesis 3:15, the content of this single, all encompassing theme builds.”¹

2. The Theme of Covenant.

The creation covenant included the ordinances of Sabbath, labor, and marriage. Adam’s life as a covenant creature was a unified whole. Man’s covenant-relationship with God involves “total-life relationship.”² “The covenant of God is all-inclusive.”³

The test of discipline in the prohibition given to Adam and Eve was a focal point of the covenant. “If Adam succeeded in submitting to God at this point, his blessing

continue to yield its fruit for man to eat” (“The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 3,” *AUSS* 26 [1988]: 129). This curse is for man’s benefit “as a needful discipline, part of the divine plan for man’s recovery from the results of sin” (*ibid.*, n. 24). More persuasive evidence for this traditional view which contrasts the modern critical tendency to see here only an aetiological reference is found in: James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 216-219; and Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, 35-37.

“Blessing and cursing are important concepts in the book of Genesis. . . . Normally, in Genesis, blessing is associated with God’s favour and cursing with his disfavour” (Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 43). God’s blessing was promised through Abraham and his descendants to the whole world. God’s blessing is closely associated with prosperity in the Genesis narratives. It is also closely associated with fertility as seen in 1:28 and 9:1. Abraham was promised numerous seed (*ibid.*).

¹Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest,” *BSac* 130 (1973): 135-136. The first element of the promise consists of “a ‘seed’ or a line of heirs culminating in a chief *heir par excellence* which is promised to Eve, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen 3:15; 12:3, 7; 13:14-16; 15:4, 5, 13, 18; 16:10; 17:2, 7, 9, 19; 21:12; 22:17; 26:24; 27:1, 7; 28:14). Several terms are used in the Old Testament to teach that the promise is God’s “word,” “blessing,” and “oath” to his chosen “seed,” while the New Testament uses only the term “promise,” *epangelia*. See *idem*, “The Eschatological Hermeneutics of ‘Evangelicalism’: Promise Theology,” *JETS* 13 (1970): 91-99; *idem*, “The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34,” *JETS* 15 (1972): 11-23. Cf. Julius Schniewind and Gerhard Friedrich, “ἑπαγγελῶ,” *TDNT*, 2:576-586.

²Robertson, 82.

³*Ibid.*

under the larger provision of the covenant of creation was assured.”¹ Radical obedience was the key to their full blessing. The relationship between man and his creator may be described as a “bond of life and death sovereignly administered.”² Curse and blessing, life and death, are the alternatives man faced under this covenant.

The covenant of Redemption was established immediately in conjunction with man’s failure under the covenant of creation. “The very words that pronounced the curse of the covenant of creation also inaugurated the covenant of redemption.”³ In the speech of God to Satan, the woman, and the man, following the order of their disloyalty to God, the elements of curse and blessing are found in each address just like the covenant of creation. In spite of the Fall, humanity must continue with its original responsibilities regarding the ordinances of Sabbath, labor, and marriage.

Covenant involved the dialogue of God with humanity and its goal is the Incarnation. God wishes to be united with humanity. In the light of the covenant, sin is “the rupture of the bond of the covenant, it is the rejection of God who is offering Himself, it is the refusal of dialogue. It is an attack on the heart of YHWH.”⁴ Divine initiative led to the revelation of the first redemptive covenant (Gen 3:15), couched in symbolic language, clearly outlining God’s plan for man’s salvation.

3. Theme of Alienation and Separation.

¹Ibid., 83.

²Ibid., 86.

³Ibid., 91.

⁴Albert Gelin, *The Concept of Man in the Bible*, trans. David M. Murphy (Staten Island, NY: Society of St. Paul, 1968), 127.

A strong bond and dependent relationship can be observed between God and intelligent beings He created in His image. Man's joy, freedom, security, fulfillment, and life were intimately anchored in the personal God and His expressed will. When Adam and Eve sought all of the above in something or someone else or in the autonomous "I" instead of God, the inevitable result is a tragic alienation, an unfortunate broken relationship between God and man. This is rightly called "Sin." This is evident in the fact that Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of God, whom they had been so fond of, after they had disobeyed Him (Gen 3:8).

Man's resultant condition can be rightly described as "fallen." The reversals and transformations discussed in the previous sections of this dissertation serve to collaborate this fact vividly. The fallen man is also alienated from himself. Shame and guilt so overwhelmed the first couple that they sought to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. The awareness of their nakedness was another major indication of their fallen humanity. Hitherto, they must have been covered by the glory of God and completely unaware of any nakedness whatsoever (Gen 2:25).

In the same vein, "Adam had been created to rule the earth. Now the earth's dust shall rule him."¹ He now engages in life-long unceasing struggle with the soil. "The ground does not wish to cooperate with the man who is its keeper (2:15), so works to frustrate him. Only when the man returns to the earth in death will this struggle cease."²

He became alienated from his fellow beings; depraved by sin, he became

¹Robertson, 105.

²Ogden, 138.

self-justifying, censorious, and recriminatory (Gen 3:11-13). He became alienated from his environment; conflict, pain, and suffering became his lot (Gen 3:15-19). The life of a creature was required to provide him with adequate covering. . . . Guilt and depravity made him unfit to stand before the holy God and he became a sinful exile (Gen 3:23-24).¹

The intimacy and companionship that the first couple enjoyed was now contrasted by the alienation and divisiveness that sin and disobedience had brought. Their mutual nakedness signified their intimacy while their rush for clothing showed each one withdrawing from intimacy and attempting to coverup. Adam had blissfully and blithely referred to Eve, his wife (Gen 2:23-25), now disparately and dispassionately calls her “the woman” (Gen 3:12). The re-use of “his wife” in Gen 3:20, 21; 4:1, after the blaming game and derogatory reference to “the woman” in 3:2, now bears the implication of alienation and fallenness.²

“A theme of alienation pervades the entire text of Genesis.”³ Beginning with human expulsion from their Eden home, the world itself became an alien place.

¹Oliver Kang-song Koh, “A Proposed Order of Worship for the Seventh-day Adventist Church Informed by the Theological Presuppositions Implied in the Genesis Account of the Creation and Fall of Man and the Covenant Promise of Genesis 3:15” (D.Min. dissertation, Andrews University, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, 1982), 13.

²God making garments of skin for the two stresses the permanence of the divisiveness which man and woman have brought upon themselves. More so, it shows that God realizes that the alienation is unavoidably a part of man’s existence. God does this so that they can cope with the stark reality of their sinfulness and fallenness.

Ogden objects: “While disobedience alienates mankind from the rest of creation, there is still a mutuality in the relationship between the man and his wife in which care and protection on his part meet with her loving response. As the climax to the search for man’s partner which is the theme for the Yahwist’s story of creation (2:18), this conclusion is entirely fitting” (139). He emphatically states: “The action of the man and the woman in eating the fruit has drawn them closer to each other (3:7)” (ibid., 137).

³Garrett, 233.

“Although of a common family, the human race is divided and scattered. Languages are divided, people are dispersed, and all bonds of unity are lost.”¹ “The great gulf of alienation can only be bridged through God’s initiative and His grace.”²

4. God’s Character: Holiness and Righteousness versus Love, Grace, and Forgiveness.

The character of God is intentionally expressed in the names used for God in these chapters. As earlier mentioned, Gen 2 uses both *Yahweh* and *Elohim* for God. *Yahweh* is God’s personal and covenant name, the God who personally cares; the God who comes down to be with His creatures; a personal God. *Elohim* shows Him as equally infinite. Only the true God of the Scripture is both infinite (*Elohim*) and personal (*Yahweh*). He is all-powerful and all-caring.³

The character of God is clearly at stake in the story of the Fall recorded in Gen 3. Here also, the names of God *Yahweh Elohim* are used together nine times in vss. 1, 8, 9, 13, 14, 21, 22, 23. Only in the temptation conversation between Eve and the serpent, in vss. 1, 3, and 5, do they refer to God as *Elohim*. Hence, the great issue in the temptation and Fall is the character of God. Satan’s insinuations against God’s claims and His character were accepted by Eve. She was deceived into doubting God’s word

¹Ibid.

²H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel* (London: SCM, 1956), 83. Garrett affirms: “The sense of estrangement and homelessness is mitigated only by the promises of God. In that, there is hope of finally finding a home” (235).

³See Doukhan, *Genesis Creation Story*, 118-134. “The gods of the eastern religions are infinite, but not personal; the gods of the Greeks in the West are personal, but not infinite. Only the God of the Scripture is both” (ibid., 133). Cf. Davidson, “Unlocking Old Testament Treasures,” 5.

and character, which opened the floodgates of woe for the whole world.

It was necessarily consistent with God's holy character that He reacted in a decisive manner to man's disobedience to the divine law. The expulsion of man from Eden and the judgment of death as a result of his sin clearly manifests God as "the arch-enemy of sin."¹ God is holy and His moral purity is absolute. He will not condone any thought or action that involves mixed loyalty, open or subtle deviance to His holiness and righteousness. "God's righteous dealing with sin and sinner is His holiness in action."²

Gen 3-4 is very basic in establishing the way God responds to human transgression as Judge. God's "judicial intervention corresponds precisely to the profane trial, which can be found universally in the institution of courts (discovery of the crime—hearing—defense—sentence)."³ The theme of judgment is vivid in Gen 3:14-19 as God sentences the transgressors in a legal trial context. However, Gen 3:15 combines judgment and salvation. "God's acts in saving and judging his people belong closely together."⁴

¹Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 137.

