

The Book of Beginnings – Studies in Genesis

LESSON XXI : GENESIS 3:8-21 – SIXTH PARAGRAPH: THE JUDGMENT AND THE SENTENCE

“Three kinds of disorder, covering the greater part of human suffering, make their germinal appearance in this chapter. In ‘personal’ relations there are the first signs of mutual estrangement (7) and the brutalizing of sexual love (16b). Here in embryo are the mistrusts and passions which will ravage society. In the ‘spiritual’ realm man has become, in his self-contradiction, simultaneously in flight (and banishment) from God (8, 24) and in battle with evil (15). On the ‘physical’ plane, his life is to be a painful struggle to renew (16) and sustain (19) its basic processes, which are in some degree disturbed. This multiple disarray is, from one aspect, his punishment, pronounced by God; from another, it is the plain outcome of his anarchy.” [Kidner, 73]

“Whereas Adam and Eve had life, they now will have death; where they had pleasure, they now will have pain; where abundance, now a meager sustenance by toil; where perfect harmony with God and with each other, now alienation and conflict.... So much for ambitions of divinity. Humankind may think of being like God, but God declared, ‘Dust you are, and unto the dust you shall return.’” [Ross, 139, 147]

‘Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.’ (Ps 32:1, 2)

The Judgment and the Sentence:

“⁸ And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” ¹¹ And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” ¹² Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ And the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” ¹⁴ So the Lord God said to the serpent: “Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” ¹⁶ To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.” ¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.” ²⁰ And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.’ (Gen 3:8-21 NKJV)

Rabbi Cassuto's translation:

v. 8 – And they heard / the sound of the Lord God

walking in the garden / in the afternoon,

and the man and his wife / hid themselves

from the presence of the Lord God / among the trees of the garden.

v. 9 – But the Lord God called / to the man,

and said to him, / ‘Where are you?’

v. 10 – He said,

‘I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, / and I was afraid,

because I was naked; / and I hid myself.’

v. 11 – He said,

‘Who told you / that you were naked?

Have you eaten / of the tree

of which I commanded you / not to eat?’

v. 12 – The man said,

‘The woman / whom Thou gavest to be with me,

she gave me fruit of the tree, / and I ate.’

v. 13 – Then the Lord God said / to the woman,

‘What is this that you have done?’

The woman said,

‘The serpent beguiled me / and I ate.’

v. 14 – The Lord God said / to the serpent,

‘Because you have done this, / cursed are you

above all cattle, / and above all the beasts of the field;

upon your belly you shall go, / and dust you shall eat / all the days of your life.

v. 15 – I will put enmity / between you and the woman

and between your seed / and her seed;

he shall crush your head / and you shall crave his heel.’

v. 16 – To the woman He said,

‘I will greatly multiply your suffering, especially of your childbearing; / in pain you shall bring forth children,

yet your desire shall be for your husband, / and he shall rule over you.’

v. 17 – And to Adam He said,

‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, / and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, saying: / “You shall not eat of it”,

cursed is the ground / because of you;

in suffering you shall eat of it / all the days of your life;

v. 18 – thorns and thistles / it shall bring forth to you;

and you shall eat / the grain of the field.

v. 19 – In the sweat of your face / you shall eat bread

*till you return to the ground, / for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust / and to dust you shall return.'*

**v. 20 – The man called / his wife's name Eve
because she was / the mother of all living.**

**v. 21 – And the Lord God made / for Adam and for his wife
tunics of skins, / and clothed them.**

v. 8 – And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden – THIS WAS PROBABLY A HABITUAL THING WITH THE LORD — Most of those I am reading understand this to have been something the Lord did frequently. Hamilton [1:192] states the verb used here to describe the divine movement – *mith^hhallēk* – is a type of Hithpael that suggests iterative and habitual aspects. *“The more or less offhand way in which this is stated indicates that this was a normal event, perhaps a daily appointment time at which the Lord met with them for communion and fellowship.”* [Morris, 116]

HOW ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND THE LORD'S PRESENCE? — Several understand this to be an anthropomorphism only (Cassuto, 1:150; Mathews, 1:239); personally I like the idea of this being a theophany (or to be more exact, a Christophany). *“This is no crude anthropomorphism, but a repeated, or even continual, theophany, in which the Word of God, Christ preincarnate, clothed Himself in human form in order to communicate with those whom He had created in His own image.”* [Morris, 116; see also Keil, 1:97]

DID THEY HEAR THE 'SOUND' OR THE 'VOICE' OF THE LORD? — The Hebrew word used [*'eth-qôl*, 'voice, sound'] is unclear and could be understood to mean 'they heard the voice of the LORD God' (KJV, ASV, Darby, Geneva, Wycliffe) or 'they heard the sound of the LORD God' (NASB, NET, NIV, NKJV, ESV, RSV, YLT, Amplified). But Rabbi Cassuto notes it cannot signify 'the sound of the voice' because the Lord does not begin to speak to man until v. 9, and even 'the sound of His feet, the sound of Him walking' would probably have used different Hebrew grammar that we find in our verse. *“Our passage does not go into great detail, but leaves the matter shrouded, as it were, in reverent ambiguity. They hear the Lord walking; precisely what they heard is not stated.”* [Cassuto, 1:152]

in the afternoon, — Literally, 'in the wind of the day, in the breeze of the day;' a phrase found nowhere else in the Bible. The LXX has τὸ δειλινόν [to deilinon] 'in the afternoon.' Most understand this to refer to the cool breezes after the heat of the day, therefore late afternoon or evening (Hamilton, 1:192; Wenham, 1:76; Currid, 1:122f; Keil, 1:97; Gill, 1:25; Skinner, 77; cf. 18:1). The lone exception I found is Calvin: "We know that at the rising of the sun the air is naturally excited; together, then, with this gentle breeze, God appeared." [Calvin, 1:160] Rabbi Cassuto goes further, giving the reason for the inclusion of this comment: *“Scripture wished to emphasize that the word of the Lord God was wholly fulfilled, even in its literal meaning. The man was told that 'in the day that he ate' from the tree [of the knowledge of good and evil] he would surely die, and lo! on the very day that he ate, in the afternoon of the selfsame day, the Lord God appeared and decreed that he should be banished from the garden of Eden, so that he might no longer be able to approach the tree of life and eat of it and be liberated thereby from the power of death.”* [Cassuto, 1:154]

and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God — While they were probably used to having daily fellowship with their Creator, the man and the woman are now

hiding from the ‘presence’ (literally, ‘face’) of the Lord in fear. *It was part of the sad deception that the man and woman who wanted so much to be ‘like God,’ rather than obtaining the stature of deity, are now afraid even to commune with him. “That the natural feeling of shame, the origin of which is recorded here, had its root, not in sensuality or any physical corruption, but in the consciousness of guilt or shame before God.”* [Keil, 1:97]

among the trees of the garden. — ‘tree,’ singular but with a collective sense. “All three of these words – [‘in the midst of, among, in the centre of;’ ‘tree, trees;’ ‘garden’] – have already appeared a number of times in our section, and they remind us of what we read earlier concerning the sin of Adam and his wife. *Such repetitions do not occur without a definite purpose. It would seem that the words are intended to hint that though the sinner was trying to forget his sin and cause others to forget it, he is unable to silence the voice of his conscience and to obliterate the traces of his misdeeds; at every step he encounters objects that remind him and others of the transgression that he has committed. It was ‘in connection with the tree which is in the centre of the garden’ that they sinned, and it is ‘among the trees of the garden’ that they were forced to hide themselves.*” [Cassuto, 1:154f]

v. 9 – But the Lord God called to the man, — *Forthwith the Judge of the whole earth calls the man, in order to demand from him an account of his conduct.* In other parts of the Bible the verb ‘to call’ is used in the sense of ‘to summon a person to give an account of his actions;’ see, for example, Pharaoh called Abram regarding Sarai (Gen 12:18); Abimelech called Abraham regarding Sarah (Gen 20:9); Abimelech called Isaac regarding Rebekah (Gen 26:9, 10); the elders of the city calls the one refusing to do his familial duties (Deut 25:8). *Yet this is more than a Judge calling, it is a gentle Father seeking His own. “Here the sins of the various characters are elicited from their own lips. But there is a certain gentleness about the inquisition. Delitzsch remarks, ‘It was God their creator, who now as God the redeemer was seeking the lost.’ By reverting to the term ‘the LORD God’ from v. 8 (cf. ‘God’ in vv. 1b-5), the narrator hints that God can still be man’s covenant partner as well as his creator and judge.”* [Wenham, 1:76]

and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ — *“God’s first word to fallen man has all the marks of grace. It is a question, since to help him He must draw rather than drive him out of hiding. Only a voice penetrates his concealment.”* [Kidner, 70]