²Koh, 15. "While God's righteousness and holiness, radiating as they do from His moral purity, reject, repel, and condemn what is sinful, they also, paradoxically, generate a divine 'drawingness'—a belonging unto Himself" (ibid.). This is indicated in the root meaning of holiness as "setting apart, a separating," as a separating or setting apart "unto God alone." Cf. William Dryness, *Themes in the Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1979), 53; and Norman Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Epworth, 1944), 21.

³Claus Westermann, *What Does the Old Testament Say About God?* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 54. Cf. Walter Brueggemann and H. W. Wolff, *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 83-100; Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 66-70; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 152-154; Claus Westermann, "Arten der Erzählung in der Genesis," in *Forschung am Alten Testament* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1964), 47; and idem, *Genesis 1-11*, 374-380.

⁴Westermann, *What Does the Old Testament Say About God?* 56.

God's holiness is found in His sanctification of the seventh-day Sabbath (2:1-3). His righteousness is seen in His prohibition against eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (2:17). His law is the norm for the dynamic relationship between Him and mankind. The law is a transcript and reflection of God's holy and righteous character. His law is love and life.

The wise, beautiful, and harmonious organization of the work of creation teaches the lessons of the law, love, and grace of the Creator-God. "The principle of law pervades the text."¹ He made everything intrinsically and aesthetically good and perfect. Nature is "a positive gift from God."²

God's grace and love towards humanity is evident in that He made them in His image (Gen 1:27). He made them for good (Gen 1:31); showing an affirmation of life and ideal existence. He allowed them free, unhindered, and unprecedented access to Himself and intimate communication with God. This is further demonstrated by the giving of the Sabbath rest (2:1-3), a beautiful and completely furnished life in the Garden of Eden, and even His institution of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (2:16-17).

¹Jacques Doukhan, "The Future Adventist Understanding of Creation" (Paper presented at LaSierra University, California, October 20, 1997), 15. "God separates light from darkness, delimits the waters. He appoints the stars for signs and for fixed times and specific functions. The living Creation is required to be fruitful and to multiply. Man is ordered to subdue the earth and to enjoy its fruit. The technical word for law (*sawa*) is used in that instance (Gen 2:16), and the seventh day is set apart. God sets hedges for the natural order which every species has to respect" (ibid., 16). All these exemplify the discipline of the law and the restraints of justice.

²Ibid. "The artistic arrangement of the literary structure, the harmonious repetition of the ten words for God, the rhetorical rhythm of seven and the refrain 'it was good,' and the concluding statement 'it was really good' (the Hebrew word for good *tov* means both good and beautiful), express the aesthetic perfection of creation" (ibid.). On the pattern of seven, see Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:13-14; and Robert Martin-Achard, *Et Dieu Crée le ciel et la Terre* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1979), 63.

He gave man food and a help-meet (2:9, 18, 21-24). The gift of marriage is an eternal loving union.

His graciousness is extended to humans by allowing them to continue to partake of His creative powers in child-bearing even after sin. The image of God was not obliterated from man outright. “Eve is not by God, separated from Adam, or deprived of motherhood.”¹

God Himself promised to implant enmity between humanity and Satan: “I will put enmity” (Gen 3:15). Human beings needed to have the divinely instituted “enmity” against Satan in order for them to have love for God and even adequately respond to God’s love. God divinely, graciously, and lovingly instituted the enmity (Gen 3:15). Had God not specially interposed, Satan and human beings would form an alliance against heaven in opposition to God and all His purposes. Human beings, on their own, could not have initiated or cherished any enmity against Satan.

God’s grace made Him to seek out the fallen and shameful couple from their hiding place. Evidently, His eyes were upon them all the time. He came to help them out and to restore and redeem them. He freely offered these guilty rebels full and free forgiveness, justification, and sonship again. God’s unmerited favor towards mankind is established indelibly.

“Immediately upon the debacle of our first parent’s deviation, the sunlight of divine grace and love burst through, for we see the forgiving God in pursuit of guilty

¹Lester Meyer, “Luther in the Garden of Eden: His Commentary on Genesis 1-3,” *Word and World* 4 (1984): 433; referring to *Lectures on Genesis*, vol. 1, *Luther’s Works*, 199.

sinner and His provision of clothing through the death of innocent animals.”¹

5. Theme of Creation, Re-creation, Redemption and Gospel.

The action of God in “setting/putting” the enmity for Satan in the mind of mankind is an act of creation (3:15). Creation, from nothingness—*ex nihilo*, was re-enacted. God also created a new clothing for mankind in place of their acquired “nakedness” (3:21). God was in the process of re-creating and redeeming the fallen man. God also promised “seeds” for mankind without revoking their participation in God’s creative powers in childbearing. Man’s posterity and continuation were assured in spite of the punishment of death hanging over his head. Fittingly, Adam names his wife “Eve,” meaning “the mother of all living” (Gen 3:20).

“The garden of Eden story of Gen 2-3 is an expansion of the image of God story in chapter 1.”² This concerns human beings, human nature, and their resemblance to God. God’s image implies physical, spiritual, biological, spiritual, social, and conjugal dimensions. This concept has an allusion to royal status of the human person. Human nature and destiny are described in relationship with God. “Humans cannot exist or survive outside of this relationship.”³

¹David L. Larsen, *The Evangelism Mandate: Recovering the Centrality of Gospel Preaching* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1992), 47. Larsen notes: “Human history would be essentially inexplicable were the third chapter of Genesis to be excised. Apart from a historic Garden of Eden, the human predicament would have to be explained as the result of our being created as finite beings, and thus God would be ultimately responsible for our plight” (ibid., 46).

²Sawyer, 64.

³Doukhan, “The Future Adventist Understanding of Creation,” 16. ANE inscriptions where the king is described in the image of the deity, shed light on humanity’s royal status. See Hans Wildberger, “Das Abbild Gottes, Gen 1:26-30,” *TZ* 21 (1965): 253-255, 484-488.

The resemblance of God is mentioned at the beginning of Adam's story as "image of God" (1:26), at the end as "like one of us" (3:22), and in the middle by the serpent saying "you will become like God (or gods), knowing good and evil" (3:5).¹ When human beings sinned, God was willing to safeguard and re-instate His image fully back to humanity.

This is "Good News" to man from the seeking and forgiving God. This is the "Gospel." The good news is forgiveness from sin, acceptance with God, and restoration of fellowship or communion with God. A promise of salvation from sin and Satan is given by the Creator. Ultimate victory over sin and Satan is ascertained.

"God looks for people. The initiative is with God, not with us. God is acting intentionally as Redeemer and Sustainer hints the gospel presence."² What we receive from God is not based on merit, not even on how faithful we are. It is God's unmerited favor. God meets us with grace greater than our sin.

Alienated and depraved, man can in no wise attain self-salvation nor can he himself effect reconciliation with a holy righteous God to Whom sin is most repugnant. Rather it is only a holy and righteous God Who can approach reconciliation. Though absolutely irreconcilable with sin, God in His grace and mercy can take the initiative to reconcile the sinner unto Himself. . . . Redemption and restoration began with God seeking man. And every possibility for communion between God and man has as its basis redemption through divine initiative.³

The name YHWH is used for God throughout His encounter with man in

¹Sawyer, 65. The image of God is not totally obliterated from humankind even after the Fall. Reference is made to it in Gen 5:1 and 9:6.

²Ibid., 107. "Gen 3 affirms that the initiative for an encounter between God and man always rests with the God of Israel" (Soggin, "The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis," 109).

³Koh, 16.

response to man's disobedience. This puts things on a personal, close, relational, reconcilable level. God is still as much available to man after sin as He was before. This is the gospel in verity. He also came as a surprise. He is a God of surprise. He gave them a second chance. He brought them hope in their hopeless state. His word was liberating from personal and satanic bondage. He breathed new life into their experience again.

Both creation and redemption require faith because of creation out of nothingness, and deliverance out of hopelessness.¹ From the creation to the Fall to a redemptive covenant, God is seen acting on behalf of man. "The first lesson which creation teaches us is a lesson of dependence."²

The Creator God is also regarded as the cosmic Redeemer. That creation is an act of salvation is collaborated by Ps 74:12-17. "The creative-redemptive relationship is primarily soteriological."³ "Protology is Soteriology."⁴

As we have earlier noted above, Gen 3:15 is indeed the first encapsulated gospel pronouncement. Gen 3:15 vividly shows that this Special Seed of the woman is the promised Messiah who is victorious over Satan and his followers. This singular

¹Doukhan, *Genesis Creation Story*, 230. "Faith as a basic love relationship is implied in the relationship of marriage and by extension to all interpersonal relationships that issue from the marriage institution. Faith as a living and growing relationship, however, must meet the crucible of obedience to God (Gen 2:17). Instinctively, faith is a compelling force in the face of the Creator God Who is mighty, good, and compassionate" (Koh, 11).

²Doukhan, *Genesis Creation Story*, vii.

³Gage, 17.

⁴Gerhard von Rad, "The Problem of Creation-Faith in the OT," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 136-143.

Messianic Seed is a Victor, Conquerer, Overcomer, and Leader. He is gracious, sacrificial, and vicarious. This is Messianic. It is the ultimate good news that sinful humanity will be delivered from Satanic enmity.

This special Seed of the woman is the One to bear the sins and sufferings of many. As the High Priest, He offered his life as a sacrifice because Satan's attack on Him was lethal. Both attacks were simultaneous and intended at causing the deaths of both sides. As the Seed of the woman fatally wounds the serpent, he is at risk of himself being wounded to death too. The Messiah-Seed bares his heel and uses it to step on the snake's head voluntarily, vicariously, and sacrificially. This is uniquely substitutionary!

The representative Seed was, of course, royal because the first human pair were royal and he was their seed. The seed always resembles its progenitor. He is therefore a King.¹ This whole prophetic episode is centered on Him.

6. Theme of the Cosmic Moral Conflict.

The first level of the enmity that God initiated in the text is between the serpent and the Woman. The second level of conflict is between the "seed" of Satan and the "seed" of the woman. Evidently, there is a shift from the singular to the plural in this level. The third level shifts back to the singular: the battle between Satan and "He."

At the literal level, one may allow for the natural duel, hatred, and abhorrence between human beings as snakes. This is only a very superficial level considering the heavy implication of the text and its context. This literal application is also implied from

¹Gen 3:15 "anticipates the creation of a royal line through which the terrible consequences of the disobedience of the man and the woman in the Garden of Eden will be reversed" (Alexander, "Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis," 31).

the fact that vs. 14 is applied to the literal snake. However, the real application is spiritual.

Since God is entirely the initiator of this enmity, He takes side with the “woman” in a great controversy against Satan. Hence, God enters a partnership or covenant of communion, redemption, and restoration with humanity. God is actually the One fighting against Satan in the life of mankind. This leads to the second level of this duel.

The enmity between the Satan’s seed and the woman’s seed results from the spiritual implication of the enmity between Satan and the woman. God is entirely involved. The grace of God establishes this enmity in the hearts of the descendants of the woman to the level that each one allows to do it. The individuals who accept God constitute the woman’s seed. On the other hand, the seed of Satan are all descendants of humanity who refuse to oppose Satan and engage in this God-originated enmity against Satan. Rather, these individuals set themselves in opposition to God and his purposes. Moreover, Satan’s angelic associates, “although not materially descended from the devil, they may be regarded figuratively as his ‘seed.’”¹

The whole humanity is divided into only two sides. Those on the Lord’s side are the woman’s seed (collectively). Those who support Satan in opposition to God are Satan’s seed (collective). This “anticipates the long struggle that ensues in the history that follows. ‘Seed of woman’ and ‘seed of Satan’ conflict with one another throughout the ages.”² This conflict between God and Satan, the principles of good and those of

¹Robertson, 98. See also Vos, 54.

²Robertson, 99.

evil, God's people and Satan's followers, will continue in all phases and facets of humanity, from the individual to universal scale, until the full accomplishment of the final level of this enmity. This is prophetic and eschatological in essence.¹ This conflict centers upon the issue of the character of God.

The intense struggles described in the first and second levels culminate in the third level. Here, the enmity narrows down to the singular. Satan himself (singular), as an individual, enters into the conflict with a representative Seed of the woman (singular). "He' shall fatally bruise you (Satan) on the head, and you (Satan) shall fatally bruise 'him' on the heel" (vs. 15).

This movement from "collective seed" to "singular Seed" is very significant. Satan himself as an individual, as the prince of his people, stands as representative of their cause. Corresponding to this narrowing from seed (collective) to Satan (singular) on one side of the enmity, there is also a definite similar narrowing from a multiple seed (collective) of the woman to a singular Seed "he" who will champion the cause of God's people against Satan.²

The truly decisive great controversy is the one between the "he" who is the "redeemer-representative Seed of the woman" and Satan. These are the two universal

¹It should be noted that victory and defeat are intermingled in the immediate experiences of both sides. Satan's side sometimes take the upper hand but it remains comforting and assuring that the ultimate victory belongs to God and His followers. The dynamics of this struggle are vivid in the religious experiences demonstrated in the book of Psalms and exemplified throughout the Bible from Gen 4 to Rev 22.

²Robertson, 99. The LXX translators chose a distinctively masculine "he" (αὐτός), instead of the neuter "it" (αὐτό), as pronoun even though its antecedent "seed" (σπέρμα) is neuter. See Martin, 425 passim; and Woudstra, 199-203. The Latin Vulgate translation renders the pronoun as feminine (*ipsa*) "she." This is not supported by the Hebrew text, but rather done to support Mariology in this text.

forces in conflict. There are no alternative powers with which to identify, and neutrality is impossible. The result of this great cosmic moral conflict is pre-determined. The symbol of the serpent licking the dust and the bruising of its head necessitates the triumph of the Redeemer and the ultimate annihilation of Satanic forces (3:14-15c). The bruising of the Seed's heel implies a fatal injury to the Redeemer (3:15d), but His triumph foreshadows His resurrection from the dead. The final solution to the great cosmic moral conflict is the crushing of the serpent's head.

Since this struggle is beyond human powers, the power and ability to withstand and inflict fatality on Satan and to provide redemption implies that the Redeemer must be more than human—He must partake of the divine. The mystery of the Incarnation is thus foreshadowed.¹

“Redemption cannot be understood in a man-centered fashion. God's glory as the great Creator has been assaulted. His handiwork has been disharmonized. Not simply for the sake of man, but for the glory of God redemption is undertaken.”²

The reality of this great cosmic moral conflict answers the objection that God could not be given a promise of salvation through or within the context of His sentence to the enemy. In like manner, Balaam, an enemy's prophet, spoke blessing of the people of God (Num 23-24). The Psalmist says pointedly that “the wrath of man shall praise God” (Ps 76:10).

7. Theme of Eschatology.

The ensuing conflict is eschatological in nature. The serpent's head is not

¹Koh, 17.

²Robertson, 95.

crushed until the end of the whole ordeal. The great controversy is already settled with the heel injury of the Seed, but does not come to an abrupt end until the serpent is annihilated. There is also the tension between the “already” and the “not yet.”

An eschatological healing/restoration/resurrection can also be deciphered in Gen 3:15. The redeemer-representative Seed comes back from His heel-inflicted injury to finish the demise of the satanic forces. Moreover, all the victory of this promised Seed is transferred to the rest of the collective seed of the woman. Everything will be settled only at the end!

The Creation conveys a “lesson of faith and hope to the believer.”¹ It proves that “death is not the last word and that new beginnings and restoration are conceivable.”² It sensitizes us to the miracle of new life and conversion. In the broader scale of human destiny, it testifies to the power of resurrection.³

“Since Creation took place, since the world had a beginning, it is therefore not eternal: its time depends on God. Creation means that since the beginning was the fact of God. The end also belongs to him. Protology leads to Eschatology.”⁴ A creative-

¹Doukhan, “The Future of Adventist Understanding of Creation,” 15.

²Ibid. “The very nature of the miracle of Creation, as an *ex-nihilo* Creation, points to another miracle which belongs to the end event” (ibid., 20).

³Ibid., 15. Doukhan further observes that “this way of referring to the post event of Creation in order to suggest the future event of Salvation is found, for instance, in the book of Jeremiah (especially 4:23-26; 31:35-37; 33:10-25)” (ibid., n. 43).

⁴Ibid., 20. Claus Westermann concludes that “the beginning and the end” are “the framework for the history of salvation” which is “the center of the Bible” and, thereby, “takes on a new aspect which is essential for the Bible as a whole” (*Beginning and End in the Bible*, trans. Keith Crim [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972], 1, 29, and 37).

redemptive relationship has been observed between Protology and Eschatology.¹ Not only is Protology soteriological, Soteriology has been described as being eschatology.²

Minor Motifs in Gen 3

Several motifs have been discovered in Gen 3 particularly. These motifs are subsidiary to the major themes discussed above. These motifs may also extend beyond this chapter but they generally depend on the presupposition of the passage whether as instructive or otherwise.

1. Ironic Reversal.

“The myths of sin are ironic in content. . . . The serpent’s speech itself is an ironic overstatement.”³ “He who tempted Eve to *eat* now himself will *eat* dust. He who is ‘*ārûm*, ‘subtle’ is now ‘*ārûr*, banned. The most subtle of all animals now becomes the loneliest and oddest of the animals.”⁴

The prophetic speech of Gen 3:14-19 is expressed in poetic irony, transforming cursing into blessing. As an “oracle of destiny,” it forms the primal model for such poetic intervention. It expresses “retributive irony” to the serpent, the woman, and the

¹Gage, 17.

²Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 42-61. The divine work of redemption is described in the language of creation. “The Old Testament likewise appealed to the creative power of god to urge confidence in divine redemption, an argument from protology to eschatology expressed in Isaiah’s word from God, ‘I am the first, I am also the last’ (Isa 48:12-14). In this context the prophet comforts God’s captive people with the assurance that God’s hand, which spread out the heavens, is the same hand that shall be against the Chaldeans” (Gage, 17, n. 2). See also Pss 74 and 136.

³Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*, Bible and Literature Series, 3 (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1981), 83.

⁴Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, 196.

man. On the other hand, it also expresses “restorative irony” to the woman and the man, transforming the curse into blessing.¹ It pronounces God’s wrath in retribution and His mercy in restoration. “This great fountainhead of judgment and salvation is a paradigm of prophetic utterance throughout the scripture, a model of all God’s messages of woe and comfort.”²

Retributive irony is evident in the condemnation of the serpent: the most crafty of creatures (Gen 3:1) becomes the most accursed (Gen 3:14). By ironic extension the serpent’s judgment characterizes the justice distributed to Satan and his seed. . . . The word play in Gen 3:15, ‘you shall bruise him on the heel’ but ‘he shall bruise you on the head’ (an irony of degree) establishes the judicial principle that as Satan had meted out, so in fatal measure it is returned to him again. . . . Retributive irony likewise characterizes the prophetic judgment upon the woman: by desiring to rule over her husband she finds herself in perpetual subservience to him, an irony of contraries. There is retributive irony in the judgment upon the man as well: the dust that would be like God (cf. Gen 3:22) is turned into dust again, an irony of consequence.³

The man and woman were subjects of both grace and wrath, the ultimate irony of curse being transformed into blessing. It was a “demonic irony” when the woman whose life was derived from the man became the minister of death to him. However by “divine irony,” the woman was still appointed to be the mother of all living (Gen 3:20).

¹Gage, 45. The poetic means that much may be signified by little stated. The German *Dichtung* (“poetry”) is from *dichten* (“to make thick, to pack”). The ironic means that what is stated may be exceeded by or contrary to what is signified. Hermann Gunkel states that poetry was the oldest form of prophetic speech in almost every ancient culture, a medium suited to the ecstatic passion of the prophet (*Die Propheten* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1917], 119).

²Gage, 41. See The. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Newton, MA: Charles T. Branford Co., 1970), 233.

³Gage, 45-46. The judicial principle is later developed in the Pentateuch as *Lex Talionis*. The idea that Eve was trying to rule Adam stems from the connection between the word “desire” in Gen 3:16 and 4:7. See Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 1:165-166. However, this argument is disputed by others.

The woman who delivered man to sin would deliver him a Savior. By “restorative irony” God ordained that the weak would conquer the strong because the “Seed” from the woman will subdue the serpent (Gen 3:15).¹

2. Seed and Procreation Motif.

“Procreation is part of creation.” Judaism traces their marriage laws and divorce laws to Gen 1-3.² The mention of genealogies and the advancing of the command to “be fruitful and multiply” are part of the seed motif.³ The use of זרע “seed” and תולדות “genealogy” in Gen 1-3 interact to form a pattern throughout the book of Genesis. “The ecstasy of giving life to another human being in birth or the earth in farming demands the agony of labor.”⁴

3. Correspondence of Sin and Judgment

Gen 3 demonstrates the principles that “the punishment fits the crime,” and “not only the crime, but the criminal.”⁵ “The whole issue of responsibility and obedience is tied up with ‘eating.’”⁶ Correspondingly, several portions of the judgment meted out

¹Gage, 46.

²Ibid., 64.

³Ninow, 121.

⁴Benjamin, 54. “The Creator here is more a midwife than a judge” (ibid.). See idem, “Israel’s God as Mother and Midwife,” *BTB* 19 (1989): 115-120.

⁵Clines, “Theology of the Flood Narrative,” 128-142, esp. 142.

⁶Patrick D. Miller, *Genesis 1-11: Studies in Structure and Theme*, JSOTSup, 8 (Sheffield, England: University of Sheffield, Dept. of Biblical Studies, 1978), 28. God’s command in 2:16-17 uses *’ākal* four times. In chapter 3, in the encounters that led to the actual judgment speeches, the verb *’ākal* is used ten times. Cf. Walsh, 161-177.

have to do with eating. The snake who enticed the woman to sin by eating the fruit would itself now eat dust all the days of its life. The amicable relations between the snake and the woman are turned into enmity by God's judgment.¹

Summary

Several theological implications of the "Seed" of Gen 3:15 arose from the examination of the main themes of Gen 1-3 and the rest of Genesis. This intensifies the meaning of the "Seed" of Gen 3:15 as Messianic.

The seed of Gen 3:15 engenders the Promise theme. Promises and blessings pronounced to humanity in Gen 3:15 connect with those of Gen 1:28; 2:1-3, 9-17, and 21-24 concerning the image of God, dominion, posterity, food, Sabbath rest, blissful home, sustenance, dominion, happy marriage, and the cloth of divine glory.

The Covenant theme emphasizes God as a God of covenant and Adam was a covenant creature whose covenant-relationship with God was all-inclusive, involving the totality of his life. The covenant of creation (Gen 1-2) and the covenant of redemption (Gen 3:15) are intricately connected, perpetuating the blessings of the Sabbath, labor, and marriage. Redemption covenant is centered on the Incarnation through divine initiative.

God promises salvation through His boundless love, grace, and forgiveness. The special Seed who will save humanity also reverses the alienation, separation, and irony that has pervaded our experience. Fallen man is also alienated from himself, from one

¹Miller, 28-29. "The narrator created a correspondence between the characteristic that led to the sin and the judgment that is given as a result of it by assonance and repetition of words and sounds" (ibid., 29).

another and from their environment. The character of God is clearly at stake in the temptation and the Fall story (Gen 3). God's absolute holiness and moral purity are repugnant to sin and punishing man was consistent with His character. However, through the salvation promised, once more humanity will fulfill the mandate to be "fruitful and multiply" and rule over all of creation made new.

The theme of creation, re-creation, redemption and the gospel is seen in the divinely-instigated enmity (Gen 3:15). The good news of forgiveness from sin, acceptance, and restoration of fellowship or communion with the Creator God is ascertained. The Creator God is also the cosmic Redeemer. Creation is an act of salvation. Creation teaches us dependence. Both creation and redemption require faith because of creation out of nothingness, and deliverance out of hopelessness.

Man's disobedience has a cosmic effect. The plan of redemption is packaged as a part of a great cosmic moral conflict between God and Satan. God is the initiator of the enmity being humanity and Satan, without which humanity would have natural affinity for sin. The whole humanity is divided into only two sides in the age-long struggle. Those human beings on the Lord's side are the woman's seed while those who support Satan in opposition to God are Satan's seed. This conflict centers upon the issue of the character of God.

The final solution of this enmity is eschatological in nature, occurring when the serpent's head is finally crushed. This refers to the ultimate annihilation of Satan, his hosts, all sin, and sinners by Christ who is the representative-Redeemer Seed of the woman. All the victory of this special Seed is transferred to the rest of the collective seed

of the woman. At the end of time, there will be resurrection of God's followers and the re-creation of all things. Death is not the last word. New beginnings and restorations are imminent.

Creation witnesses the beginning of all things and equally testifies to the end of all things. Creation was the fact of God. Similarly, the end of all things also belongs to Him. Protology leads to Eschatology. Protology is soteriological and Soteriology is eschatological.

The minor motif of irony shows itself in various ways in Gen 3. Retributive irony is seen in the judgments pronounced on the serpent, woman and man. Restorative irony is shown in the transforming of the judgments or curses into ultimate blessings for humanity. By demonic irony, the woman whose life was derived from the man became the minister of death to him. However, by divine irony, the woman was still appointed to be the mother of all living (Gen 3:20). The woman who delivered man to sin would deliver him a Savior.

The seed and procreation motif notes that procreation is part of creation. Also, זרע "seed" and תולדות "genealogy" advance the command to "be fruitful and multiply," given in Gen 1:26-28. Lastly, the motif of correspondence of sin and judgment demonstrates that the punishment fits the crime and the criminal. The snake who enticed the woman to sin by eating the fruit would itself now eat dust all the days of its life.

**SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS
FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

This study has sought to ascertain the meaning and referent of “seed” and its related pronouns in Gen 3:15. This examination is crucial to the true understanding of this watershed passage that has received considerable attention over the history of Jewish and Christian interpretations.

Summary of Findings

In the Introduction, the centuries of the interpretations of Gen 3:15 were presented according to various classifications. From a vast range of interpretations, including Literal, Symbolic, Figurative, Naturalistic, Allegorical, Aetiological, Messianic, Mariological, Historical, Political, Christological, Eschatological, Collective, Singular, Representative, Rationalistic, and Form-Critical interpretations and their considerable overlaps, opinion shifts, and dogmatism, as well as apologetic rigidity, I have presented several general classifications.

The Literal and Naturalistic interpretations take the text literally as involving nothing more than snakes and human beings in perpetual hatred for one another. These refer only to snakebites and the killing of snakes by humans from generation to generation. Similarly, the Naturalistic Aetiology construes the text as an afterthought or

made-up story explaining mere aetiologies of humans and snakes.

The Allegorical interpretations are the most creative and varied, most evidenced in Philo, Augustine, and several Jewish writers. They deviate from the text into numerous conjectures using philosophical, moral, and emotional terms like passion, pride, and pleasure, to mention but a few.