THE LORD ADDRESSES ADAM ONLY AT THIS POINT — Note it is not, ‘and said, “Where are you?”’ but ‘and said TO HIM, “Where are you?”’ *The Lord turns direct to the man wherever he is. Even though both Adam and Eve were hiding, the Lord only addresses the man first.* The second person masculine singular is used through vv. 9-11, focusing on the individual liability of Adam. [Mathews, 1:240; Currid, 1:123] *It is not until the man points to Eve that God addresses her; it is the first time in the Edenic narrative that Eve and God converse.*

THE LORD KNEW WHERE ADAM WAS HIDING — This is not to suppose the Lord is unaware of what is happening around Him. The query, ‘Where are you?’ in our verse resembles the question the Lord asks Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ (4:9), when Abel’s body is lying on the ground beneath the open sky with no attempt being made to conceal it. In fact, the matter is so well known to the Lord that He immediately follows His question with, ‘Hark, your brother’s blood is crying to Me from the ground’ (4:10).

COULD THERE HAVE BEEN A DEEPER MEANING TO THE QUESTION? — While I do not think this was the intent of the Lord’s question to Adam, the following comment by Rabbi Scherman is an interesting point to consider. *“A further meaning of God’s question is not that*

He inquired after Adam's physical whereabouts; rather, the significance of the question was, 'Consider well how you have fallen from the heights; where is your exalted status?'" [Rabbi Nossan Scherman, *The Chumash: The Stone Edition*, or *The Five Books of Moses* in book form (Mehorah Publications LTD, Brooklyn NY) 2011, page 17]

v. 10 – He said, 'I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, — *"Although this is not stated explicitly, we must picture to ourselves that the man, when he realizes that he has been discovered, emerges from his hiding-place and, standing shamefaced before the Judge, mumbles his reply. His wife creeps out slowly after him."* [Cassuto, 1:156] Adam and Eve were somewhat naive and childish in their attempt to hide from the Lord, as children hiding in fearful shame from their father. Their reply to God's inquiry shows that they understood the question as an invitation to come out and explain their behavior. Adam does not dare lie to his Creator but he is not yet willing to avow his sin, hence he turns the conversation to another subject, the last thing that happened after his transgression.

and I was afraid, — Adam admits perhaps unwittingly to a sense of fear and trepidation felt by the transgressor who is summoned before the court. It was not necessary for the Lord to speak; it was only necessary for Him to be present, walking in the garden. *"Adam's answer conceals the cause behind the symptoms; but 'afraid' (the first mention of fear) is significant: this shrinking from God remains part of our fallen condition."* [Kidner, 70]

because I was naked; and I hid myself.' — *"[At] the time he actually thought more of his nakedness and shame than of his transgression of the divine command, and his consciousness of the effects of his sin was keener than his sense of the sin itself."* [Keil, 1:98] Note too that Adam's answer, 'I hid myself,' does not incriminate the woman but only himself.

v. 11 – He said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' — Two follow-up questions sharpen the fact of the crime. Clearly these are not questions of one ignorant of what has happened; even a person of average intelligence could safely conclude the man had eaten from the forbidden tree. Their very formulation suggests the all-knowing detective who by his questioning prods the culprit into confessing his guilt. *"The purpose of the interrogation is only to force him to make a complete confession; after what he has already said, the accused can no longer deny his guilt."* [Cassuto, 1:157]

'YOU VIOLATED MY COMMAND' — "Here 'tree' is no longer identified as the tree of knowledge but the tree 'that I commanded you not to eat from' (cf. 'commanded,' 2:16). Together these questions explain to the man that his sense of shame arose from his defiance of God's command." [Mathews, 1:241] "Observe that in the present verse God uses a much stronger word about his directive: 'I commanded you.' *What God had given to man in 2:16-17 was not a suggestion or advice, but it was a firm order, a divine statute that was to be obeyed.*" [Currid, 1:124]

v. 12 – The man said, 'The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.' — *A simple yes would have got the matter out into the open, but the man becomes devious and defensive. "The second answer admits the truth, but angles it against the woman and ultimately God. Man is learning quickly, but his retreat into verbal hiding only puts a fresh obstacle in the way of mercy."* [Kidner, 70] *"The man endeavours to lessen the gravity of his offence by emphasizing in the preface to his confession that it was not on his own, but on the woman's, initiative that he committed the wrong. Thus we often find excuses for ourselves by throwing the blame on our companions, without realizing that our very failure to resist the*

will of others constitutes our sin. Possibly there is also to be noted an attempt on Adam's part to exculpate himself by alluding to the fact that it was the Lord God Himself who 'gave' the woman to be with him, as though to say: 'Thou didst give' the woman to be with me, and 'she gave' me of the fruit of the tree. This, too, is characteristically human: people are inclined to justify their conduct by pointing to the circumstances and fate that God has allotted to them in life."

[Cassuto, 1:157] ***Through rationalization the criminal becomes the victim, and it is God and the woman who emerge as the real instigators in this scenario.***

The woman was depicted as God's gift in 2:22 and initially received by Adam with enthusiastic glee. But the divisive effects of sin alienates man from both his dearest companion and from his all-caring Creator. Like the serpent, Adam charges that God's good gift was malicious, for she has led to his downfall. She was a mistake. This is a line still heard today.



INDIVIDUAL CULPABILITY FOR SIN — *While everything Adam said was true, it obviated the fact that it was still he who made the choice he did. By shifting the blame, the man hoped to evade accountability for his autonomous actions. "Every one," says James, 'is tempted by his own concupiscence' (James 1:14); and even Adam, not otherwise than knowingly and willingly, had set himself, as a rebel, against God."* [Calvin, 1:164] Note later Adam's punishment is related to his consent to the woman (3:17).

THE LORD DOES NOT DIGNIFY ADAM'S EXCUSES WITH A REPLY — *"To this implicit contention of Adam, the Lord God gives, of course, no answer, for it was not consonant with His dignity to reply thereto, but the Divine silence indicates the rejection of the plea."*

[Cassuto, 1:157f]

v. 13 — *Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this that you have done?'* — "The Lord's question to the woman is worded very emphatically with a demonstrative pronoun: 'What is this you have done?' It has the force of saying, 'What in the world have you done?' or 'Do you realize what you have done?'" [Ross, 144] "He begins it with the interrogative *māh* ['what'], which is **often used to introduce exclamations of indignation and wonder**. The interrogative is followed by the enclitic pronoun 'this,' which serves to emphasize the interrogative." [Currid, 1:125; see also Calvin, 1:164] *The woman, who was Adam's delight and was designed by God to be his 'helper' in achieving blessing (2:18), becomes a partner in crime.*

CLEARLY RHETORICAL — "Here it is clearer still that the question is merely rhetorical. The woman's deed is already known from the man's answer; there is no need, therefore, for further questioning in order to establish the facts." [Cassuto, 158]

The woman said, 'The serpent beguiled me and I ate.' — The woman begins the sentence with 'the serpent' which gives special attention to the subject; she is claiming she is not to blame but the serpent. "In addition, the verb 'to deceive' appears here in the Hiphil stem (that is, the causative pattern). **Thus the woman is directly accusing the serpent of being the cause of mankind's disobedience.**" [Currid, 1:125] *But while evasive, to her credit she does not say 'the serpent whom you made' nor does she say 'the man to whom you gave me' as Adam did. And unlike the man she can rightly claim to be the 'victim' of deception. "But who compelled Eve to listen to his fallacies, and even to place confidence in them more readily than in the word of God?"* [Calvin, 1:165] *The result is that the authority of God has been successfully undermined, first through trickery and then through wilful rebellion.*

THE JUDGMENT ORACLES – THE SERPENT

“Prose here gives way to rhythmic speech, as in 2:23 and in oracles generally. Note, in all that follows, the undiminished sovereignty of God. Man’s dominion (chapter 2) and man’s sin (chapter 3) ‘simply set sovereignty in a different context’: they do not threaten it.” [Kidner, 70]

“Once again the order is inverted, corresponding to the order of the culprits’ collusion: the judgment oracles assign punishment to the serpent first (vv. 14-15), then the woman (v. 16), and then the man (vv. 17-19). In each instance the punishment will also correspond to the nature of the crime.” [Mathews, 1:243] *“It is important at the outset for the exposition to establish the nature of these oracles. They are not commandments to be obeyed but declarations of how life now must be.... Moreover, the oracles are not simply curses. The decrees include provisions for relief and victory as well as punishments.”* [Ross, 144f]

THIS SERPENT IS ALSO A REFERENCE TO THE SATAN — As a reminder, in our last lesson we saw that if we consider the present narrative alone the serpent without question is a literal serpent, a snake, one of the creatures the Lord created on day six. But as we look at the New Testament and even later Jewish literature, it was well understood the serpent was the mouthpiece of the devil, a creature used by the Satan to entice the human race into sin. We will attempt to keep both those truths at the forefront as we continue in these verses.

v. 14 – The Lord God said to the serpent, — The Lord turns now to the serpent but asks no questions nor seeks a reply. He only has words of condemnation for the serpent, whereas the man and woman receive God’s continued concern and provision in the midst of their punishment. *“He does not interrogate the serpent as he had done the man and the woman; because, in the animal itself there was no sense of sin, and because, to the devil he would hold out no hope of pardon.”* [Calvin, 1:165] *“[It] must be observed, that no pains is taken to convince Satan of his sin, or any time spent in reasoning and debating with him about it, he being an hardened apostate spirit, and doomed to everlasting destruction, and without any hope of mercy and forgiveness.”* [Gill, 1:27]

‘Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all the beasts of the field; – THE FIRST CURSE IN THE BIBLE — This pronouncement stands out as *the first occurrence of a divine ‘curse.’* The Hebrew word used here is *’ārûr*, from the root *’ārar*, meaning *‘to curse, mostly as to its effect; to wish or speak evil of anyone.’* [Wilson’s OT Word Studies] This word appears fifty-five times in the Old Testament, predominately in the Pentateuch with eight occurrences in Genesis (Gen 3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25; 12:3; 27:29; 49:7). It is important particularly to the listed curses and blessings regarding Israel’s covenant (Deut 27-28). *‘Curse’ conveys the idea of imprecation where verbal or written utterances invoke misery against a person or thing. It 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). “To curse’ is the antonym of ‘to bless’ (cf. Gen 12:3). In the Bible, to curse means to invoke God’s judgment on someone, usually for some particular offense.”* [Wenham, 1:78]

GOD CURSES THE SERPENT AND THE GROUND BUT NOT ADAM AND EVE —

Curses are uttered against the serpent and the ground, but not against the man and woman, implying that the blessing has not been utterly lost. It is not until human murder, a transgression against the *imago Dei*, that a person receives the divine curse (Cain, 4:11).

PARALLELS WITH THE TEMPTATION (3:1-5) — There are several parallels between the serpent's temptation and his punishment.

- There is a wordplay on the words used; the serpent was originally described as '*crafty, cunning, shrewd*' ('ārûm; 3:1), it will now forever be '*cursed*' ('ārûr).
- As just mentioned, the serpent was more cunning '*than any beast of the field, above all the beasts of the field;*' it is now cursed '*above every other beast.*' The most subtle of all the animals now becomes the loneliest and oddest of the animals. ***The serpent's shrewdness is what originally set it apart within the animal world, its curse will forever set it apart from the rest of the animal kingdom.***
- The serpent who tempted Eve to '*eat*' of the tree and therefore fall by subsequence of that eating, will now himself forever '*eat*' dust.
- While originally denied by the serpent and possibly not considered by Eve in the temptation, the effects of the fall was '*death*' which was passed along to all her '*seed, offspring;*' ***but the serpent's first triumph will not be the last word. The final retaliation against the serpent's 'offspring' will be effected by the 'offspring of the woman.'***

upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat — ***These punishments are related to the snake's life of humiliation and subjugation in the natural world.***

- '*Whatever crawls on its belly, ... these you shall not eat, for they are an abomination.*' (Lev 11:42; '*belly,*' Heb. gāchôn, only here and in Lev 11:42). ***"This shall be the curse of the serpent. The state of this creature, which symbolizes 'evil,' shall be ever 'evil,' and shall be a warning to men of the consequences of wickedness."*** [Cassuto, 159]
- The idea of '*eating dust,*' in a metaphorical sense of course, occurs several times in Scripture ***with reference to personal humiliation and the plight of conquered foes.***

'May those who dwell in the wilderness bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust!' (Ps 72:9)

'They shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet.' (Isa 49:23)

'They shall lick the dust like a serpent' (Mic 7:17)

Obviously snakes do not eat dust, and no ancient writer ever thought they did (although it might eat dust along with its food).

WHAT WAS THE ORIGINAL FORM OF THE SERPENT? — Almost all the commentators at least mention what may have been the original form of the serpent. Some deny it looked any different from that which we are familiar (e.g., Kidner, 70; Mathews, 1:249; Calvin, 1:167; Skinner, 78f). Others however admit the possibility of a change in the serpent's form, especially given the myths prevalent in the ancient world:

- ***"If these words are not to be robbed of their entire meaning, they cannot be understood in any other way than as denoting that the form and movements of the serpent were altered, and that its present repulsive shape is the effect of the curse pronounced upon it, though we cannot form any accurate idea of its original appearance."*** [Keil, 1:99]

- “Whatever may have been its beauty and posture before, it would henceforth glide on its belly and be an object of dread and loathing by all.” [Morris, 118f]

- Some Jewish writers think it had feet before but were cut off; Pliny suggests some serpents had feet like geese; it might have had a more erect posture on its hinder feet as the basilisk (a European legendary reptile reputed to be a serpent king, who causes death to those who look into its eyes); if it was a flying one, bright and shining in the air, now it should lose all its glory and grovel in the dust. [Gill, 1:27]

- In the eastern religions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, a mythological semi-divine race known as the ‘*naga*’ (Sanskrit for ‘*serpent*’) took half-human, half-cobra form, although they could shift shapes to fully take on one or the other.



As interesting as these thoughts may be, we are not given the slightest indication of what kind of form the original serpent had before his doom was decreed. The rabbinic legend that the serpent resembled a human being in shape and stature corresponds to the figures that appear on some Mesopotamian seals which depict a composite creature, half serpent and half man. ***But Rabbi Cassuto comments that the Torah has purposely remained silent on the subject in consistent opposition to whatever is connected to mythological beliefs.*** [Cassuto, 160]

‘*SENSUS PLENIOR*’ AND THE PROTEVANGELIUM

We are now entering verses that, while difficult, are at the same time extremely exciting and interesting. All of those I am reading comment on the difficulties of understanding the following and much has been written on the various views. We will look at some of these but prior to entering into specifics, a couple words to define:

- What follows has been called the *protevangelium*, a Latin word built upon two Greek words meaning ‘*first gospel*.’ ***This refers specifically to Gen 3:15 as having a Messianic interpretation, the prototype for the Christian gospel.***
- My understanding of the following verses might be best understood as an example of ‘*sensus plenior*’ which is Latin meaning ‘*fuller sense, fuller meaning*.’ ***It is used to refer to an event or thing present within the Old Testament which, while having a historical truth, also has a deeper meaning intended by God and possibly not even understood at the time by the human author.*** Some examples: Isa 7:14 was historically fulfilled with Isaiah’s son, Isa 8:3, yet we are all aware the NT picks up on this and makes application to our Lord Jesus, Matt 1:23. In 2 Sam 7:12 David is promised a seed to establish his kingdom, which was immediately fulfilled in Solomon (note 2 Sam 7:14, ‘*if he commits iniquity...*’) yet finds its fullest fulfillment in our Lord Jesus, Rom 1:3. I personally read Ps 22 as immediately applicable to David, yet we are all aware our Lord used this on the cross as His own words, Matt 27:46 (see also 27:35 with Ps 22:18). Truly, what we know as ‘types’ in the OT could also fall within this category.