The Historical-Political interpretations, assuming the dating of Gen 3 to be within the Solomonian era, involve a criticism of this reign through metaphorical discussions of Israel's political enemies like Egypt, Tyre, Moab, Ammon, Edom, Hittites, and the like. Further, Rationalistic interpretations totally deny that Gen 3:15 possesses any divine inspiration, as they do other parts of the Bible.

The majority of scholars writing on Gen 3:15 allow for Naturalistic plus Figurative interpretations of the text by seeing a more serious inner symbolic and figurative interpretation in addition to the literal and naturalistic meaning on the surface. In fact, Gen 3:14 mostly addresses the literal serpent even though it already contains certain hints of the figurative language. However, Gen 3:15 is mostly symbolic, with remnants of literal meaning.

The Figurative "messianic" interpretations, which incorporate the Royal Ideology, concern the elaborate king ideology rather than the eschatological messianism of Bible. These interpretations are based on the equation of the ancient oriental royal theology with that of Israel, assuming Israel's king David as the model of the Adam stories. Similarly, the figurative, collective, eschatological, non-Christological interpretations of the Targums and other Jewish sources reject the uniqueness of the

special Seed of the woman.

The Figurative plural collective-Christological interpretations of the Church Fathers and Calvin identify the woman's seed collectively as the Church, or the whole human race, while the woman could be the Church, Eve, or Mary. Some take the serpent's collective seed severally to include evil spirits, snakes, demons, and evil people. Christ is involved by implication because He is the only one who has conquered Satan. The Figurative singular individual-Christological interpretation, of the likes of Luther, takes the woman's seed exclusively and particularly as Christ as an individual; but by implication and extension, may be applied to Christ's followers.

Virgin birth and Mariological interpretations underscore the birth of Christ as being from the woman's "seed" without the participation of a man. Hence, Mariology involves the subsequent exaltation of Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, to a superior status over all normal humans. This includes Mary's immaculate conception, sinlessness, infallibility, perpetual virginity, veneration, and intercessory, mediatorial, and co-redemptive roles. The final interpretation is the one that recognizes a movement from collective figurative seed to singular representative Christological Seed.

Chapter 1 demonstrates that the Hebrew text of Gen 3:15 is relatively problem-free. The basis of this examination is the final form of the text. The MT represents the mother text which has influenced the LXX, Peshitta, Latin versions, Vulgate, Jerome, Targum Onkelos, and Targum Neofiti in retaining the singular masculine personal pronoun הוּאָ "He" as referent to the Seed of the woman.

The extant portions of Gen 3 from the Dead Sea Scrolls are identical with the

Hebrew text, thus showing that the Hebrew text is uncorrupted as is. Hence, the other ancient texts cited as following the MT rigidly must also be correct in this respect. The quality of the LXX for the Pentateuch have been generally accepted as higher than other parts of the OT. LXX seems to be a literal rendition of the MT in Gen 3:14-15.

The genre of the book of Genesis is narrative like a record of literal events of history. The genealogical or historical records are called תולדות (toledoth) for both the stories of the origin of the cosmos (Gen 1-11) and the patriarchal stories (Gen 12-50). The garden of Eden narrative (Gen 2-3) is as much historical as the rest of the book of Genesis. Moreover, the word זרע “seed” is programmatic in the book of Genesis, combining with the key word תולדות in order to yield the central organizing fabric for the book.

The literary structure of Gen 3 shows that vss. 14-15 are the center of the chiasmic structure. Thus, Gen 3:15 is the central message of the passage. The numerical pattern of the seven expressions of the introductory formula of the divine direct speeches in the discourse between God and the other characters in Gen 3 underscores the centrality of God’s speech to the snake in Gen 3:14-15. Moreover, the syntactical analysis supports the centrality of Gen 3:15. The other pronouncements of God to the woman (Gen 3:16) and man (Gen 3:17-19) are expansions of Gen 3:15.

The overall structure of the book of Genesis and its earlier chapters evidence the unity of the text. The first three chapters of Genesis are linked together by words, terminologies, expressions, verses, numerical symmetry, themes, and structure, describing the creation and the Fall in the garden of Eden. Several interesting transformations and

reversals are noted between Gen 2 and 3. These strengthen their inseparable connections. This was similarly demonstrated between Gen 2-3 and 4.

The morphological and semantic analysis of the words and expressions within Gen 3:14-15 broaden our understanding of the passage. The definite article in שֶׁנָּחָשׁ “the serpent” shows the reader that Adam and Eve must have been familiar with, and warned about an impending enemy prior to Gen 3. Indeed, the verb שָׁמַר in Gen 2:15 has varied nuances pointing to the idea of paying careful attention to oneself, others over whom one has charge, or to the expressed or implicit will of one’s superior.

This serpent is the natural snake like other literal beasts of the field which God had made in the beginning. This ordinary snake, like other beasts, was put under the sovereignty of humans. However, the narrative of Gen 3 shows that there was now an evil power acting behind this ordinary snake. This fact is made evident by the serpent’s intelligence, conception, speech, knowledge, and keen insight that surpasses those of humans. This serpent is individualized, and seems to have access to the mind of God, or somewhat to the supernatural world. Ultimately, these elements within the text point to the conclusion that the serpent of Gen 3 represents Satan, the devil.

Only the serpent is cursed by God, apart from other beasts who are not partakers with it. The form of this curse reinforces the fact that even though it was pronounced on this literal, non-morally culpable snake, it was more for the spiritual tempter lying behind it. However, I submit that the snake itself must have had some measure of limited rationality at this age of creation.

There is some evidence in the text of Gen 3 suggesting that the serpent might

have flown prior to the curse that limits it to crawling. This will accentuate the punishment of the snake for its part in the human Fall. The figurative expressions of crawling on the belly and eating dust signify utter defeat and annihilation of the devil and the ultimate victory of Christ.

The emphatic technical and legal term “enmity” in Gen 3:15 is described as perpetual and occurring only between persons or morally responsible agents, and not applicable to sub-human creatures, according to its other biblical occurrences. This reinforces the involvement of Satan behind the literal snake, in hostility to Christ and the righteous people. The hatred between humanity and the evil one is divinely implanted and maintained, rather than naturally initiated or continued. The decisive end of this age-long battle is the ultimate victory of the Messianic Seed and the demise of the serpent (Satan).

The woman of Genesis is Eve, even though she stands in place of the couple and humanity as a whole. The enmity against Satan began with the woman just as the fall of humanity began when she followed Satan’s offer. The uncommon idea of the woman possessing “seed,” instead of the usual male “seed,” appears first here in Gen 3:15. The seed of the woman is taken figuratively to represent the plural collective righteous human beings. The seed of the serpent is taken figuratively to represent the plural collective wicked human beings, evil angels, and demons. This supports the symbolic understanding of Gen 3:15.

The seed is understood as symbolizing moral quality. While retaining the offspring notion, these two opposing seeds stand for two races, or two communities

found among the children of men, each marked by moral quality. This fact was first concretely demonstrated in the contrasting natures of evil Cain and righteous Abel in Gen 4:1-15 and their respective posterity.

The rebellious seeds of Cain follow his unrighteous footsteps by setting God aside (Gen 4:16-24), while the seeds of Seth, chosen in place of murdered Abel, “call on the name of the Lord” (Gen 4:26). The evil genealogy of Cain (Gen 4:16:24) contrasts the righteous genealogy of Seth (Gen 5:3-32), traced directly from Adam, instead of his evil surviving brother Cain (Gen 5:1-3). The text of Gen 5 implies that Seth is a “son of God” like Adam. Hence, the genealogy of Seth constitutes the “sons of God,” i.e., the righteous seed-group (best exemplified in the life of Enoch [Gen 5:19-24]). Moreover, the “daughters of men,” representing the evil lives of Cain and his descendants (most evident in the wickedness of Lamech [Gen 4:19-24]), are contrasted with the “sons of God,” representing the righteous seeds of the Sethites (Gen 6:1-4).

The two verbs used to signify the reciprocal actions of the serpent and the representative seed of the woman come from the same root **שָׁחַח**, having a semantic range that is broad enough to embrace the action of a snake in biting human beings on the heel, and the crushing of the serpent’s head in turn. I subscribe to the translation “fatally bruise” for both uses. There is no reason in the Hebrew text to suspect the presence of more than one root for both verbs. Indeed, the reader understands the normal intensity of such action depending on the doer of each action.

Both verbs signify hostile attacks which are eventually fatal for both representative individuals. Furthermore, the action described by the verb **שָׁחַח** affects the

totality of the person of each actor in this struggle. The verb affects ultimately the “you” and the “him,” even though the points of the contact are the “head” and the “heel” respectively. The effects of the attack are by no means limited only to the points of contact, vis-a-vis, the head and the heel. The text can be literally rendered as “He will fatally bruise you, [through] the head, and you will fatally bruise him, [through] the heel.”

The only other biblical occurrences of the verb **רָשַׁע** are Job 9:17 and Ps 139:11. In both instances, the actions described have negative meanings, always affect the whole person, and involve dying and disappearing. This sheds light on the use of this verb here in Gen 3:15. Furthermore, the **וְ** which separates both usages of this verb in Gen 3:15 is not strictly causal, but also comparative, introducing the idea of measure for measure. As a result, both attacks occur simultaneously and contain futuristic applications.