As we will see, in the following verses there are several understandings of what Moses is writing:

- there is a ***real-time, actual historical interpretation*** of the verses, in the immediate case that being the serpent and Eve
- there is a ***long-term, historical interpretation*** of the verses; that will be seen as we unpack the verses
- there is also a ***spiritual, Messianic interpretation*** which we know for a fact because of the New Testament's use of some of what follows

To accept any part of any of these interpretations of what follows is not to deny the other understandings present with what follows. And I believe a failure to grasp all three of these understandings is to do damage to a proper interpretation of the following. Having said that, let us now look at the verses in detail.

all the days of your life. — ***As one of the creatures created on day six, not only would the serpent be punished as long as it would live but because of its treachery the snake brought about his own death.*** That curse may also be applied to the offspring of the serpent, as we read of the future state in Isaiah:

'The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, says the Lord.' (Isa 65:25)

Even in that future day, the judgment upon the serpent will still apply. And we can also apply this to the one who was using the serpent, the Satan, thus meaning ***there is no deliverance or redemption for him. He will remain detestable and under judgment for eternity.*** ***"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."*** [Cassuto, 160]

v. 15 – I will put enmity — The noun 'enmity' is emphasized because it appears as the first word in the sentence in the original Hebrew. The term means that one party 'is an enemy to' the other. It has the intensity of hostility experienced among nations in warfare (e.g., Ezek 25:15; 35:5) and the level of animosity that results in murder (e.g., Num 35:21, 22). ***Both this context and other passages suggest a long-lasting enmity is meant, a life-and-death struggle between combatants. "We must understand that the new order announced in Genesis 3 includes extreme hatred, animosity and the desire for murder. It should not be forgotten that it is God who is setting up this new order. He is in control, acting in his providence and managing history unto his own ends. History is being played out according to his desire, will and plan."*** [Currid, 1:128]

between you and the woman — "'Between you [serpent]' has the singular pronoun (as elsewhere in the verse), meaning that ***this hostility begins with the beast and the woman as individuals. Yet their experience is shared by their offspring too; 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. Eve and her adversary are the progenitors of a lifelong struggle that will persist until a climactic moment when the woman's offspring will achieve the upper hand.*** [Mathews, 1:245]

and between your seed and her seed – THE NARRATIVE PROGRESSES INTO THE FUTURE — As just mentioned, the first part of the conflict will be between the serpent ('you')

and the woman. That part of the conflict has already occurred at the beginning of Genesis 3 in which the serpent plays a major role in the fall of mankind into sin.

Serpent ('you') ↔ Woman

But the continuum of experience between parent and offspring is seen by the parallelism of the verse (v. 15b || 15c): *'between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.'* Thus we see:

Serpent ('you') ↔ Woman
↓ ↓
Your seed ↔ Her seed

The second stage of the conflict is between *'your seed'* and *'her seed,'* the obvious reference going beyond the original narrative of the fall, Eve and the serpent. ***"The human race, 'her offspring,' and the serpent race, 'your offspring,' will be forever at loggerheads. Those who had been in league against their creator will from now on be fighting against each other, a motif that reappears in the tower of Babel story (11:1-9). It is not simply a case of God versus the snake in perpetuity, but of mankind versus the snake as well (cf. Isa 11:8)." [Wenham, 1:79]*** It then progresses into the future where the conflict reaches its climax in a battle between two individuals. The final stage is as follows:

Serpent ('you') ↔ Woman
↓ ↓
Your seed ↔ Her seed
↓ ↓
Serpent ('you') ↔ He (3rd person masc. sing.)

In this final clause, the serpent is not mentioned first but the one referred to as 'he' is – that is to demonstrate the latter's primacy and pre-eminence in the conflict. In addition, it should be noted that the blow to the serpent is to the head – a mortal, deadly wound. Details as to what this refers will be explained below.

'HER SEED' AND THE 'SEED OF THE SERPENT' HAS BOTH A PHYSICAL AND A SPIRITUAL APPLICATION — ***While this enmity may be applied to Eve and the serpent and even to their immediate offspring (as we will see), a fuller understanding requires us to understand this as not referring to a physical lineage but to a spiritual descent.*** Is there a general animosity between mankind and the serpent world even to this day? – yes, but there is a much deeper application than that general phobia. ***Satan (the serpent) cannot bear children. He is a fallen angel, and nowhere in Scripture is there any evidence that angels have the power of physical reproduction (cf. Mark 12:25). It is rather a spiritual idea, in which one can be a child of Satan by will, heart and intent.*** Remember that Jesus said to the Pharisees that *'You are of your father the devil...'* (John 8:44). The believer, or seed of the woman, by way of contrast says, *'Our Father who is in heaven...'* (Matt 6:9).

'SEED, OFFSPRING' COULD REFER TO INDIVIDUALS OR TO GROUPS — The Hebrew term for *'seed'* (zera') is commonly used of lineage / descent. The Septuagint normally renders the word as *sperma*, which reflects the idea of posterity. Part of the beauty (as well as the difficulty) in understanding this verse is that the term for *'seed'* may refer to an individual or to a group; it could refer to a specific child (e.g., Seth, 4:25) or a singular collective indicating a plural progeny (e.g., 12:7; Isa 41:8). What follows is how this works out throughout history.

THESE 'TWO SEEDS' HAS IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES IN THE BOOK OF GENESIS

— It was not long before our first parents witnessed the fulfillment of this prophecy. In Gen 4:1, 2 Eve bore two sons, first Cain and then Abel. But Cain was of the seed of the serpent:

'not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother' (1 John 3:12)

Cain's enmity was against his brother because Abel was righteous:

'By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous' (Heb 11:4)

In the enmity between good and evil, we know the wicked Cain slew his righteous brother Abel. But in God's grace, He gives Adam and Eve *'another seed:'*

'And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, "For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed."' (Gen 4:25)

In this particular case, Abel was the physical *'seed'* of Eve and also one who was spiritually righteous. Cain, while also being a physical *'seed'* of Eve, spiritually belonged to Satan and was indicative of the *'seed of the serpent.'* ***This is true of each member of the human race; while physically we may all trace our ancestry back to our original parents, spiritually we are either of the righteous seed or the evil seed of the serpent. There is no in-between; we are of one group or the other. "Specifically, it appears that Satan's seed consists of those who knowingly and willingly set themselves at enmity with the seed of the woman. They partake in a very specific sense of the character of the Adversary and seek to oppose God's purposes in creation and redemption. The 'seed of the woman,' on the other hand, would refer in the first place to those in the human family who are brought into right relationship with God through faith, children of the Father. The prophecy forecasts the agelong conflict between the children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one, beginning with Cain and Abel, and continuing to the end of the age."*** [Morris, 121] "The seed of the serpent is not literal, as in little snakes, for it has already been established that the serpent is only a masquerade for a heavenly spirit. Neither is the seed demons, for such an interpretation does not fit the context and Satan does not father demons. Rather, the seed of the serpent refers to natural humanity whom he has led into rebellion against God. ***Humanity is now divided into two communities: the elect, who love God, and the reprobate, who love self. Each of the characters of Genesis will be either of the seed of the woman that reproduces her spiritual propensity, or of the seed of the Serpent that reproduces his unbelief.***" [Waltke, 93f]

'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! ... Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?' (Matt 23:29, 33)

'He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.' (1 John 3:8)

THE HISTORICAL OUTWORKING OF THE TWO SEEDS — ***Beyond Cain and Abel, the basic theme of animosity and conflict can be traced through the history of mankind.*** Of the fifty-nine occurrences of *'seed'* in the book of Genesis, the majority are found in the patriarchal narratives (47x), where the focal concern is with the genealogical lineage of the chosen family. As prophesied in these verses, the hope for the appointed *'seed'* is unveiled progressively through Seth (*'another seed,'* 4:26; his genealogy, 5:1-32), through Noah's offspring (9:9), and the seed of Abraham first described in 12:7 (with 12:1-3; also cf. 13:15, 16; 15:3, 5, 13, 18; 16:10; 17:7-12,