The word **רֹאשׁ** “head” in Gen 3:15 refers to the head of the symbolic serpent which is the point of a fatal attack from the special Seed of the woman. This indicates literal death for the serpent. Similarly, the word **עֲקֵב** “heel” refers to the literal heel at the foot of the special Seed of the woman. The Head/Heel dichotomy is a *majusi* and a *minus* signifying victory for humankind. While both actions are fatal, the head is more fragile and fatal. This seems to point to the serpent’s total defeat.

The drama of the enmity prescribed in Gen 3:15 unfolds in stages. On the first level, the serpent is set against the woman, each being a singular individual. This level includes the following portion of the text:

15(a): **וְאִיבָה אֲשִׁית**

15(b): **בִּינְךָ וּבֵין הָאִשָּׁה**

The main characters, vis-a-vis, the snake, the woman, and the man, play representative roles in this passage. This is supported by the fact that this narrative avoids elaborating their individual thoughts or their individual plights in a personal crisis. They are indeed representatives and heads of their races.

On the second level, the serpent's seed is set in antagonism with the woman's seed each side being plural collective. This level includes this division of the text:

15(c): וַיִּבֶן זְרַעַתְךָ וַיִּבֶן זְרַעָהּ. This second round of enmity between the plural collective seed grows out of the initial enmity between Satan and the woman. From this second level onwards, the serpent is addressed only in symbolic sense, as Satan, the Devil. Prior in Gen 3:15a-b, the serpent is addressed as both literal and symbolic.

Both the collective woman's seed and the serpent's seed have symbolic connotations, rather than equating them literally and wholly as the totality of the physical descendants of womankind or rather naively with snakes respectively. The conflict envisioned describes something much more crucial. This collective woman's seed comprises righteous human beings who have been set at enmity with Satan and all forms of unrighteousness. They are spiritually discerned, determined, and delineated. They stand in support of God and His divine purposes.

Likewise, the collective serpent's seed are spiritually determined. They are the followers of Satan and the opposers of God, His people, and His purposes. They must include the fallen angels, demons, and all human beings who oppose God, His followers and His purposes, though not physically born of the serpent.

On the third level, the plural collective woman's seed is now narrowed down to a

singular, representative individual Seed. The narrowing movement is signaled in the Hebrew text of Gen 3:15. Syntactically, the MT signals this shift from a collective to a singular with an *athnach* under the last **עֲרֵעַ** (Gen 3:15c). This is followed by the abrupt and sudden usage of the emphatic masculine independent third-person pronoun **הוא** “he” intended to demarcate the intended shift from the collective to the singular (Gen 3:15d). Moreover, the *vav*-consecutive **וְ** which precedes the masculine independent second-person pronoun **אתה** “you,” referring to the singular individual serpent, also signals the fact that the syntactical arrangement calls for an understanding of the shift from the collective to the singular individual (Gen 3:15e). Also, the imperfect verb **ישׁפך** with the third-person singular subject (Gen 3:15d), and the imperfect verb **תשׁפנה** with a third-person singular pronominal suffix (Gen 3:15e) clearly refer to the very same collective **עֲרֵעַ** (Gen 3:15c).

A regular pattern and rule emerges from all the occurrences of **עֲרֵעַ** “seed” in the Hebrew Bible. Whenever **עֲרֵעַ** refers to the collective for “offspring in general, posterity,” its related pronouns, are always plural, whether they are independent pronouns, object pronouns or pronominal suffixes. Similarly, whenever **עֲרֵעַ** refers to a specific singular descendant, its related pronouns are always singular independent pronouns, singular object pronouns, or singular pronominal suffixes. Several ancient manuscripts vividly and intentionally agree with the MT to show that the singular pronoun **הוא** is the intended referent to **עֲרֵעַ**.

The most powerful textual support is rendered by the LXX which strictly follows the Hebrew text in Gen 3:15. LXX intentionally violates the Greek grammatical word

order in its rendering of the masculine singular personal pronoun אֵלָּהּ “he” in order to make a point in favor of a Messianic reading of this text. Here, LXX uses a neuter singular or collective noun σπέρμα (*spérmatos*) in place of a masculine singular or collective noun אֵלָּהּ. The pronoun which refers back to the אֵלָּהּ and the σπέρμα (*spérmatos*) happens to be masculine singular in both cases. This is grammatically correct in the Hebrew, but an obvious syntactical violation in the Greek. The Greek antecedent σπέρμα (*spérmatos*) is neuter and definitely requires the neuter pronoun αὐτό rather than a masculine pronoun αὐτός.

In all other cases of translating the Hebrew masculine pronoun אֵלָּהּ, LXX never violates Greek grammar, even if the translator needed to change gender or loosely render the translation so as to maintain grammatical correctness. However, once, and so uniquely so, the LXX of Gen 3:15 rigidly translates the Hebrew masculine pronoun אֵלָּהּ with the masculine Greek pronoun αὐτός although the Greek grammar will require the neuter pronoun αὐτό. This cannot be coincidental or a mere oversight. It is intentionally Messianic.

Furthermore, the Targum Onqelos to Genesis, regarded as a unique literal translation of the Hebrew into the Aramaic, translates Gen 3:15 by rendering the singular pronoun אֵלָּהּ “he” and prepositional phrase לְהֵי “to him” in agreement with the MT. This sustained narrowing from the collective plural seed to the singular individual Seed is Messianic also.

Likewise, the Targum Neofiti, the most literal of the Palestinian Targums, translated the first half of Gen 3:15 quite literally (*bnh* may be singular or plural), and

retains הַיְהוָה “him” which is certainly a third-person singular pronoun. This abrupt and intentional shift to the third-person singular reflects its a Messianic undertone. In addition, the Syriac Peshitta, which appears to literally render the MT of Gen 3:14-15, follows this Messianic narrowing phenomenon already established in the MT, LXX, Targum Onqelos, and the Targum Neofiti 1.

Finally, the Old Latin manuscripts from the European text type (E) and the North African one use the masculine intensive pronoun, *ipse*. Jerome seems to have also followed the Hebrew masculine pronoun by retaining the masculine pronoun as *ipse*. These also maintain the Messianic narrowing of the plural seed to the singular Seed. Seemingly, even some of the OL manuscripts, like Fischer’s edition and the Vulgate which use the feminine singular pronouns *ipsa* and *eius* with the woman as the antecedent, also inadvertently recognize the narrowing from the plural to the singular.

All these lines of textual evidence within the Hebrew of Gen 3:15 and the early translations of this Hebrew text confirm the idea of a narrowing from collective to the singular. It also suggests that this may be stylistic for other seed texts which evidence narrowing from plural collective seed to singular individual Seed to be most likely Messianic in intention.

Three powerful witnesses in the Hebrew text thus suggests its intention: a conscious narrowing down from the collective plural seed to a singular representative Seed! These include the masculine singular personal pronoun הוּא “He,” the imperfect verb יִשָּׂא with the third-person singular subject (Gen 3:15d), and the imperfect verb יִשָּׂא with a third-person singular pronominal suffix (Gen 3:15e); all clearly referring

to the very same collective זרע (Gen 3:15c).

In the fourth level of the text (Gen 3:15[d] and [e]), there are two expressions each of which has three words which correspond to, parallel, and antagonize each other. This parallelism in the literary structure of Gen 3:15 is another strong evidence of the narrowing of the collective seed of the woman to a singular Seed. The enmity is climaxed in a clash between the serpent תנאך “you” (singular representative individual) and the זרע “He” (singular representative individual Seed). Since the serpent is definitely a singular individual, he can be expected to be matched in poetic parallelism with another singular individual. This underscores the singular unity that exists in the collective seed mentioned in the second stage of this ensuing drama. This narrowing down of both the concept of woman’s seed and the serpent’s seed happens in the distant future showing the prophetic, predictive, and eschatological nature of Gen 3:15.

The representative seed of the serpent equals Satan in this last stage. Focus is again given to Satan himself as an individual at this stage of the conflict. As the prince of his people, he stands as representative of their cause. In order to parallel and match this supernatural evil figure, the representative Seed of the woman must also be a more powerful supernatural being working in the place of the woman (Eve) and her posterity. Christ became the divine-human Redeemer of the human race.

The collective seed of the woman find their cause represented and embodied in an individual in whom the idea “seed of the woman” finds the most perfect expression, the masculine Messianic Seed (Jesus Christ). He is the very center of the perfectly natural concentric circles of meaning of the seed of the woman. As the Champion of the

cause of God's enmity against Satan, He is the single representative Hero, more than a match for the antagonizing Satan.

The last portion of Gen 3:15 vividly shows that this special Seed of the woman is victorious over Satan. The seed is not exclusively collective or exclusively singular, neither is it exclusively literal or figurative. There is a movement from the collective figurative seed to the singular individual representative Christological Seed.

Chapter 2 reveals the extent to which the premier Messianic gospel prophecy of Gen 3:15 is developed through intratextual allusions to the Seed in the rest of the book of Genesis. The Pentateuch was consistent in its understanding and portrayal of the seed of Gen 3:15.

Notions of the "seed" of Gen 3:15 began in Gen 1:28 with God's mandate for humanity to be fruitful and multiply, filling and subduing the earth, and exercising dominion over all creation. Procreation means "seeding." This promise was safeguarded by Yahweh even post-Fall through woman's seed in Gen 3:15. Aspects of subduing and exercising dominion are perpetuated by the victorious crushing of the serpent's head by the representative Seed of the woman.

It is the identification of this special Redeemer Seed who will champion the cause of humanity against Satan that is the major pre-occupation of the rest of the book of Genesis. This programmatic "Seed" couples with the תולדות headings to form the organizing fabric of the entire book, with a view to delineating the special line of descent that will produce the chosen Seed. This chosen Seed is also portrayed as a royal-kingly-priestly figure already in Genesis.

By a process of divine elimination and discrimination, the choice of the Seed is narrowed down through the twists and turns of the narratives in the book of Genesis. Male descendants were designated to bear the promise of the special Seed from Seth to Noah, to Abraham to Isaac, to Jacob and his twelve sons, and lastly with Judah, the chosen one (Gen 49:8-10). The journey that traces the special Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15) within the book of Genesis ends on a high note in the identification of Judah (Gen 49:8-12) who is the progenitor of King David. This explains the equation of the singular “Seed of the woman” with the singular “Seed of Abraham,” the singular royal “Seed of David,” and Jesus Christ, the Messiah in the NT.

The biblical text reveals that Adam and Eve must have understood the seed promise of Gen 3:15 as Messianic. Eve’s exclamation in Gen 4:1 “I have got a Man, the Lord!” constitutes the first biblical commentary to Gen 3:15 and reveals the Messianic hope and aspiration of Adam and Eve. Following their tragedy, they still held on to the fulfillment of this Messianic promise through Seth, the “appointed seed” (Gen 4:25).

Gen 12:7 is reminiscent of Gen 3:15 in that God both appeared and spoke to Abraham about the Seed promise. It adds the promise of land possession by the seed, signifying prosperity and authority. Gen 15:13 also exemplifies both singular and collective seed in similar ways to Gen 3:15.

The rare expression of women possessing seed started in Gen 3:15 and is repeated in Gen 4:25; 16:10; and 24:60. The emphasis in each case focuses on a single special individual male child. These other examples of the feminine seed contradict the teaching that the virgin birth is explicit in Gen 3:15.

Gen 22:17-18 provides the greatest parallel to Gen 3:15 because of the structural similarity in terms of the movement from collective to singular Seed. This narrowing phenomenon is the strongest Messianic feature of Gen 22 beyond the idea of the substitutionary sacrifice. A similar narrowing movement from collective plural seed to singular individual Seed is also found in Gen 24:60. These narrowing movements vividly signal a Messianic undertone. Evidently, the Messianic hope was alive and well among the patriarchal worshipers of Yahweh!

Chapter 3 uses intertextuality in the pursuit of the development of the understanding of the Seed of Gen 3:15 within the Pentateuch, the remaining OT verses, and the NT. Several major Messianic texts and seed passages in Genesis and the rest of the OT display vivid allusions to the Seed of Gen 3:15. These intertextual allusions enhance, complement, and illuminate the limited but programmatic message of Gen 3:15. It was my finding that subsequent writers of the OT and NT recognized and followed this same understanding of the seed.

The victory that God assured to the collective righteous seed in their warfare against the wicked ones is demonstrated in Exod 11:1-10; 15:1-21; and Num 23-24. The gift of childbirth is connected with bearing seed in Lev 12:1-8. The kingly role of the special Seed is underscored in Deut 17:14-20 and 2 Sam 7:4-19. This Messianic King will usher in everlasting peace after conquering the enemies. The vicarious suffering servanthood of the Messianic Seed, which was hinted at in Gen 3:15, is made plain in Isa 53. The clearest syntactic parallel to the Seed of Gen 3:15 is found in 2 Sam 7:13.

The Messianic Psalms (Pss 2; 18; 68; 72; 89; and 110) echo the note of victory in

consonance with the language of the victory of the Seed of Gen 3:15. These texts evidence several terminological, syntactic, and structural links with Gen 3:15. I also elucidated several themes which the book of Job shares with Gen 1-3 concerning character and blessings, temptation and its results, great moral conflict, the gospel, and eschatology.

In the NT, Christ is singled out as the Seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16, 19) and the Seed of David. By extension, believers become the collective seed of Abraham through faith in Christ (Gal 3:29). This representative aspect of the Messianic Seed's victory is echoed in Rom 16:20a and Rev 12. Believers are victorious in and through Him only.

Chapter 4 presented the major similarities and contrasts found between the ancient Near Eastern literature and some of the expressions found in Gen 3:14-15. Some of the similarities are mentioned first. Both traditions contain some form of the understanding of the fallen condition of humanity which was preceded by a perfect state of existence. In that golden age, humanity dwelt in perfect peace of some sort and divinity related well with humanity. For example, the Sumerian had an equivalent of the garden of Eden supplied with good nature, fruits, foods, and clean water in abundance. Furthermore, both cultures teach the need for a savior of some kind who will deliver humanity from its present predicament.

Both cultures maintain similar understanding of phrases like "crawling on the belly," "eat/lick dust," and "crushing/standing on someone's head" to include humiliation, subjugation, and possibly death.

Both cultures accept the serpent as cursed because it has been used as an agent

by the enemy of humanity. Negatively, the serpent was also considered as the principle of evil and harmfulness in the ANE. It is considered as an enemy of God and good from primeval times which is always hostile to humanity. Its correlation with deception and temptation in the ANE agrees with the Gen 3 story.

There is similarity between the names of the biblical Adam and Adapa in the Mesopotamian story of Adapa. Both Adam and Adapa were given clothes and underwent a test before the deity based upon something they were to consume. These tests led to certain repercussion which affected all humanity and nature. They were both summoned before the divinity to give account of their actions and some supernatural angel-like beings were involved in the aftermath of their punishment.

There are numerous contradictions and contrasts between the biblical account and the ANE cultures. There exist very uncompromising differences in their portrayal of the salvation of humanity. The biblical account seems to have intentionally contradicted the pagan philosophies in order to distinguish the God of the Bible as the Creator-Redeemer. While many of these cultures teach of multiple deities, the Bible opposes this with monotheism.

A few examples of ANE folklore portray certain animals talking with humans and with nature. These differ from the biblical instances in which God is primarily involved in the incidents of talking animals (Gen 3:1-19 and Num 22:21-35).

Snakes were revered and feared in most ANE cultures. Serpents were regarded in many cases as symbolizing positive qualities such as sovereignty, life, immortality, youthfulness, helping, healing, fertility, potency, knowledge, wisdom, as well as negative

qualities like evil, enmity, chaos, and death. The Bible does not elevate the serpent to the status of a god as do the ANE cultures.

However, the serpent's association with life, immortality, and wisdom resemble its negatively deceptive agenda for destroying mankind as evident in the Gen 3 story. The Bible mostly shows the serpent in negative light unlike the numerous positive attributes given to it in the ANE. Even the wisdom that is attributed to the serpent in the Bible is not a pure kind of wisdom, but sneaky and sinful.

Many ancient cultures recognize the role of some woman as the progenitor of humanity. She is connected with giving life and given the status of a goddess believed to have had some interrelationship or intercourse with some male gods. While some similarities exist in the mention of the "rib" in connection with the creation of the woman, the Bible rejects the idea of the woman being a goddess. Moreover, there was no sickness connected with the perfect creation of God, both male and female, made in God's image (Gen 1:26-27).

Chapter 5 discusses the theological implications of the "Seed" of Gen 3:15 which arise from the examination of the main themes of Gen 1-3 and the rest of Genesis. This intensifies the meaning of the "Seed" of Gen 3:15 as Messianic. The promise/blessing theme is implicit in the divine pronouncements of Gen 3:14-19 concerning posterity, victory over Satan, love, family, and labor. Promises/blessings already pronounced in Gen 1-2 include those of the image of God, dominion, posterity, food, Sabbath rest, blissful home, sustenance, dominion, happy marriage, and the cloth of divine glory.

The covenant theme begins with the creation covenant which includes the

ordinances of Sabbath, labor, and marriage. Adam was a covenant creature whose covenant-relationship with God was all-inclusive, involving the totality of his life. Curse and blessing, life and death—are the alternatives man faced under this covenant.

The covenant of Redemption was established immediately while God pronounced the punishment for man's failure under the covenant of creation. This perpetuates the blessings of the Sabbath, labor, and marriage and centers on the Incarnation through divine initiative.

Alienation and separation were inevitable result of man's disobedience, an unfortunate broken relationship between God and man. Several reversals and transformations pervade Gen 2-3. The fallen man is also alienated from himself. Shame and guilt became common to human existence as they became alienated from one another and from their environment. Intimacy and companionship are replaced by alienation and divisiveness as they face expulsion from the garden.

The theme of God's Character involves holiness, righteousness, love, grace, and forgiveness. The character of God is intentionally expressed in both names in Gen 1-3 that only the Bible combines for God. The name "Yahweh" shows God as personal, intimate, caring, and covenant-keeping while "Elohim" shows Him as equally infinite and all-powerful. The character of God is clearly at stake in the temptation and the Fall story (Gen 3). God's absolute holiness and moral purity are repugnant to sin and punishing man was consistent with His character.