19; 21:12, 13; 22:17, 18; 24:7. For the repetition of the promise of descendants, see Isaac (26:3, 4) and Jacob (28:4, 13-14; 32:12; 35:12; 48:4). Moreover, this promise points to the Mosaic community, which defined itself as the offspring promised to Abraham (e.g., Exod 32:11-14; Deut 11:8-12). But the strife between the elect line and the cursed (as initially witnessed in Cain) is envisioned in Noah's curse and blessing (9:24-27), which is but a foreshadow of the tension between the patriarchs and the neighboring nations; e.g., Canaan, Gen 38. For later Israel the hostility comes to full fury in Egypt when Pharaoh purges the Hebrew children which ends with the firstborn of Egypt being slain. It may further be seen through the hostility Israel faces throughout the Old Testament. ***The history of Israel may be described as an outworking of this initial prophecy given here.*** [Mathews, 1:246f]

he shall crush your head and you shall crave his heel.' – THE SAME VERB USED TWICE

— While not immediately obvious in many translations, a majority of the commentators agree forms of the same verb is used in both parts of this phrase (although note a minority of commentators say the two verbs have different roots; see Mathews, 1:245 footnote; Hamilton says the reason for using two different verb roots finds its source in the Latin Vulgate, 1:197). The root word in both cases is *shûph*; removing the forms of the verbs and just using the root looks like this,

'it shall shûph your head' (the original verb form is *y^eshûph^ekhā*)

'and thou shall shûph his heel' (the original verb form is *t^eshûphennû*)

The root word *shûph* means *'to bruise, to batter, to strike, to crush.'* It is only used 4x in three different verses in the OT:

'it (or, 'he') shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel' (KJV; NKJV; ESV) (Gen 3:15, 2x)

'If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me' (NKJV); 'If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me' (KJV, ESV) (Ps 139:11)

'For he breaketh me with a tempest' (KJV); 'For He crushes me with a tempest' (NKJV, ESV) (Job 9:17)

With so little other usage in the Old Testament, it is difficult to determine the precise meaning of the two verbs. [Cassuto, 1:161] ***Presumably we should translate the verb the same way both times, there being no evidence in the Hebrew text to support divergent readings*** (cf. AV, RSV, NAB, NEB). Hamilton suggests that a sense of *'strike at'* could adequately cover the reciprocal moves of the woman's seed and the serpent's seed against each other. [Hamilton, 1:197] "The imperfect verb is iterative [expressing repetition of a verbal action; doing something again and again]. ***It implies repeated attacks by both sides to injure the other. It declares lifelong mutual hostility between mankind and the serpent race.***" [Wenham, 1:80] ***"Both English words translate the same Hebrew root. The parallelism suggests that both individuals are grievously wounded. There must be struggle, affliction, and suffering to win this battle over the Serpent."*** [Waltke, 94]

'IT' OR 'HE'? — The pronouns used here are given prominence in the Hebrew text by preceding the verb for added emphasis: *'as for it, it shall...*, and *'as for you, you shall...*. How is the first pronoun (*hû* ') to be translated? It is a personal pronoun, third person, masculine singular which in the Hebrew would include *'he'* or *'it.'* The majority of translations render it as *'he shall*



...’ (ASV, NASB, Darby, ESV, Geneva, NET, NIV, NKJV) but the rendering ‘*it shall ...*’ (KJV) is not incorrect. The ancient versions offer various alternatives. The LXX has αὐτός [autos], ‘*he*,’ even though the antecedent is σπέρματος [spermatis] which is neuter in Greek. One might have expected αὐτό [auto, ‘*it*’] instead of αὐτός [autos, ‘*he*’]. ***The LXX seems to have had a messianic understanding of the verse;*** while the independent personal pronoun *hû*’ occurs more than one hundred times, this is the only one that the LXX translates literally with αὐτός [autos, ‘*he*’] although the Greek idiom would require the neuter. ***Obviously our modern translations follow that Messianic emphasis by translating the pronoun as ‘he.’*** ***An interesting note:*** while the pronoun used here could be translated either ‘*he*’ or ‘*it*,’ some Old Latin texts and the Vulgate uses the feminine pronoun ‘*she*’ [*ipsa*] *shall crush*’ (!) rather than the masculine. This is of course picked up by Catholics as having reference to the virgin Mary rather than to the Messiah!!!

THE MESSIANIC CONCLUSION OF THE STRUGGLE OF GOOD AND EVIL — ‘*Seed*’ is a resourceful term for speaking of all human history while at the same time permitting a reference to a specific individual descendant. This explains why the individual offspring of the woman (‘*he*,’ ‘*his heel*’) can be said to do battle with the progenitor serpent (‘*your head*,’ ‘*you*’) in v. 15d and 15e. Would this individual, or these individuals, be among the kings of Israel and Judah who are the ‘*offspring*’ of their fathers (2 Sam 7:12; Ps 89:4) who ‘*crush*’ their enemies (Ps 89:23) ‘*under their feet*’ (2 Sam 22:39) so that these enemies ‘*lick the dust*’ (Ps 72:9)? ***While that understanding could be included in these prophecies, the New Testament is clear that the true fulfillment of the ‘seed’ to do final battle with the serpent is the Lord Jesus Christ:***

‘Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil’ (Heb 2:14)

‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us.’ (Matt 1:23)

‘But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law’ (Gal. 4:4)

‘Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ.’ (Gal. 3:16)

There is good New Testament authority for seeing here the protevangelium, the first glimmer of the gospel:

‘And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.’ (Rom 16:20)

‘HEEL’ AND ‘HEAD’ — ***As seen previously, the verbs used by the two antagonists is the same but the outcome of that battle is radically different.*** The Hebrew word *shûph* meaning ‘*to bruise, to batter, to crush*’ describes the combatants’ parallel action, but the location of the blow distinguishes the severity and success of the attack. The impact delivered by the offspring of the woman ‘*at the head*’ is mortal, while the serpent will deliver a blow only ‘*at the heel*.’ Continuing the imagery of the snake, the strike at the human heel is appropriate for a serpent since it slithers along the ground, while the human foot stomps the head of the vile creature. ***Thus the curse upon***

the serpent includes its final destruction by the descendant of the woman. This animosity is at the instigation of God. The serpent was instrumental in the undoing of the woman, and in turn the woman will ultimately bring down the serpent through her offspring. “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 [‘greater and lesser’], 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 a 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.” [Keil, 1:100] “With the revelation of the New Testament we are able to see how the human race would ultimately gain victory – it would come through one who took upon himself the curse of the whole world. The motifs in this chapter – toil, sweat, thorns, the conflict, the tree, death, dust, and the seed – all will be reflected in the experience of the Christ, who became the curse, sweat great drops of blood in bitter agony, wore a crown of thorns, hung on a tree until he was dead, and was placed in the dust of death (cf. Ps 22:15).” [Ross, 141]

THE VIRGIN BIRTH? — While we who have the benefit of the entirety of Scripture at our disposal might see the virgin birth in this verse, it would be demanding too much to interpret the passage as teaching this truth. “[One] should not force an interpretation of ‘her offspring’ that the expression cannot bear. The LXX translated Heb. *zaʿrāh* (lit., ‘her seed’) as σπέρματος αὐτῆς [spermatos autēs; lit. ‘her seed’], and the Vulgate as *semen illius* (also lit., ‘her seed’), *but to read the LXX as ‘her sperm’ and the Vulgate as ‘her semen’ (an oxymoron if there ever was one!) in order to see a hint here of the virgin birth of this seed (the absence of a sperm-supplying father) is farfetched indeed. If for no other reason, Gen 4:25 would invalidate that proposal, for here Eve says that God has given her ‘another seed,’ and certainly Seth was not born of a virgin!*” [Hamilton, 1:199]