God's gifts (e.g. Sabbath, perfect order in creation, nature, marriage, labor, procreation), laws, and prohibitions reflect His character of love and grace. His character

is evidenced in the free, unhindered, and unprecedented access and intimate communication He instituted between Himself and humanity. God divinely, graciously, and lovingly instituted the enmity between humanity and Evil (Gen 3:15) otherwise, Satan and human beings will have formed an alliance against heaven in opposition to God and all His purposes. In seeking out fallen humanity with full and free forgiveness, justification, and sonship, God's unmerited favor towards mankind is demonstrated.

The theme of creation, re-creation, redemption and the gospel is seen in the divinely-instigated enmity (Gen 3:15). The good news of forgiveness from sin, acceptance, and restoration of fellowship or communion with the Creator God is ascertained. The Creator God is also the cosmic Redeemer. Creation is an act of salvation. Creation teaches us dependence. Both creation and redemption require faith because of creation out of nothingness, and deliverance out of hopelessness.

The theme of the cosmic moral conflict appears because God who initiates this enmity takes side with the "woman" in a great controversy against Satan. God enters a partnership or covenant of communion, redemption and restoration with humanity. God is actually the One fighting against Satan in the life of mankind. The whole humanity is divided into only two sides in the age-long struggle. Those human beings on the Lord's side are the woman's seed while those who support Satan in opposition to God are Satan's seed. This conflict centers upon the issue of the character of God.

This conflict between God and Satan, the principles of good and those of evil, God's people and Satan's followers, will continue in all phases and facets of humanity, from the individual to universal scale, until the full accomplishment of the final level of

this enmity in the final fatal clash between Christ and Satan resulting in the final destruction of Satan, his hosts, all sin, and sinners. The final solution to this great cosmic moral conflict is the crushing of the serpent's head. This is prophetic and eschatological.

The eschatological theme is best seen in the fact that the fullest effect of fatally bruising serpent's head will not be fully realized until the end of the on-going cosmic moral conflict. Though the redeemer-representative Seed of the woman has already received His heel injury, yet this controversy does not come to an abrupt end until the serpent is totally annihilated. There is tension between the "already" and the "not yet."

An eschatological resurrection can also be deciphered in Gen 3:15 as Christ returns from His heel-inflicted injury to finish the demise of the satanic forces. Moreover, all the victory of this promised Seed is transferred to the rest of the collective seed of the woman. Everything will be settled only at the end! Death is not the last word, new beginnings and restoration are conceivable. In the broader scale of human destiny, it testifies to the power of resurrection.

Creation witnesses the beginning of all things and equally testifies to the end of all things. Since creation, the beginning of all things, was the fact of God, the end of all things also belongs to Him. Protology leads to Eschatology. Moreover, not only is Protology soteriological, Soteriology has been described as being eschatology.

The minor motif of ironic reversal shows all kinds of ironies in the text of Gen 3. Retributive irony is seen in the judgments pronounced on the serpent, woman and man. Restorative irony is shown in the transforming of the judgments or curses into ultimate blessings for humanity. By demonic irony, the woman whose life was derived from the

man became the minister of death to him. However, by divine irony, the woman was still appointed to be the mother of all living (Gen 3:20). The woman who delivered man to sin will deliver him a Savior.

The seed and procreation motif notes that procreation is part of creation. Also, זרע “seed” and תולדות “genealogy” advance the command to “be fruitful and multiply,” given in Gen 1:26-28. Lastly, the motif of correspondence of sin and judgment in Gen 3 demonstrates that the punishment fits not only the crime but also the criminal. On the recurring issue of “eating,” the snake who enticed the woman to sin by eating the fruit would itself now eat dust all the days of its life.

Conclusions

Based on all the findings enumerated above, I conclude that for any translation or interpretation of Gen 3:15 to be faithful to the Hebrew text, it must recognize the movements within the text. Moving away from the superficial literal meaning of the serpent as merely a physical snake, there is a deeper symbolic or figurative meaning which is the real message of the text.

More importantly, the narrowing movement from the plural collective seed to the singular individual representative Christological Seed is the prime Messianic indicator in the text. This narrowing happens on both sides of the on-going God-implanted enmity between the serpent (singular) and the woman (singular); the seed of the serpent (collective) and the seed of the woman (collective); and culminating in the serpent (singular) and the representative Seed of the woman (singular).

Hence, the only authentic classification of interpretation of Gen 3:15 is the one

showing the movement from collective figurative seed to singular representative Christological Seed. The זרע “seed” of Gen 3:15 is neither solely singular individual nor plural collective. There is a progression of parallelism in the text. Any interpretation that leans heavily on mere theories, conjectures, allegories, without due consideration for the textual, literary, structural, thematic, terminological, syntactical, morphological, and semantic lines of evidence from the text is not justifiable.

The genre of the passage is narrative that is a history of actual events just like the rest of the book of Genesis. Gen 3:15 is the pivotal point of the message of this passage. It has become a watershed for prophetic interpretations in the Bible. The two technical words זרע and תולדות constitute the organizing fabric of the book.

The woman of Genesis is Eve. The serpent represents Satan. Their seed are among human beings, depending on who has their allegiance between God and Satan. The divinely instituted enmity is perpetual until Satan is vanquished. The first level (15a-b) of Gen 3:15 features the enmity between Eve and Satan. In the second level (15c), the enmity has engulfed their collective seed in the future.

In the third level (15d), the focus shifts to the singular individual representative Seed of the woman and Satan himself. Grammatical, syntactical, and textual analyses of the text reveals its intention to underscore this narrowing from the plural collective seed to the singular individual representative Seed as the Messianic indicator. Several of the early translations of the Hebrew text support this narrowing phenomenon. This is finalized in the fourth level (15d-e) of Gen 3:15 as both singular, individual, representative subjects fatally clash in a battle that leaves the Messiah victorious and

Satan vanquished.

My intratextual and intertextual examination of the Seed of Gen 3:15 within the book of Genesis and beyond yields the tantalizing conclusion that the Messianic hope was alive and well among the common patriarchal worshipers of Yahweh. Subsequent biblical writers in the Old and New Testaments recognized, understood, and maintained this Messianic hope. The first biblical commentary on Gen 3:15, found in Gen 4:1, 25, helps us to conclude that Adam and Eve immediately understood and perpetrated its Messianic force. All these later allusions collectively enhance, complement, and illuminate the Messianic understanding already portrayed in Gen 3:15. However, the ANE do not constitute exact parallels to the biblical account but a basis of comparison on some aspects of the Gen 1-3.

The special Seed of the woman is a Victor, Conquerer, Overcomer, and Leader. He is gracious, sacrificial, and vicarious because He stands on behalf of the many. He is royal and priestly while remaining servant-like. The New Testament proclaims that the Seed of Gen 3:15 is Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind. The Seed of the woman is the promised Messiah. By extension, all who believe in Christ become victorious in and through Him over Satan, sin, wicked people, and the world.

The theological themes support the Messianic understanding of the Seed of Gen 3:15. The promises, blessings, and the covenant are centered on the Messiah who delivers the people from the enmity of Satan and Satan's followers. The salvation that the Messiah offers humanity is individual and cosmic, and both in the present and in the future. This great cosmic moral conflict will finally end when Christ eliminates Satan, all

sin, and sinners while vindicating all of God's followers as He makes all things new.

As a sequel to all the analysis in this dissertation, I offer the following as my paraphrased translation of Gen 3:15: "And I (God) will put a divinely instigated enmity between you (Satan) and the woman (Eve); between all human beings who follow after Satan (seed of the serpent) and all those who follow righteousness (seed of the woman). Ultimately, He who is the vicarious male descendant that represents the seed of the woman will fatally bruise Satan on the head to fully destroy and annihilate him (and his followers), while Satan in turn fatally bruises Him at His heel."

Implications for Further Studies

Further research is needed for the other seed passages which evidence the narrowing movement from the plural collective seed to the singular individual seed such as found in Gen 22:17-19 and Gen 24:60. In addition, there is need for more in-depth study of all Messianic texts in the canon in order to investigate the possibility of a common trend, or sequence or link between them. There seems to be some inherent interconnectedness that begs for attention in further academic research.

More is left for further investigation on another major emphatic word in Gen 3:15, namely אִיְבֹנָה "enmity." It stands at the beginning of this watershed text and may contain more information than I have been able to investigate in this dissertation.

Furthermore, there is more that can be researched concerning the theological implications and themes that arise from Gen 3:15. This can certainly be the focus of other doctoral dissertations in Systematic or Practical Theology. For example, a D.Min.

thesis by Oliver Koh¹ examined how an order of worship can be based on Gen 3:15.

Finally, it is also important to further study the behavior of other nouns that function like “seed” by appearing in the same form in both singular and plural forms. It will be helpful to ascertain to what extent other such nouns reveal their intended singular or collective meanings in the same way as in the case of זרע “seed” by means of the number (singular, plural) of related verbs, pronouns, adjectives, and participles.

¹Koh’s thesis has been mentioned several times in the preceding chapters.

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