THE JUDGMENT ORACLES – THE WOMAN

v. 16 – To the woman He said, — The woman’s penalty impacts her two primary roles: childbearing and her relationship with her husband. The punishment upon the woman was not due to any sexual improprieties in their transgression as some exegetes believe. But since the punishment was specifically intended for the woman and her female descendants and was not a penalty shared with men, it had invariably to be of a nature restricted to the female sex. *“Moreover, there is no cause specified for her suffering, whereas the serpent is charged with deception (v. 14) and the man with eating disobediently (v. 17). This is due to the woman’s culpability through deception, in contrast with the willful rebellion of the serpent and man; also the oracle has a gentler word for the woman since her punishment entails the salvation of the human couple (v. 15). Whereas the man’s action condemned the human family, Eve will play the critical role in liberating them from sin’s consequences. This is realized in part immediately since the woman gives birth to new life (e.g., 4:1, 25), but v. 15 indicates that the final conflict will also be humanity’s victory by virtue of the woman’s role as childbearer.”* [Mathews, 1:248]

‘I will greatly multiply your suffering, especially of your childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children,’ — This could be read as ‘your suffering’ in general, and more particularly that of ‘your childbearing.’ But many understand this as a hendiadys, ‘the suffering of your childbearing, your pain in childbearing.’ “‘To be a joyful mother of children’ (Ps 113:9), preferably a large family, was a sure sign of God’s blessing (cf. Pss 127, 128). Yet the pain of

childbirth, unrelieved by modern medicine, was the most bitter known then (cf. Mic 4:9-10; Isa 13:8; 21:3).” [Wenham, 1:81] ***“That the woman should bear children was the original will of God; but it was a punishment that henceforth she was to bear them in sorrow, i.e., with pains which threatened her own life as well as that of the child.”*** [Delitzsch; quoted in Keil, 1:103]

UNUSUAL WORDS USED HERE FOR ‘PAIN’ — Neither the word used here *‘itstsāyôn* (*‘your pain, painful-labor, sorrow in childbearing’*) and *‘etsey* (*‘in pain, painful labor, sorrow you shall bring forth children’*) are the usual words for the pangs of childbirth. The first of these words is repeated in v. 17, *‘in pain, painful-labor, sorrow you shall eat of it all the days of your life’* when speaking to Adam. It is only used one other time (5:29) and indicates hard labor. ***“Apparently, we have here a play upon words with reference to ‘ēts (‘tree’): it was with respect to ‘ēts (‘the tree’) that the man and woman sinned, and it was with ‘etsy (‘pain’) and ‘itstsāyôn (‘toil, suffering’) that they were punished.*** The woman ate from the tree that seemed to her *‘good’* for food, and a *‘delight’* to the eyes, and was to be *‘desired’* to make one wise; and she was punished with something that was not *‘good,’* and no source of *‘delight,’* and not *‘to be desired,’* but a great *‘suffering,’* a severe *‘pain,’* which would become proverbial (such sayings as [to suffer] *‘pangs like a woman in travail’* are familiar). The very fact that Scripture does not employ here the usual phrases found in connection with the suffering of childbirth, like *chēvel* (*‘pain’*), *chîl* (*‘writhing, anguish’*), *tsîr* (*‘writhing, pang’*), *tsārāh* (*‘distress’*), but chose expressions derived from the root *‘ātsay*, proves that it was with some specific intention – for instance, to allude to the word *‘ēts (‘tree’)* – that these words were selected.” [Cassuto, 165] ***This would include not only the physical suffering of pregnancy and childbirth but also the emotional pain of losing unborn children in what today we call miscarriages or stillbirths, along with the pain of infertility.***

‘GREATLY INCREASE’ — The form of the Hebrew grammar here is unusual, emphasizing the intensity of the punishment, *‘I will greatly increase’* (*har^ebāh ’ar^ebeh*; literally, *‘multiply, I will multiply’*). This unusual grammar form is only used in two other passages, both in the context of God’s promise of blessing through the birth of many children (Gen 16:10, the Angel of the LORD speaking to Sarai; Gen 22:17, the Angel of the LORD speaking to Abraham after his offer of Isaac on the altar).

yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’ – ‘DESIRE’ — ***The second judgment of her sin is the relationship with her husband is forever tainted.*** The word for *‘desire’* is only used in two other places and which of those passages is used to help define this word impacts the meaning of this verse. One of those passages is in the Song of Solomon:

‘I am my beloved’s, and his desire is toward me.’ (Song of Sol 7:10)

In the Song of Solomon reference it has a decidedly romantic and positive nuance describing a feeling of mutual attraction between two lovers, thus the woman shall desire her husband but he shall lord it over her. If we also consider the mention of her *‘seed’* in v. 15, then despite the pain of childbearing she will still have sexual desires for her husband.

But most I am reading prefer to understand this verse in relation to a closer reference which not only has our word *‘desire’* but also the word *‘rule.’* Speaking to Cain, the Lord says,

‘If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.’ (Gen 4:7)

In chapter 4 *‘sin’* is like an animal that when stirred up will assault Cain; it *‘desires’* to overcome

Cain, but the challenge God puts to Cain is to exercise ‘rule’ or ‘mastery’ over that unruly desire. *If the lexical and structural similarities are intentional, this would understand our verse as a struggle as a mastery between the two sexes. The ‘desire’ of the woman is her attempt to independence, domination and the control of her husband, but she will fail because God has ordained that the man exercise his leadership function.* This is rendered perfectly by the NET, ‘You will want to control your husband, but he will dominate you.’ [Mathews, 1:251; Cassuto, 1:165f; Hamilton, 1:201f; Wenham, 1:81f; Currid, 1:132f; Waltke, 94; Ham, 125; Keil, 1:103]

‘RULE’ — *“The nature of the new order is quite appropriate. It was Eve who led the family in the garden episode, who ate the fruit first and led the man to do the same. Adam, for his part, let the woman lead, and he refused to take his mandated leadership role. God now proclaims that such struggles and tensions will always appear in the marriage relationship.”* [Currid, 1:133] *The judgment is therefore ‘talionic,’ meaning the punishment is tailored to suit the crime. This is supported by v. 17, ‘because you obeyed your wife’.*

This is not to suggest the roles of the sexes changed because of the fall; (1) it was man who was created first and given the law to teach to his family, (2) the woman was created as his ‘helper,’ (3) the woman was brought to the man, and (4) the man named her not once but twice. *But before the entrance of sin the man and his wife were to reign as co-equals over the remainder of God’s creation, not in a fierce dispute with each party trying to rule the other. There was male leadership but not male dominance. The two who once reigned as one now attempt to rule each other. This has implications for both sexes, sin having disrupted the attitudes of both the husband and the wife. The wife tries to usurp her husband’s God-given authority as head of the home, and the husband often lords his authority over the wife in an unkind, harsh, or even despotic way. “To love and to cherish” becomes “To desire and to dominate.”* [Kidner, 71] *“We cannot understand the divine word ‘he will rule over you’ as a command to impose dominance any more than v. 16a is an exhortation for the woman to suffer as much as possible during childbirth. It is a distortion of the passage to find in it justification for male tyranny. On the contrary, ancient Israel provided safeguards for protecting woman from unscrupulous men (e.g., Deut 24:1-4), and the New Testament takes steps to restrain domination. Paul admonished men and women to practice mutual submission (Eph 5:22, 23) and cautioned husbands to exercise love and protection without harshness (Col 3:19). Because of the threat of harsh dominance, Paul commanded Christian charity toward women in the community of the home and the church.”* [Mathews, 1:251f]

THE JUDGMENT OUTSIDE OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE — We sometimes forget the world outside the influence of the Word of God. “Created for the man, the woman was made subordinate to him from the very first; *but the supremacy of the man was not intended to become a despotic rule*, crushing the woman into a slave, which has been the rule in ancient and modern Heathenism, and even in Mahometanism [old term for Islam and Muslim] also.” [Keil, 1:103] *“When the man is good, a Christian man, forgiven of his sin, and his wife has been forgiven of her sin, their relation is like it was before, the woman is next to his heart, and the rule is not the rule of a lord and master, but the two walk together in mutual love and support each other.* But if he is a bad man, see how he rules over the woman. Look at India, China, Africa: there the women are slaves, good and chattels. Let one of these heathen get into straits and he will sell his wife. Look at the Indians. One of the most eloquent things I ever heard was by Dr. Winkler in an address on foreign missions. He said, ‘I stepped into an art gallery and saw the picture of an Indian chief. He seems to have the very strength of an angel, and by his side was an Indian maiden, and

how beautiful she was.... But who is that crouched behind the man and the girl? It is a wretched old hag. Who is she? She is the Indian's wife. She hoes his corn and cooks his venison and carries his burden and is his slave. And as she is, so will this beautiful daughter be when she marries.”

[Carroll, 1:109; *note BH Carroll lived in Texas, 1843-1914*]

THE JUDGMENT ORACLES – THE MAN

v. 17 – And to Adam He said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, — “Note that, as in v. 14, the causal clause precedes the main clause, emphasizing the relative importance of the former. Obeying his wife rather than God was man’s fundamental mistake.”

[Wenham, 1:82]

and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, — Adam listened to his wife and ate of the forbidden fruit (3:6, 12), and once again God’s word of judgment matches the sin. “Since you listened to her voice, although by so doing you disobeyed My commands, and ‘you ate’ what I forbade you ‘to eat,’ your punishment will also be connected with ‘eating.’ The stem ‘ākal (‘to eat, devour’) occurs no less than five times in the Lord God’s address to man.” [Cassuto, 167f]

saying: “You shall not eat of it”, — Repeating the original prohibition verbatim, ‘you must not eat of it,’ reinforces the severity of the crime and reminds him of the dire consequences of his rebellion. Emphasis on the second person ‘you’ and ‘your’ sharpens God’s focus on the man’s individual fault. There is no room for avoidance now; he is caught without a word to say.

[Mathews, 1:252]

cursed is the ground because of you; — Adam’s penalty also fits his crime since his appointed role was intimately related to the ground from which he was made and which he was charged to cultivate (2:7, 15). Now the ‘ground’ is decreed under divine ‘curse’ on his account; it will no longer produce abundantly but will fight Adam’s efforts to make it produce. “‘The land [‘adāmāh] is cursed.’ ‘Land,’ one of the key words of the narrative (cf. 2:5-7, 19) is mentioned at the beginning and close of the curse ‘until you return to the land’ (v. 19), thereby forming an inclusion.” [Wenham, 1:82] **“In order to understand the nature of the earth’s curse, we must determine what is meant by its blessing. From a number of passages (e.g., Deut. 33:13-15) we learn that a blessed land is one that is amply watered and fertile. It follows that a land is cursed when it lacks water and fertility. In the garden of Eden, which was well watered and produced abundant fruit, man ate to his satisfaction without any anxiety or undue exertion; from now on, the earth would yield its harvest to him only with difficulty and in meagre measure.”** [Cassuto, 168]

CREATION CURSED WITH ADAM, NOT THE SERPENT — “Creation is subjected to vanity, futility and frustration because of mankind’s fall. The universe’s continuous cycle of birth, growth, death and decay demonstrates this subjection. The universe is in a process of deterioration (what Paul calls ‘slavery to corruption’), and it appears to be running down. Nature, like mankind, is in a state of decay, deterioration, pain and futility (Rom 8:20).” [Currid, 1:135] “The world experienced corruption, not of its own choosing but by the condemnation of God for the sin of Adam; however, creation looks to the prospects of redemption that will be realized by it and the saints at the advent of Christ’s glory. Both the creation and the ‘children of God’ groan as with birth pangs (Gen 2:15-16) for the dawning of the new era.” [Mathews, 1:253]

in suffering you shall eat of it — Ironically, the ground that was under the man’s care in the garden as his source of joy and life (2:15) becomes the source of pain for the man’s wearisome existence (v. 17). This parallels the judgment upon the woman (v. 16); as woman is doomed to

suffer in her fundamental role as wife and mother, man will be similarly afflicted in his basic role as farmer and food-producer. Both of their tasks will be toilsome and hard. “Similarly, God’s word to the man parallels his word to the woman, for in the experiences of both there will be ‘pain’ (Heb. *’itstsāyôn*) [*‘in sorrow’* or *‘in pain you shall eat of it,’* 3:17]. For her the pain will be connected with childbearing, and for him the pain will be connected with food. *’itstsāyôn* and the verb *’ātsay* [*‘your pain – ’itstsāyôn – in childbearing, in pain – ’ātsay – you shall bring forth children,’* speaking to Eve, 3:16] obviously refer to physical pain, but they also embrace the concept of anguish, as is obvious in verses like Gen. 6:6 (God’s anguish); 45:5 (the distress of Joseph’s brothers); 1 Sam. 19:2 (David in grief).” [Hamilton, 1:202f]

all the days of your life; — The same expression *‘all the days of your life’* occurred in God’s judgment against the serpent, where he will eat ‘dust’ as his punishment (v. 14). This punishment also involves the ‘dust’ of the ground, tying together the two crimes and their consequences.

v. 18 – thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; — *‘Thorns ... and thistles’ are eloquent signs of nature untamed and encroaching; in the Old Testament they mark the scenes of man’s self-defeat and God’s judgment, e.g. in the sluggard’s field (Prov 24:31) and the ruined city (Isa 34:13). When used together reflect judgment (Hos 10:8). “Of its own accord, without your labour, the ground will produce for you only thorns and thistles, plants that do not provide you with sustenance. These are to be identified with sîach hassādeh [‘thorns of the field,’ see 2:5] mentioned earlier. Then – before man had been created – there were no thorns of the field yet upon the earth; now, on account of man’s sin, the thorns of the field would be found there in abundance.”* [Cassuto, 168f]

and you shall eat the grain of the field. — *This anticipates his expulsion from the garden (3:23), outside where he must battle the elements as a toiling farmer. Now the conditions of land and life are those we are accustomed to, which at one time did not exist (2:5-7) but have come about by the man’s sin. The passage has brought us full circle from creation’s bliss to sin’s burden. Nevertheless, the sentencing itself contains God’s gracious provision since the man will still derive sustenance from the ground for survival.* [Mathews, 1:252f] “Even when you succeed in eating of the fruit of your land, it will no longer be the desirable fruit of the garden of Eden but the ‘grain of the field,’ that is, the bread that you will produce from grasses like wheat and barley and other kinds of cereals. *This, too, recalls what is stated in 2:5: ‘and no grain of the field’ had yet sprung up. At that time there were no cornfields yet; from now on, by dint of man’s labour, cornfields would multiply upon the earth.*” [Cassuto, 169]

v. 19 – In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread — The phrase *‘in the sweat of your face’* – that is, through toil, which will bathe your face in sweat – provides an additional explanation of [*‘in toil’*] in v. 17. “‘Sorrow ... sweat ... and dust’ answer the fantasy ‘you will be like God,’ and lead to the cry ‘all things are full of weariness’ (Ec. 1:8, RSV).” [Kidner, 71]

till you return to the ground, — The painful toil of man’s life is to be a permanent situation, relief from this situation comes only when man dies. “After making the general statement, *‘all the days of your life,’* the Bible defines the expression more closely, and links it up with what has been said earlier (2:7): *‘Then the Lord God formed man of DUST FROM THE GROUND.’*” [Cassuto, 169]

for out of it you were taken; — “*You wished to be like God and to transcend the status of the earthly creatures, but you must not forget that although you were created in the Divine image, your body was derived from the ground, and everything in nature must return in the end to its original source.*” [Cassuto, 169]

for you are dust and to dust you shall return. — A repetition of the thought in different words. Adam's death is portrayed by the dreadful wordplay on his creation and essential physical constitution as the 'dust' of the 'ground.' ***His 'return' will be from whence he came: 'ādām will become once again 'adāmāh ('ground').*** The idea that man is only 'dust,' and that in the end he must return to 'dust,' finds expression in various passages of the Bible, all of which are dependent apparently on our verse. Examples are:

'For He knows our frame; He remembers that WE ARE DUST' (Ps 103:14)

'when Thou takest away their breath, they die, AND RETURN TO THEIR DUST' (Ps 104:29)

'how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, WHOSE FOUNDATION IS IN THE DUST' (Job 4:19)

'Remember that Thou hast made me of clay, AND WILT THOU TURN ME TO DUST AGAIN?' (Job 10:9)

'all flesh would perish together, AND MAN WOULD RETURN TO DUST' (Job 34:15)

'all are FROM THE DUST AND ALL TURN TO DUST AGAIN' (Eccles 3:20)

'AND THE DUST RETURNS TO THE EARTH as it was' (Eccles 12:7)

“Once again the judgment is related to the offence. Mankind had been given dominion over creation when Adam and Eve were first formed. But now the ground claims victory – it brings mankind into ultimate subjection. Mankind will not gain eternal life on the earth, but they must go back to the dust from which they were taken. Mankind are merely dust. The construction of the Hebrew sentence emphasizes that point: it literally says, ‘Dust you are,’ the object preceding the subject. When that occurs in Hebrew, the object is being highlighted. Make no mistake about it – man is dust!” [Currid, 1:136]

ADAM NOW UNDERSTANDS WHAT IT MEANS TO DIE — ***“The words of the Lord God to the man explain to him in detail the meaning of the warning, ‘you shall surely die,’ which had been addressed to him in the beginning (2:17). Then he had not been able to comprehend the detailed implications; but now, having eaten of the tree of knowledge, he is able to understand, and a comprehensive explanation is given to him.”*** [Cassuto, 169f] Death comes by the reversal of the man's God-given state, that is, a 'living being' (2:7). This reversal is the deterioration of the body that will 'return' to the dust from which it was made. 'Dust you are' always overcomes the progress of medicine and the ingenuity of cosmetology; every opened casket proves it so. [Mathews, 1:253f]

v. 20 – The man called his wife's name Eve (*Chavvāh*) because she was the mother of all living (*chay*). — This statement was added later as an editorial explanatory insertion, possibly by Moses. It is not Adam's own reason for in that case he would have said: 'because she shall be the mother of all living.' *Chavvāh*, traditionally rendered 'Eve,' is a feminine noun form of the Hebrew term for 'life, living thing' and is related to the word 'living' used at the end of the sentence. [Currid, 1:139; see also Keil, 1:106] Her name occurs sparsely in Scripture (Gen 4:1; 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2:13; also the apocryphal book Tobit 8:6). The etymology of the word is difficult, with one OT lexicon listing nine possible sources for her name. But regardless of whether we can trace the etymology of the word, the text itself relates 'Eve' and 'to live' (Hamilton [1:205] suggests her name may reflect a primitive form of the Hebrew verb 'to live' with a different

spelling than later Hebrew). This is an old understanding since the LXX translates ‘Eve,’ as Ζωή [Zoē, ‘life’]. *“After the sentence of death, this name, ‘life,’ with its play on the word ‘living,’ is very striking; its connection with Eve’s role as ‘mother’ further suggests that Adam heard the promise of 15 in faith.”* [Kidner, 72]

CONTRA EVOLUTION — “In any case, it surely refutes the idea that there were any ‘pre-Adamite men’ living in the world outside the garden, as some have speculated.” [Morris, 129]

v. 21 – *And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife tunics of skins, and clothed them.*

— The Lord made ‘*tunics of skins*’ of wild or domestic animals; enduring tunics in contrast to aprons of leaves (v. 7) which would not last a long time. The coats of skins are forerunners of the many measures of welfare which man’s sin makes necessary. The skimpy ‘*loincloth, belt*’ of leaves are replaced with something more formidable which would reach down to their knees or ankles, both to cover their embarrassment and to preserve them in the new hostile environment to which they will be banished. Along with the woman’s birth pangs and the man’s hard labor to provide, their clothing will forever confirm they have sinned against God and no longer able to walk before Him in innocence.

WAS THIS A SPIRITUAL COVERING AS WELL AS A PHYSICAL COVERING? — The commentators differ as to what extent we may say the atonement is foreshadowed; Kidner says “it is unduly subtle, and a distraction, to foresee the atonement here: God is meeting immediate rather than ultimate needs, for both are His concern.” [Kidner, 72] But most I am reading recognize some symbolism in the Lord’s actions. *“Since the garden narrative shares in tabernacle imagery, it is not surprising that allusion to animal sacrifice is found in the garden too. Through an oblique reference to animal sacrifice, the garden narrative paints a theological portrait familiar to the recipients of the Sinai revelation who honored the tabernacle as the meeting place with God. Sacrifice renewed and guaranteed that special union of God with his people (e.g., Day of Atonement, Lev 16). This mode of provision then for Adam and Eve affirmed God’s abiding goodwill.”* [Mathews, 1:255] Several lessons we may derive from this final act prior to man being banished from Eden:

- the fig leaves were an attempt to cover oneself, the animal skins were accepting the covering from another
- the fig leaves were manmade, the animal skins were God made; Adam and Eve are in need of a salvation that comes from without, God needs to do for them what they are unable to do for themselves
- the clothing precedes the expulsion from the garden, thus God’s act of grace comes before His judgment; in like manner, Cain is marked before he is exiled (4:15) and the Lord announces the post-flood covenant even before the flood (6:18)
- the coverings provided by the Lord involved death; the animals had to die to provide the covering for the man and the woman
- while the term ‘skin’ is used of sacrificial animals in the Torah (e.g., Exod 29:14; Lev 4:11), the word is not limited to sacrifice and is also used for the materials from which garments and the coverings of the tabernacle were made

- part of a very practical lesson provided in this act is that the Lord was showing them how they might use the animals for their own good and even sacrifice animal life for the preservation of human lives
- that God ‘made’ (*‘āsāh*) these garments stands in striking relief to the seventh day when God ceased from all that he had ‘made’ (*‘āsāh*) (2:2-3); ‘made’ routinely describes God’s creative work, occurring eleven times in 1:1-2:4, but now his action in behalf of the couple is salvific in character

“It is also to be remarked that the clothing which God provided was in itself different from what man had thought of. Adam took leaves from an inanimate, unfeeling tree; God deprived an animal of life, that the shame of His creature might be relieved. This was the last thing Adam would have thought of doing. To us life is cheap and death familiar, but Adam recognized death as the punishment of sin. Death was to early man a sign of God’s anger. And he had to learn that sin could be covered not by a bunch of leaves snatched from a bush as he passed by and that would grow again next year, but only by pain and blood. Sin cannot be atoned for by any mechanical action nor without expenditure of feeling. Suffering must ever follow wrongdoing. From the first sin to the last, the track of the sinner is marked with blood. Once we have sinned we cannot regain permanent peace of conscience save through pain, and this not only pain of our own. The first hint of this was given as soon as conscience was aroused in man. It was made apparent that sin was a real and deep evil, and that by no easy and cheap process could the sinner be restored. The same lesson has been written on millions of consciences since. Men have found that their sin reaches beyond their own life and person, that it inflicts injury and involves disturbance and distress, that it changes utterly our relation to life and to God, and that we cannot rise above its consequences save by the intervention of God Himself, by an intervention which tells us of the sorrow He suffers on our account. For the chief point is that it is God who relieves man’s shame.” [Marcus Dods, *The Book of Genesis*, pp. 25f; quoted in Ross, 149]

WHO ACTUALLY MADE THE SKINS? — Something of which I had never given much thought but did the Lord actually kill and create the tunics for Adam and Eve? Skin the animals, sew the hides together, give them to Adam and Eve to wear? Rabbi Cassuto makes the comment that it was not the Lord Himself who clothed them but that He enabled them to clothe themselves. [Cassuto, 1:171] “The words, ‘*God made coats,*’ are not to be interpreted with such bare literality, as that God sewed the coats with His own fingers; they merely affirm ‘that man’s first clothing was the work of God, who gave the necessary directions and ability’ (Delitzsch).” [Keil, 1:106] *If that is true, how much more would it have meant to Adam and Eve to have to actually take the life of an innocent animal because of their sin? To see the life go out of the eyes of the animal? To skin the animal with all of its blood as its flesh was being ripped from its body? What kind of impression would that have made on our first parents?* In opposition to this however, if the clothing of skins are considered a type of salvation then Adam and Eve making their own coats would suggest their works were required in salvation; a false teaching.